



## Wisdom Does it Again

by Peggy Miniclier

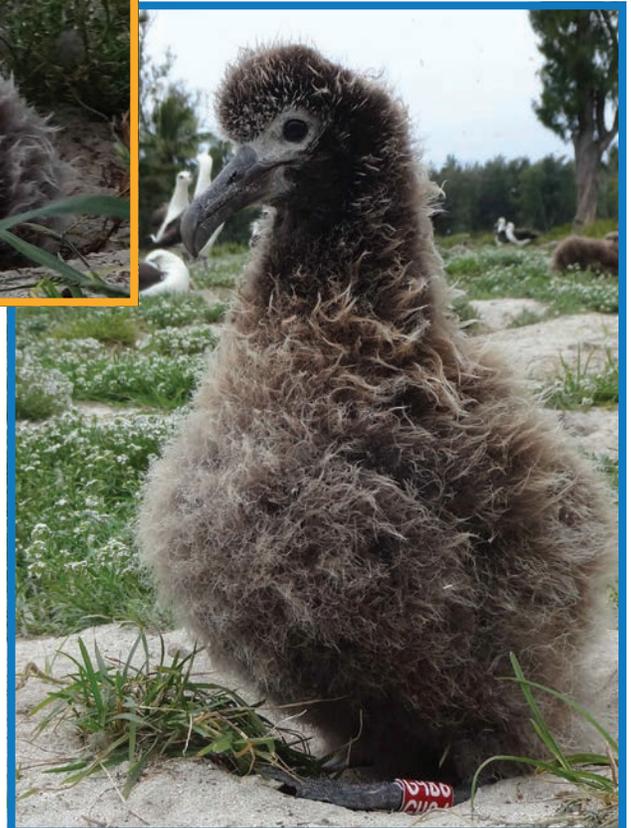
After a long awaited winter, Wisdom returned to Midway Atoll this year and produced another chick. This event brought a renewed sense of joy to the many who have grown to love these islands. In the midst of the many changes on the Atoll the purpose of everyone's efforts is seen in the health of the albatross who, like Wisdom, return year after year.

Wisdom is known to be at least 62 years old. She is considered the oldest documented wild bird in the world. U.S. Geological Survey scientist Chandler Robbins, who estimated her to be about 5 years old at that time, originally banded her in 1956. He saw her again in 2002. She was found again in 2006 and has been monitored since then. She has worn out five bird bands and was rebanded this year.

This year's chick was hatched on Feb. 3. Fish and Wildlife Staff including Pete Leary, John Klavitter

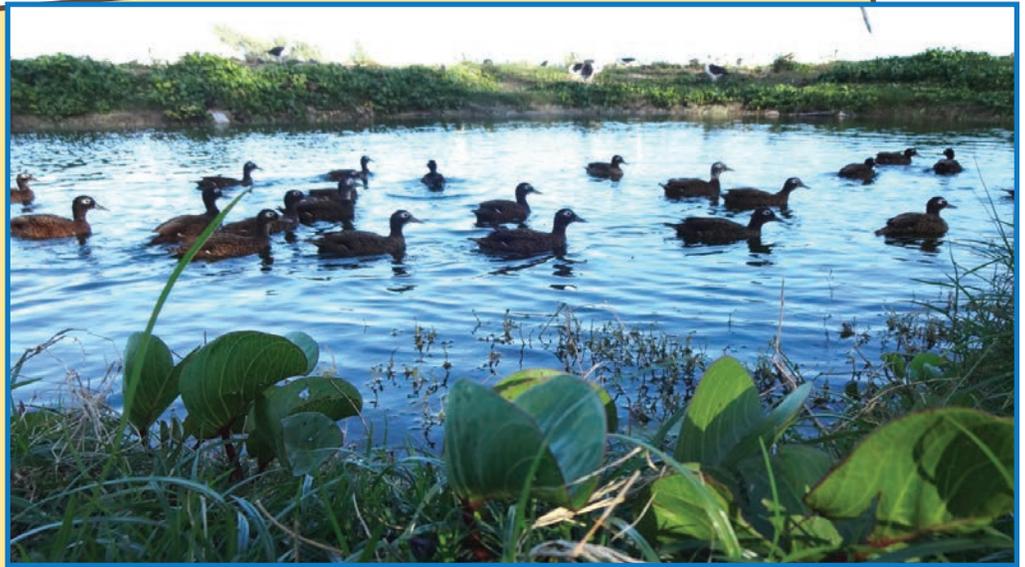
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Photos: J. Klavitter, USFWS



