

PAPAĀNAUMOKUĀKEA MARINE NATIONAL MONUMENT

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Update

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Wildlife and Habitat Management

Hawaiian Islands NWR - Tern Island:

Station Manager Pete Leary observed gray bird locusts on Tern Island. This invasive grasshopper has also been found on Nihoa and has a noticeable impact on the native vegetation. Staff also continued to rescue Hawaiian green sea turtle hatchlings. During the month of September, a total of 365 lucky hatchlings were carefully released.

Hawaiian Islands NWR - Nihoa:

Biologists working with FWS Endangered Species program, including an expert from the Honolulu Zoo, began developing appropriate techniques for capture, translocation, and release of the Nihoa millerbird to Laysan. Currently found only on Nihoa, a cousin of the millerbird went extinct on Laysan in the early 1900s as a result of invasive rodents. These preliminary steps are critical for recovering the species by establishing additional populations of the millerbird.



Recovering the endangered Nihoa Millerbird includes plans for moving some individuals to other islands, such as Laysan. Photo by Mark MacDonald

Hawaiian Islands NWR - Mokumanamana:

Regional Archaeologist Anan Raymond accompanied University of Hawai'i anthropology

doctoral candidate Kekuewa Kikilo'i on an 18-day expedition to survey cultural resources at Mokumanamana (Necker Island). While there, the team uncovered a rare partial stone image carving from ancient Hawaiians, possibly located within a workshop setting. A news conference regarding the visit was held in Honolulu, resulting in considerable local and some mainland coverage.



Partially finished stone carving (hand trowel for scale.)

Hawaiian Islands NWR - Laysan Island:

In preparation for operating a year-round species recovery operation, the National Marine Fisheries Service monk seal camp was successfully relocated adjacent to the FWS field camp. Since the former location was at the beach edge, this move will help to protect the camp and researchers from winter's higher surf conditions.

Excavation for a new "lua" (outhouse) revealed artifacts of possible archaeological significance - items that are thought to be from the island's guano mining era. Upon the discovery, digging stopped and the site was photographed, covered, and marked for later reexcavation by trained archaeological staff.

Laysan Island staff continued the ongoing battle against invasive plant species. However, removal of some individual shrubs is postponed until wedge-tailed shearwater chicks fledge.

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Wildlife and Habitat Management (continued)

Midway Atoll NWR:



Midway's fire crew ensured that the controlled burn of nonnative ironwood trees was well contained.

Pacific Region Fire Staff Pam Ensley and Brett Fay successfully completed a burn of hundreds of nonnative ironwood trees (*Casuarina equisetifolia*) that had been cut down over the last year during

maintenance and habitat restoration activities on Sand Island, Midway Atoll NWR. After the fire, the area under the burn was cleaned of any remaining debris and prepared for the outplanting of native plants propagated in the Refuge's native plant greenhouse, thus returning another portion of the island to wildlife habitat. In addition to the burn, the Fire Staff also put on a chainsaw safety class for 20+ employees/contractors. This will enable the Refuge to continue to work safely toward the Management Plan activity of maintaining a limited ironwood forest while reclaiming seabird nesting habitat from this aggressive, nonnative tree.

Due to the ongoing outbreak of avian botulism, Refuge staff continued to do daily searches of all wetlands for sick or dead Laysan ducks. A total of 8 adults and 14 "hatch-year" birds were found dead during the month of September.

Maintenance

Hawaiian Islands NWR - Tern Island:

With excellent contract crews working on the project, construction of Tern Island's warehouse walls was 3 days ahead of schedule at the end of September. Options are being evaluated regarding the best method to store and remove from the Monument the large amount of asbestos-containing materials that were taken during the renovation.



Replacing "blow-out walls" with permanent walls in Tern Island's storage warehouse.

