



Dedicated to the preservation, education and history of our national treasure- Midway Atoll

Friends of Midway Atoll Newsletter

December 2011

# Historical Midway

## USS Nautilus, takes on destroyer Arashi by Darlene Moegerle

With this issue, we are beginning a series of articles illuminating the History of Midway. We anticipate sharing stories from the pre-history of the atoll's formation up to and including the transition from the Navy to the Department of Interior and the Fish and Wildlife Service. If you have suggestions for future articles, please feel free to send a note and we will endeavor to include your request in an upcoming issue.

With the 70th Anniversary of the Battle of Midway coming up in June of 2012, it is appropriate that we remember that decisive naval battle and some of the interesting incidents that lead to that most incredible victory.

The Battle of Midway is fraught with lucky breaks and coincidences that led to the unprecedented victory. It has long been held that submarines played an insignificant role in the battle; however without the action of one old American sub the outcome might have been quite different.

On the morning of June 4, 1942, the old, unwieldy and slow sub the USS Nautilus, was patrolling north-west of Midway. It attracted the attention of the Japanese destroyer Arashi. As it came under attack, the Nautilus valiantly fired its few torpedoes at the enemy ship but to little or no effect.

However, in the skirmish with the Nautilus, the Arashi became separated from the main Japanese striking force. As it sped to catch up with the main group, it sailed below two squadrons of dive-bombers from the carrier USS Enterprise. Without knowing it, the Japanese destroyer pointed the way to the main contingent of the striking force and ultimately to the aircraft carriers.



Photos this page from US Navy Mil archives- taken Aug. 1942



Though the aircraft of the US forces were also outmoded and slow, the accidental spotting of the Arashi allowed the bombers from the USS Yorktown to achieve a perfectly coordinated, though completely unplanned, attack on three of the four Japanese aircraft carriers. Soon the Kaga, Akagi and the Soryu were on fire and doomed from this attack.

# The Hawai'i Wildlife Center

“Ultimately what the Hawai'i Wildlife Center will do is create a place of hope for all of us who love and care so deeply about Hawai'i's beauty. This isn't just a refuge for native wildlife, this is a refuge for all of us, our spirit, our hope that we can help to reverse the destructive impacts we've had on Hawai'i's wildlife, its environment and ecology. And what you do for Hawai'i's living systems you do for the earth's living systems.”

Nainoa Thompson  
Polynesian Voyaging Society Director  
Kamehameha Schools Trustee



*The mission of the Hawai'i Wildlife Center is to protect, conserve and aid in the recovery of Hawai'i's native wildlife through hands-on treatment, training, research, science education and cultural programs.*

## **Grand Opening Celebration. . . Hawai'i Wildlife Center**

Saturday, November 19 marked the Grand Opening for the Hawai'i Wildlife Center in Kapa'au, on the Big Island of Hawai'i.

The HWC includes a state-of-the-art wildlife treatment facility, and interpretive lanai and an educational pavilion. The 4,500 sq ft building includes rooms for wildlife intake, holding, washing, drying, food preparation, lab work, medical treatment and isolation. The HWC is the first state-of-the-art response facility exclusively for native Hawaiian wildlife and it will provide for the best achievable medical and husbandry care for sick, injured, contaminated and orphaned native wildlife, servicing the entire Hawaiian archipelago and other Pacific Islands, as needed.

Linda Elliott, the Center Director, has managed or participated in 18 oiled wildlife responses worldwide. She has also provided technical support in resolving avian botulism outbreaks and the annual fallout of shearwaters and petrels. She is not a stranger to Midway, having provided oil spill response training to refuge staff and, more recently, providing assistance during a Laysan Duck botulism event.

The Center's interpretive lanai, once completed, will be open to visitors wishing to learn about conservation of Hawaiian wildlife. A major function of the Center will be response training of agency staff and volunteers.

# FOMA Membership Reminder

by Darlene Moegerle, Membership Chairman

**A**s we approach the end of the year, it's time for each of us to renew our FOMA membership. The Friends of Midway Atoll couldn't and wouldn't exist without your sustaining membership contributions.

It has become our custom to use the newsletter as a membership reminder once a year rather than sending individual reminder notices via e-mail or U.S. mail. As our membership has grown, it became an increasingly more difficult to keep up with personalized reminders...though I must admit, I did enjoy getting to know many of you through our membership correspondence!! During 2011, your membership funds, along with those from the sale of articles in our gift shop on Midway, were used to purchase 3 "Guzzlers"! As you saw in the last issue of the "Gooney Gazette II", these were placed on Eastern Island to provide fresh water for the Laysan ducks. The natural source of fresh water was compromised during the tsunami that washed over the islands.