## President's Corner

Recently I was honored to be chosen as President of the Board of Directors of Friends of Midway, replacing Avery Loy who resigned in January. FOMA was fortunate to have Avery as President for the last two years. He has been a member since 2000 and on the Board since 2002. He



*Enjoying Communication Wetland.*

photo: J. Klavitter, USFWS

contributed greatly to updating the operation of our store on Midway and in streamlining our inventory and ordering procedures. Over the years he has represented FOMA at functions in Hawaii. Avery's wife, Kathleen, has been doing our newsletter since 2004 and has set a high standard for us. Her dedication to FOMA will be sorely missed. Thank you Avery and Kathleen for your years of service to FOMA!

At our March Board meeting a new member was added to the board. Gary Nielsen, from Oroville, CA, will serve the remainder of Avery's position. Gary has volunteered on both Midway and other Northwest Hawaiian Islands and has been a member of the annual albatross counts the past two years. A retired biology teacher, he brings not only a great interest but also an extensive knowledge of wildlife. Welcome aboard, Gary.

We are undertaking a major revision of our website under the leadership of directors Teya Penniman, Mike Logan, and Peggy Miniclier. We hope to have it up and running in a short time. Peggy has also undertaken the responsibility for the Gooney Gazette newsletter.

Midway Refuge is undergoing significant changes this year with the reduction in funding. The major impact we note is the termination of visitations by the public and educational groups, plus the reductions in staff and volunteers on Midway. This is going to put a strain on staff who already were doing a yeoman's job on Midway. FOMA is concerned about the future of Midway Refuge if severe funding shortfalls continue. We are working with Fish and Wildlife folks to help where we can, as well as drawing attention to the needs of Midway to elected representatives.

We are asking you to keep up your support of FOMA, especially by being sure your membership is up to date. We changed our dues renewal to a calendar year basis. If you have not renewed for 2013 please do so as soon as possible and consider upgrading your membership.

*Bob Fields, President  
Friends of Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge*



# Fish & Wildlife Service News

January 2013 saw teams checking the reproductive success of the Laysan duck and the black-footed albatross. In addition, Dr. S. Shaffer and team replaced GPS monitors on the albatross, which was collecting foraging data. Ironwood seedlings were removed on Sand Island. The annual albatross nest count finished January 2, 2013. This years count 479,526 Laysan and 27,498 black-footed, came to within 1% of pre-tsunami numbers of 2011. News articles were posted about the parts from the Brewster Buffalo (F2A-3) from WWII that was discovered last year.

February's biggest news was the hatching of Wisdoms chick. Please see article on page 4. Monitoring Laysan ducks for botulism is on-going. NOAA scientists trained staff on using Geiger counters to check debris for radiation. Ongoing Verbasina eradication continues. Detailed information will be on new FOMA website. The collapsing south wall of the Seaplane Hangers storage shed was removed.

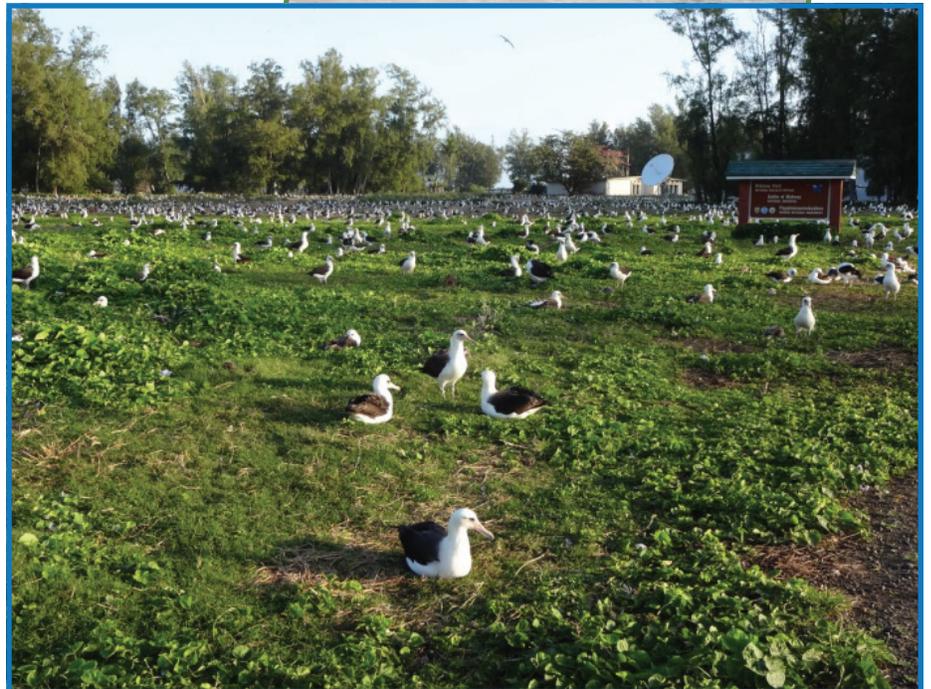
March continued monitoring Laysan duck health. Building maintenance saw the removal of asbestos from the 1940s Marine Barracks as the beginning of the removal project. Department of Interior's Central Hazmat fund covered the expenses for removing the four Cable Station structures and the contaminated soil where now albatross chicks are thriving.