Hawaiian Islands NWR - Laysan Island:

Elizabeth Koren, Presidential Management Fellow from the Department of Homeland Security, was instrumental in resolving ongoing email connectivity and communications issues on Laysan Island. Laysan had suffered failures in all elements of its communications capabilities. Elizabeth repaired and replaced computer, satellite email and phone, INMARSAT, and HF/VHF radio systems. Her efforts restored all systems to full operating capacity and created system redundancy, safety essentials for such a remotely located outpost.

Midway Atoll NWR:

After almost 3 years, repair and construction was finally completed on Midway's runway. In addition to a brand new surface, the runway now has new lights, navigational aids, signs, and paint. Through its partnership with the Federal Aviation Administration, Midway maintains an emergency, diversionary landing strip for flights traveling across the Pacific. As Refuge Manager Matt Brown likes to say, "It's the niftiest runway in the Pacific!"

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Administration

John Klavitter, Midway biologist for more than a decade, was selected as Midway’s new Deputy Refuge Manager. With John’s experience and knowledge at Midway, he’s hit the ground running in his new role. Thanks to his detailed efforts, and coordinating with many Papahānaumokuākea partners, a barge shipment carried almost 400,000 lbs. of debris out of Papahānaumokuākea destined for recycling centers on O‘ahu. The tug also towed the *M/V Aukele* away. FWS acquired the *Aukele* years ago when the U.S. Air Force departed from Johnston Atoll. Unfortunately, refurbishing it ended up being too costly and it was not useable at



American Marine tug leaving Midway harbor with M/V Aukele and tons of debris.



Debris destined for recycling ranged from containers loaded with scrap metal, household recycling and computer equipment, to forklifts, to a bus.

Midway Atoll. Removal of the vessel ensured that it would not become a financial or resource liability.

Visits to the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands by the contracted *M/V Kahana* are used to their best advantage up and down the chain of islands. The *Kahana* delivered fuel, supplies, and staff to the remote islands on its way up. On the way down, FWS Superintendent Susan White; Permits Manager Ray Born; Visitor Services Manager Tracy Ammerman; and Regional Office Engineer Mark Harris made spot visits at Midway Atoll, Laysan Island, Tern Island, and Nihoa. The 7-day trip allowed the staff general orientation, review of the status of the islands, plans for upcoming and ongoing

projects including the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act projects at Laysan, and initial review for a new camping site at Nihoa. The experience was valuable beyond measure in assisting the cadre of managers and planners to better understand the challenges, issues, and wonders of each individual site.



Firsthand experience examining the hurricane shelter on Laysan Island

Wildlife Refuge Specialist Ty Benally arrived at Tern Island via the *M/V Kahana* for a 2-month detail. Ty will be Acting Tern Island manager, overseeing all Tern operations - including biological monitoring protocols and the contractor’s warehouse renovations. Ty is filling in while Refuge Manager Pete Leary is away attending training and taking much-deserved vacation time.

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Visitor Services

World renowned visual artist Chris Jordan visited Midway for 2 weeks to document the impacts of marine plastics on wildlife and the marine environment. Mr. Jordan brought with him a five-member team that consisted of photographers and cinematographers, as well as a poet. The team's experience on Midway and the products they will produce will ideally reach out to inform audiences that might not otherwise know about wonders of Papahānaumokuākea, and the challenges faced from debris. To date, the team's journey has received coverage through numerous media outlets, including National Geographic, Discovery Channel, and *Yes* magazines. Information about their journey to Midway can be found at: www.MidwayJourney.com and www.Discovery.com.

Members of the Monument agencies began the planning process for the 2010 Papahānaumokuākea 'Ahahui Alaka'i (PAA) "educator's workshop." This workshop brings together people interested in learning about and being inspired by science and traditional knowledge management practices to help their own communities be better stewards of their natural and cultural resources. Nomination packets will be available November 1, 2009, and details can be found on the Monument's website: www.papahanaumokuakea.gov



Jan Vozenilek creates moving images, while Chris Jordan creates still images, in an effort to illustrate the impacts of marine plastics on Laysan albatross.

For more information, contact:

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