You also supported some of the meal costs for volunteers who participated in the annual bird count last December. Determining the current population of birds who make Midway their home, is important in assessing the breeding health and viability of the various species. Volunteers pay for their flight from Honolulu to Midway, and FWS provides lodging during the three-week work camp. Their many hours of searching through the verbesina and scaevola undergrowth are vital to a successful count. So, your contribution to this cause is important and very much appreciated by the volunteers. Please give this annual solicitation some careful thought. You will be supporting a cost-effective charitable 501 (c)(3) organization.

## Membership Levels

- Student \$10.00**
- Veteran \$20.00**
- Individual \$25.00**
- Family \$35.00**
- Contributer \$100.00**
- Corporate \$500.00**
- Life \$1,500.00**

**It's easy to use Paypal on the confirmation page at the Friends of Midway Atoll website:**  
<http://www.friendsofmidway.org/>

**Mail renewal payment to:**

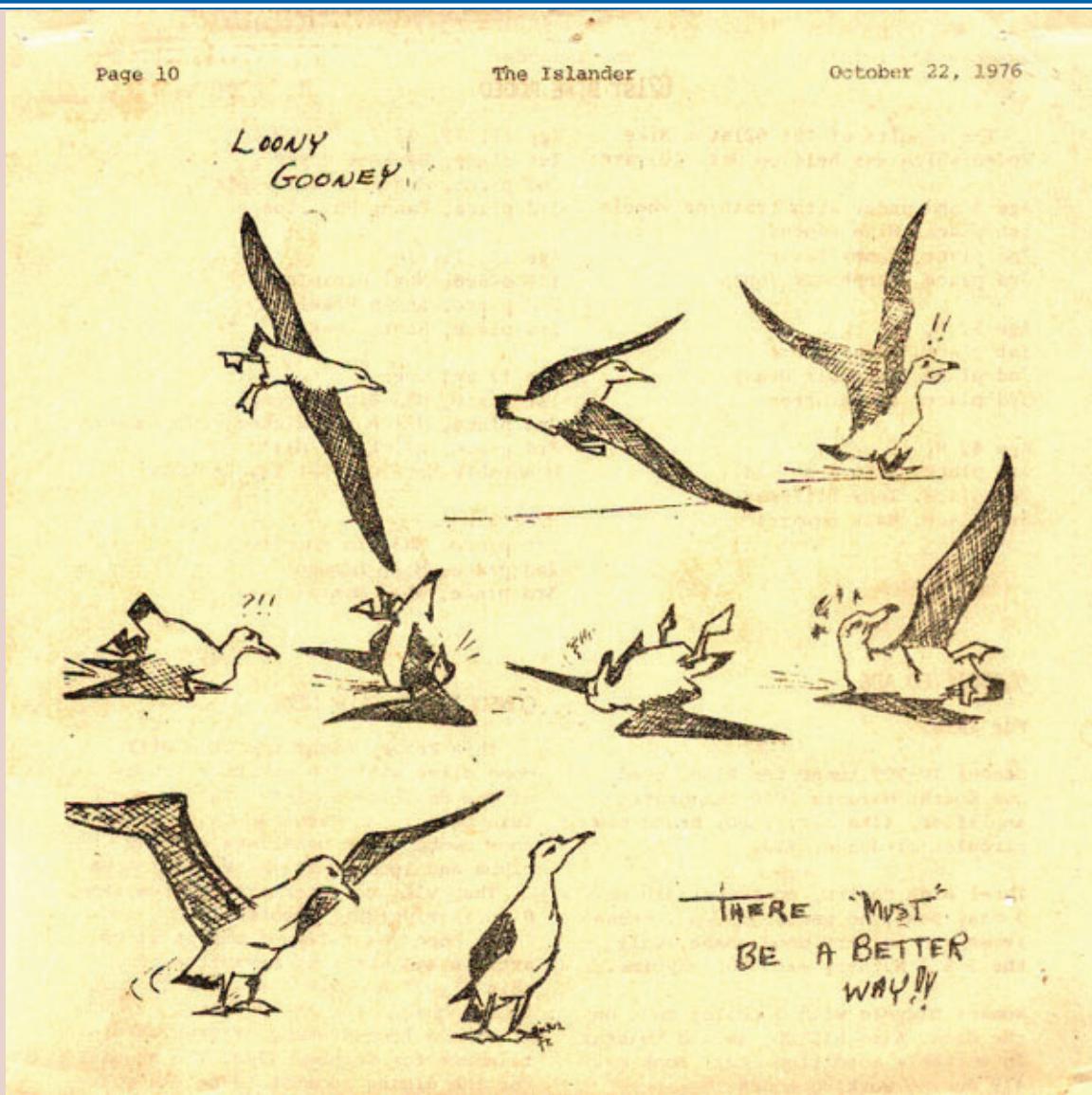
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## Marine Research : Midway Atoll

