ALIEN EEL, 39 inches long and weighing ten pounds, was RAPA NUl for only the third time in Rapa Nui Journal 61
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forming under the sea just south of Hawai‘i Island) and travel found on Maui as they will begin at Lo‘ihi (the newest Hawaiian Island, still
required for the restoration. Plans are to sail to the remote northwestern Hawaiian Islands. The voyage will be “statewide” in its 16-day Circle Hawai‘i cruises. The advance promotion on Holland America’s Web site says that once on Moloka‘i, passengers may go deep sea fishing or explore the island’s scenic beauty, history and ancient places of worship. Other activities include mule rides to Kalaulapa and a hoolaulea with food and entertainment at Malama Cultural Park near Kaunakakai Harbor. The director of the Molokai Visitors Association said the passengers aboard the Statendam will be generally an older retired group. She expects about 600 of the 1,000 passengers to visit Molokai, an island with an estimated population of about 7,000 residents. These early visits will determine if Molokai will remain a regular stop. A lot hinges on how things go. Molokai’s unemployment rate was 9% in September, a 2.6% improvement over the same month last year, following 9-11 and a drop in tourism. Zhantell Du doit, whose business is helping to organize the hoolaulea, said she feels that there are environmental concerns but she also believes there is room for a compromise. “We need the business,” she said.

THE HOKOLE‘A HAS BEEN RESTORED and is ready to return to Pacific waters to resume its sailing adventures. The Polynesian Voyaging Society was able to reach their goal of the $100,000 required for the restoration. Plans are to sail to the remote northwestern Hawaiian Islands. The voyage will be “statewide” as they will begin at Lo‘ihi (the newest Hawaiian Island, still forming under the sea just south of Hawai‘i Island) and travel all the way to Kure in the northwest Hawaiian chain.

AN ALIEN EEL, 39 inches long and weighing ten pounds, was found on Maui. It may have been brought in ballast water aboard a ship and managed to reach the pond, or it might have crossed the ocean on its own, from it’s nearest native area, Tahiti. The eel moves from salt to fresh water, and is found in the Indo-Pacific region as well as in South Africa. State laws prohibit its importation. A Maui boy fishing in the pond was stunned to find this creature on his spear. No one at the Department of Land and Natural Resources had seen anything like it, so it was sent to the Bishop Museum and was identified by scientists as Anguilla marmorata, a giant mottled eel, harmful to native creatures.

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WHAT’S NEW IN HANGA ROA

THERE WAS A MURDER ON RAPA NUI for only the third time in 120 years. The crime left the island community reeling from shock. Alberto Tepihi Hotus killed his wife, Maria Ika Pakarati, with a knife and then tried unsuccessfully to kill himself. There had been a history of spousal (and substance) abuse in the relationship and she was planning to leave him. This calamity might have been prevented; however, there is little social support in Chile (or on the island) for women who try to use the law to protect themselves and their children from domestic violence. Theoretically, there are severe legal constraints against abusive spouses, but in practice the carabineros are reluctant to intervene. Even then the woman has to press charges, and often she won’t because the legal system discourages her from doing so. In earlier times the family structure was capable of some level of control (albeit inconsistent) over the more common sort of domestic violence, such as threats against the abuser by members of the spouse’s family. But, today families are in disarray and that rarely happens.

MANY OF THE HARE MOA AROUND the island have been rebuilt and a replica “ancient village” is also being built inland from the ahu at Te Pito Kura. These “restorations” are being done by local youths with no archaeological input.

THE INTERNET CAFE ON Atamu Tekena has closed, and as a lot more people seem to have gotten computers in the last year, the Entel internet connections are very slow. It is still possible to check email in the mall next door to the market, Kai Nene (formerly called Tumu Kai) on Atamu Tekena.

A NEW BAR/PUB CALLED ALOHA has opened in the village. It features live music on Friday nights. Another local pub, called Banana, is said to have a rather rough clientele.

VANDALISM TO A FALLEN STATUE at Vinapu has been reported, and the culprit was identified as a tourist from Japan. He was
allowed to leave the island but now the National Parks is trying to extradite him for a trial. The cost of repairs will be thousands of US dollars.

THE VILLAGE MERCADO HAS BEEN EXPANDED but is still stifling. Whoever designs the island’s buildings has no concept of ventilation. The other market, a feria or “open market” at the corner of Atamu Tekena and Tu’u Makehe consists of roofed over stalls and display areas and is being used for the sale of curios and carvings. Formerly planned as a place to display and sell fruits, vegetables, and fish, islanders are instead selling these perishables from the backs of pickup trucks, ranged along Atamu Tekena, across the street from the government structure. This appears to be in protest, but of what we could not determine.

BOTH OF AHU TONGARIKI’S huge wings have been restored. The size of this ahu is awesome. Visitors should walk around behind the ahu, on the east end, to see the collection of statue fragments found during reconstruction. This most interesting collection should be in the island museum.

VIEW OF TONGARIKI from the huge east wing. Photo: Adele Norton.

THERE IS NEW CONSTRUCTION all over Hanga Roa village. What these buildings are intended to be is unclear. But as tourism is down dramatically, many projects begun when the good times were rolling may not be completed very soon. None the less, small shops up and down the two main streets are open and, for the first time, we noted some two-story houses around the village.

AN OUTSIDE ATM MACHINE now stands in front the island’s bank on Tu’u Makehe Street, but it only accepts Bank of Chile cards and Mastercard.