Above: New "Gooney" chick with pink temporary bands.

Right: Freshly restored bird habitat on Sand Island.

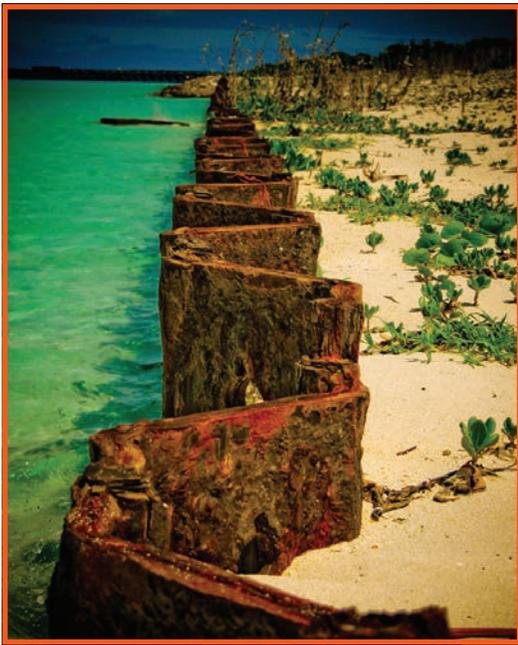
Right: Refuge staff removed collapsed walls from the historic Seaplane Hangar's south wall "storage shed."



All photos this page: J. Klavitter, USFWS

# Memories of Midway

by Darlene Moegerle



*Rusted seawall, Midway Atoll.*

*Photo: JanVozenik/Midway Journey*

Frequently, I give power point presentations about Midway and my involvement with FOMA. Almost always I am asked about how I got interested in Midway. Here is my answer...

For two years during World War II, my uncle was stationed on Midway. He was a Captain in the Navy and was the Procurement Officer for the atoll. He was my favorite uncle and I remember occasionally getting letters from him with some words missing ... the work of censors!

I was just a child at the time and I remember my mother explaining how the earth is round by saying, "If we could

go out to where Uncle Herb is, we could come home by going on in the same direction." I still had no concept of how far away that mysterious isle of Midway was, but I did start to gain some idea of how big the earth is.

At one time I received a pretty necklace from my uncle which he said was made by one of the civilian workers on Midway. We knew it was made of a natural kernel of some kind but I had no idea until my first visit that it was made of ... Ironwood seeds!!!

Fast forward sixty some years and my husband and I heard about the transfer of Midway from the Navy to the Fish and Wildlife Service. There were opportunities for volunteers to assist in the final "clean-up" of the island and we seriously considered going out, but for some reason we didn't. (Two children in college and/or aging and ailing parents ... ?)

Fast forward another couple of years, I was a widow and saw an advertisement from the Oceanic Society to volunteer on Midway. The session that caught my eye was a 10-day visit to work on "Historic Preservation." This was such a made-to-order opportunity for me that I signed up immediately.

It was an exciting trip for me. We worked on organizing some of the historical documents from the 1942 Battle. We cleaned and restored one of the



Photos: National Archives



large gun emplacements on the west side of the island.

We repaired the fence around the cemetery, as well as doing some minor work in the theater. We worked hard but it was so exciting to finally be on Midway!!!

One of the people I met on Midway was a young Polish man doing dolphin research. I had taught English in Poland, so he was thrilled to find someone who had been to his country and we developed a friendship immediately. Before I left, he invited me to return the next year to work with him on his research project. I did return, and it was during this visit that four volunteers and the Refuge Manager, Rob Shallenberger – now a FOMA board member – decided to try to develop a Friends group for Midway ... You know the rest of the story!!!