UC Santa Cruz researchers Dr. Don Potts, with PhD graduate students Kristin McCully and Anne Warner conducted several dives outside the atoll to survey for bivalves and collect sediment samples, prepared and tested an underwater video camera, and measured reef accretion/erosion at several already established stations around the atoll. FWS volunteers Dani, Anthony, and Eamon accompanied Kristin to collect coral samples for later dissection to determine reproductive status. The group found an adult pearl oyster, a very rare find.

Dr. Don Potts collecting sediment sample as Hawaiian morwong swims by. Photo by Kristin McCully.





### What difference does it make anyway . . ?

Here is a little Midway story from when I was working out there as the Guest Services Coordinator and the Flight Attendant in 1997- 1998. I have a lot of funny stories, Hope you like it. by Lisa Brackin

**OK**, so we're sitting in the office one day and a C-130 wants to land. No air traffic controllers on Midway so no one can tell a pilot what to do. But it's during nesting season and there are Gooney birds everywhere. My boss acknowledges they are going to land and we will meet them and give them what they need. He then proceeds to tell them there is a flock of birds at such and such an altitude between them and the runway. The pilot says nothing. Again he repeats his information, nothing. One more try and we get a rather questioning, OK. Sure enough the pilot does not understand what Mike G. is trying to tell him... there is a flock of very large birds in front of you and if you don't change your altitude you will hit them and probably lose an engine. They land and sure enough suck a bird. The pilot greets us big eyed and full of excitement. "I just could not understand what you were saying until I noticed this very large bird in front of my windshield flying like hell trying to out fly us, I'm sure he kept looking over his wing thinking he could do it! Then there were birds everywhere like I have never seen before!" I then asked him if he had ever been to Midway. He said, "No, but now I understand why you guys want us to land at night." We just smiled.

## Papahanaumokuakea National Monument (PMNM) Midway Atoll NWR

These Short-Tailed Albatross (STAL) decoys, were herded together to be taken back to Sand Island for an overhaul! The decoys sustained significant damage in the March tsunami and need repair work in addition to the annual cleaning. Some of the decoys were sent to Laysan Island in September to enhance the STAL reintroduction to Laysan Island. Midway volunteers helped collect the STAL decoys.



**PMNM Midway Atoll NWR Habitat Management:** Funding received from the Refuge System's National Invasive Species program and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation will allow the refuge to hire four (4) contract workers to begin a five (5) year project to eradicate Verbesina from Eastern Island. The March tsunami redistributed the seed bank of Verbesina throughout Eastern Island and heavy rains in July and August have increased the size and density of Verbesina overcoming work done since 2003. Hopefully the arrival of the four (4) person crew and the introduction of Milestone herbicide will make it possible to recover the lost ground and restore the island's native plants. There is also a discernible increase in the spread of Beach Wire Grass at Eastern Island and it needs to be mapped completely to target it in the upcoming Eastern Island project. Paperwork was finalized this week to allow DBSI to recruit herbicide applicators for this project.



Refuge staff and volunteers finished installing a well on Eastern Island so that fresh, clean water will be available for herbicide work as part of the Eastern Island Verbesina Eradication and habitat restoration project. The team began installing the first of three Laysan duck guzzlers on Eastern. Defense Base Services has also hired all four of the herbicide sprayers for the project. The workers are expected to arrive to Midway at the end of December.