WHILE THE PAVING OF THE STREETS in Hanga Roa progresses, the roads to Akivi, Puna Pau, and to Orongo are still unpaved. Along the south coast, the road is paved to the eastern side of Poike peninsula. This portion of the road is a big improvement as the short stretch that runs along the Poike peninsula was notorious for turning into mush when it rains.

The numbers of tourist arrivals (1992-2001) to Easter Island are shown above but they do not include in-transit passengers or ship arrivals which do not discharge passengers. A large drop in tourists from all countries occurred between 2000 and 2001. Tourists from the USA went from 10,902 to 2,271. The figures by courtesy of Sematur, Isla de Pascua.

AHU AKIVI HAS BEEN CLEANED UP, providing the site with a much more attractive ambience. The weeds and shrubbery were cut back and the ramp weeded. On the down side, Vinapu is still overgrown with ‘cho-cho’ a nasty plant that is toxic to animals. The heavy brush cover nearly obscures the entire site of Vinapu 2.

THE PLAN TO BUILD A 5-STAR HOTEL with golf course at Vaiete, in the center of the island, is still being pushed by a few individuals. While a “Canadian Consortium” is said to be behind it, word is that the big backers are wealthy investors from Santiago. Nearly all the islanders are against this scheme and concerned Rapanui are pleading for help to stop the project. An article in El Mercurio stated that: “The warm Polynesian climate and the fact that it is one of the richest areas of marine wildlife in the Pacific Ocean have whet the appetite of Canadian businessmen who plan to construct the hotel. Rapanui Mayor Petero Edmunds Paoa has endorsed the plan which would be built on 100 hectares in Rapa Nui’s center, an area known for its beautiful countryside. The project will require an investment of more than $US 7 million, and the hotel will have 100 rooms with additional luxury areas for VIPs like a golf course.”

One of the main concerns with the project is that the hotel would deprive locals of work and separate tourists from the village area. “We want people from the island to work on the land, which would not be the case with this project,” said businessman and President of the Easter Island Tourism Chamber, Pedro Riroroko. “One of the Mayor’s arguments for building a hotel here is that it would give people work, but we know that the hotel’s own (foreign) personnel would be brought in,” he said. Mayor Edmunds described the economic benefits that a luxury hotel would bring. “With a hotel like this we could hold conferences like APEC [sic] forums here,” he said.

Another project being proposed by the Chilean/Canadian/Consejo de Ancianos group, is a “floating hotel” that would be...
attached to a pier. In exchange for permission to build this floating hotel, supporters of the project have promised to build the pier, a drainage system for the island, and to give school grants (and other guarantees). There are few examples of floating hotels so little is known as to how it may be affected by ocean currents and storms. There also are considerable potential environmental impacts. Damage to the coastline and the ever-present dangerously high surf would make this a highly unstable project. Where the pier and floating hotel might be situated was not specified and the issue of sewage was not mentioned. Easter Island's Port Authority was horrified. Mayor Edmunds still prefers the Vaitéa 5-star hotel project and has asked the government for assistance with that project.

**WE WERE TOLD THAT THE VILLAGE** cemetery is now full with no room for expansion due to the bedrock formations surrounding it. One islander plaintively asked, “Where will we be buried?” The only other option, at this moment, is the old cemetery near the former leper sanatorium.

**THE JAPAN-UNESCO PROJECT** for the conservation of archaeological sites on Rapa Nui began recently. The main purpose of the project was established after a meeting on the island amongst the scientific committee which included archaeologists William Ayres, Gonzalo Figueroa and José Miguel Ramírez, conservation experts Masaaki Sawada and Mónica Bahamondez, and engineer Mauricio Sarrazin, the National Council of Monuments and UNESCO representatives, along with the participation of Rapanui authorities. This purpose is not restoration but preventive maintenance of the many *ahu* that are in the process of deterioration. Due to the fact that the large Tadano crane is broken, the only works that can be accomplished are those that do not require the use of the crane. These include Ahu Hanga Hahave, Ahu Tahai, and Ahu Hanga Tetenga. The original project had targeted Ahu Te Pito Kura for restoration but that idea has been dropped. It was decided to work on the stabilization of the platform and the archaeology of the area. A small unnamed *ahu* (site 6-253 after McCoy 1976) located at the entrance to Hanga Te'e (Vaihu) was protected with a retaining wall 40 meters in back of the *ahu* to avoid any further erosion. The work was done by islander Rafael Rapu and his team. José Miguel Ramírez, from the University of Valparaíso, was in charge of documenting the process. A canoe ramp that is located 45 meters to the west of the *ahu* was also stabilized. But more threatened sites will need stabilization also: Ahu Ura Uranga Te Mahina, the wings of Ahu Akahanga, Ahu Hanga Poukura, Ahu Hanga Te'e, Ahu Tepeu, the recuperation of the fallen *moai* at Ahu Runga Va’e, etc. Dr Ayres is expected to be working on the island beginning in January 2003.

**THE TWO DIVE SHOPS** at the *caleta* (Orca, and Mike Rapu’s Dive Shop) have various types of gear for rent, including wet suits, scuba gear, and kayaks. The dive shops are side-by-side facing the caleta. Many visitors to the island are unaware of the excellent opportunities for scuba diving around the island, and are pleasantly surprised to find such up-scale equipment available. The diving is said to be particularly good in the waters off Motu Nui and Motu Iti.