# Midway Albatross Count

by Gary Nielsen

In mid December of each year since the late 1990s, a group of about 15 volunteers has converged on Honolulu for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife flight to Midway Atoll. These volunteers have come from locations as distant as Sweden and as close as residents of Honolulu. Their common goal is to count every active albatross nest on the three islands that comprise Midway Atoll. It is a huge undertaking that requires three teams of five or six people to work all day every day except Christmas day and New Year's Day until the count is complete. It usually requires 15 to 18 full days of effort for the three teams. The work goes on rain or shine, wind or calm until the count is finished. Occasionally wind and heavy rain can imperil the nests and the counters get an afternoon or a day off to dry out. The count requires the careful planning and direction of a small group of count leaders and a USF&W biologist that coordinate from Honolulu or arrive on Midway several days ahead of the rest of the counters to lay out the sectors that divide the islands into manageable chunks of real estate.

When first seeing the albatross on Midway it is hard to

*Continued on next page*

Number of Nests by Albatross Type and Location		
Island	Laysan	Black-footed
Sand	294,131	15,310
Eastern	183,705	12,152
Spit	1,690	36
<b>Total:</b>	<b>479,526</b>	<b>27,498</b>

*Data collection continues for the annual Laysan and Black-footed Albatross survivorship study.*

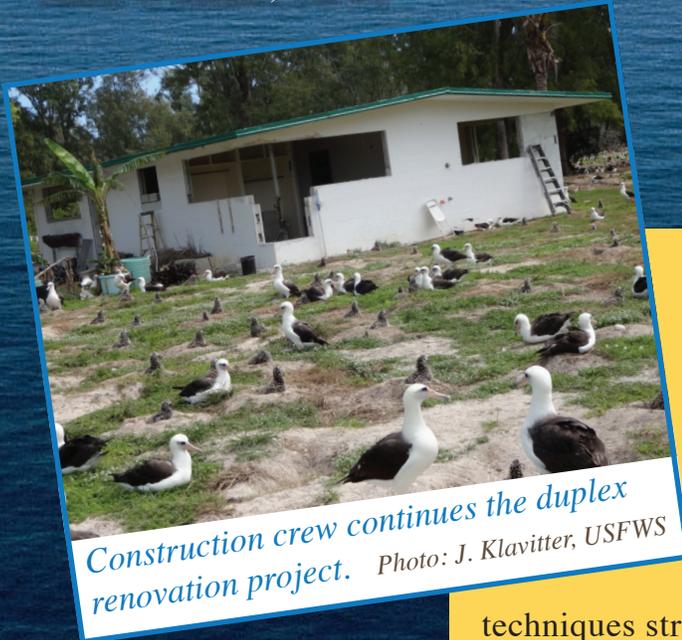
Photo: Pete Leary, USFWS

Photo (below): Gary Nielsen



**O**n Sand Island the albatross nest census crew assisted with out-planting aki aki grass, morning glory, bunchgrass, and *Chenopodium oahuense* at Ski Warehouse and Cable House demolition sites.

Photos: G. Schubert, USFWS



*Construction crew continues the duplex renovation project.* Photo: J. Klavitter, USFWS

### *Albatross Count ... continued from page 5*

imagine counting them all. There are several techniques used and all require the groups to spread out along a line and either mark each nest with a dot of traffic paint or “air count” each nest along an imaginary line between you and your closest partner. Both

techniques stress not overlapping count areas and counting a nest twice or missing nests entirely. There are several audits done each year in which sectors are recounted by a different team to double check the accuracy of the counting. It is not a difficult set of instructions to learn but it is easier

to describe than to do in some situations. Some areas are brushy, and some are full of petrel burrows that require careful attention and may result in surprising falls into a burrow that has collapsed underfoot. There are also areas of dried *Verbesina* plants from the previous season that scratch and pull and are generally unpleasant to deal with. The work requires mental concentration, is physically demanding, and is very rewarding. By working hard and closely with a group 15 people the counters accomplish a task that is not duplicated anywhere else on the planet. One learns by personal sweat and blood what 500,000 really means!



*Freshly restored albatross habitat.*

*Wisdom ...  
continued from page 1*

and Sue Schulmeister are keeping a watchful eye on the chick. They report it is doing well. Currently the parents are both returning to feed the chick about every two weeks.

Wisdom has produced a chick a year since 2006, except for one year. It has been estimated that she has raised 30-35 chicks. Albatross lay one egg a year with an occasional year off.