## **End of an Era. . .Goodbye Sak!**



An era ended when Chavengsak "Sak" Phosri retired on October 27. He was the longest-serving employee at Midway Atoll having worked on Midway since February 11, 1982. He began his Midway career as a plumber for the US Navy and was quickly promoted to Water Plant Supervisor--a position he held through the several transitions from US Navy to different contractors. According to John Hanna, Chugach Project Manager, "Sak always took time to train others in the water plant trade and his vast knowledge of Midway's island infrastructure is in good hands." Whatever the task, he was as solid and dedicated as they come! He also enjoyed the wildlife--he always looked forward to the return of the albatross in late autumn and timed his retirement so he could experience their return one more time. Midway residents gathered at the airport for a big island-wide send-off, including a rare honor, a "shower of affection" by the Midway fire crew.

A grand retirement celebration was held at the All Hands Club where he was presented with a golf bag--a gift from the Midway residents. At the festive gathering, Sak was also greeted by a life-sized stand alone cut out image of himself so actually his presence on Midway continues! Sak has returned to his family home in Thailand where he will spend his well-deserved retirement. Besides getting to know his new grandchild, he plans to break in that new golf bag and do some traveling. Midway folks will miss his gentle demeanor and his vast historical knowledge. The Friends of Midway Atoll join the Midway residents in wishing him the best of health and happiness!



## **Red-tailed tropicbird flies unconventionally!**



A stowaway seabird found on a cargo ship from Korea was flown on November 3rd by jetliner from Los Angeles to Honolulu and then on to Midway Atoll on the USFWS chartered aircraft. The red-tailed tropicbird, native to the warm central Pacific Ocean, had been living for more than a month under quarantine at the International Bird Rescue's Wildlife Center in San Pedro. It apparently flew aboard a container ship in the central Pacific and was found after arrival at the Los Angeles Harbor.

Several weeks were required to obtain the proper federal permits needed to fly the bird to Hawaii. The

bird, traveling in a cat carrier, arrived to Midway on the evening of November 3rd in excellent condition and was successfully released the following morning in the water just off the North Beach on Sand Island. The bird preened for a moment before lifting off magnificently and flying north out toward the open ocean. Free as a bird!



## **New Director to FOMA Board Barbara Mayer**



Barbara Mayer was born into an Air Force family, started school in Saudi Arabia and graduated from an American high school in Tokyo, Japan. She earned a Bachelor's degree in biology from Agnes Scott College near Atlanta, GA. Her career was influenced by two turning points.

The first came as a teen, when she stumbled upon a crab living inside a colonial sea squirt on a storm-swept Sanibel Island, FL beach. Her fascination with ocean creatures led to an MS in marine biology from Scripps Institution of Oceanography in La Jolla, CA.

The second turning point came about a year later when she found her prestigious degree did not automatically land her a job. While pounding the pavement, she volunteered to lead school field trips at a Massachusetts Audubon wildlife sanctuary north of Boston...and fell in love with teaching.

After finally landing a job counting plankton...over and over and over... at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution on Cape Cod, it was not a hard decision to go back to school one more time and get that teaching certificate.

For over 20 years, Barb was kept on her toes with mostly 13-year-olds in science classrooms at Punahoa School, La Pietra Hawai'i School for Girls, retiring from Kamehameha Schools in 2005.

She now does--

- substitute teaching
- contract science/nature writing and curriculum development
- and volunteer work at Hanauma Bay Education Program, the National Park Service, and mostly recently Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge



## **Holiday Greetings from Midway Atoll~**



L to R : John Klavitter (Deputy Refuge Manager), Scott Hall (Seabird Program Manager, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation), Sue Schulmeister (Refuge Manager), Pete Leary (Wildlife Biologist), Dr Randall Stocker and Dr. Alison Stocker (Invasive Plant Specialists and Professors Emeritus from University of Florida), Dan Clark, Ecological Services

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## Installation of Guzzlers and Solar Panel. . .the work never ceases.



Refuge staff and volunteers continue habitat restoration (management of non-native plants including Verbesina encelioides, growing native plants in the greenhouse, and out-planting native plants including bunch grass (Eragrostis variabilis)).

The Verbesina crew is maintaining approximately 230 plus acres on Sand Island. They also continued installing Laysan guzzler roofs on Eastern Island. They also installed a solar panel to power the well pump to provide water for herbicide mixing and native plant propagation as shown in photos at left.

## *continued HISTORY from page 1*

submerged and was eventually able to make it back to Hawaii for repairs. Back in service, she was to participate in many successful Pacific patrols throughout the rest of World War II and was finally decommissioned in 1945. Send story ideas to Darlene Moegerle at: darlenemo@parallax.ws

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