Refuge deputy manager John Klavitter was interviewed for Australian radio station

Pacific Beat. In the interview (www.abc.net.au/news/2013-03-07/62-year-old-albatross-

gives-birth-to-chick/4559670), John stated, “Wisdom’s name was picked because it is representative of what she’s seen over her lifetime ... she can provide hope for our planet and the seabirds.”

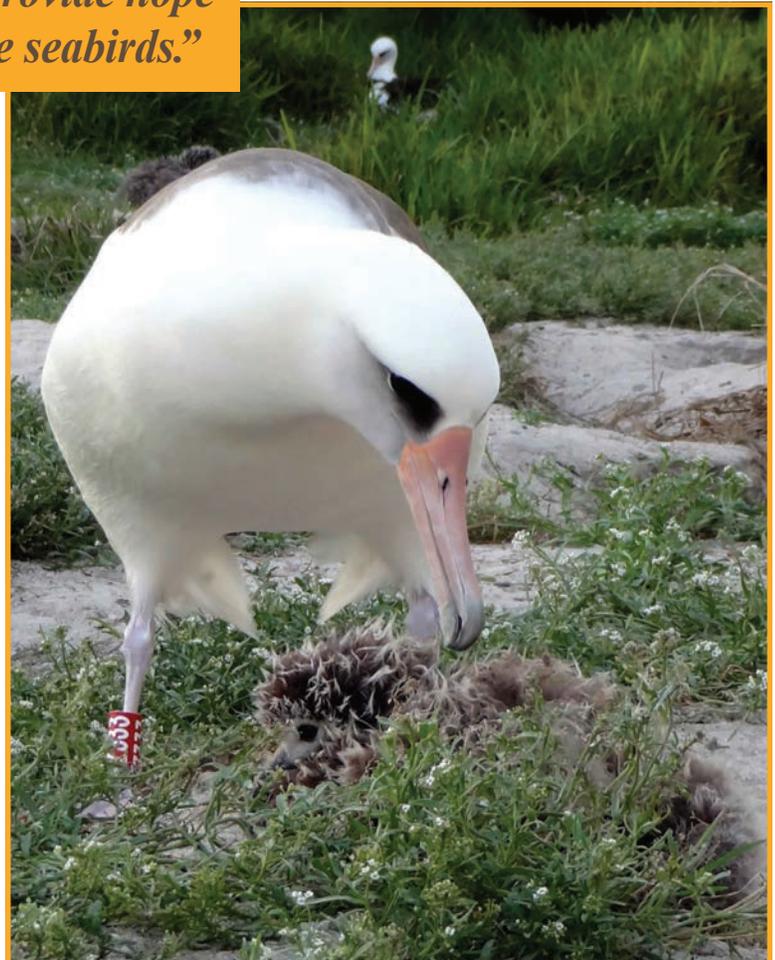
In a news release from Paphanaumokuakea Marine National Monument Feb 4, 2013, Manager of the Midway Atoll NWR, Sue Schulmeister reminds us that the ability to monitor Wisdom has provided information, which “helps us monitor the health of our ocnas that sustain the albatross.”

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Photos: J. Klavitter, USFWS



*“Wisdom’s name is representative of what she’s seen over her lifetime ... she can provide hope for our planet & the seabirds.”*





## Editor's Notes

by Peggy Miniclier  
mminiclier@gmail.com

I hope to continue the tradition of sending out an interesting and inspiring newsletter. I am also interested in your stories. If I do not use them here they can be archived and put on our new upcoming website. We don't want to lose those memories. I was able to go back last year and record more of my Dad's Battle of Midway stories. It will be great to have those available to share.

If you know of any great links we would like to let everyone know about them. Newest board member, Gary Nielsen, sent me this one on the cable ship, Restorer. See: [www.atlantic-cable.com/Cablesips/Restorer](http://www.atlantic-cable.com/Cablesips/Restorer)

FWS is putting together a project list for FOMA. Items under discussion are replacement transmitters, updated cameras and contributing to the interpretive work being considered for some of the historical buildings. We hope to continue to provide support as best we can.

This year FOMA will still benefit from sales at the Island store because there is ongoing work that was contracted for in the previous budget cycle. The store is where we generate the majority of our income and when there are workers (and previously visitors) we sell our store items. Next year there will be reduced numbers going to the island. We will have to do some fundraising to keep our support active. Perhaps there will be a project that interests you?

## Friends Of Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge

6506 SE Clackamas Road  
Milwaukie, OR 97267



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