



**NOAA Teacher at Sea  
Kazu Kauinana  
Onboard NOAA Ship OSCAR ELTON SETTE  
May 8 – May 23, 2006**

**Mission: Fisheries Survey  
Day 5: Saturday, May 13, 2006**

**Weather Data from Bridge**

Latitude: 25, 33.1N

Longitude: 121:28.9W

Visibility: 10nm

Wind direction: 090

Wind speed: 19Kts

Sea wave height: 2-3

Sea swells height: 4-6

Sea water temperature: 24.8

Sea level temperature: 24.8

Sea level pressure: 1021.4

Cloud cover: 4/8, altocumulus, cumulostratus, cumulonimbus, cumulus

**Science and Technology Log**

I left the OSCAR SETTE at 8:30 this morning on a Zodiac with cargo and a crew of five for Laysan Island. This island was not a military landing strip so it still looks like what you might imagine a desert island would look like. It is really beautiful—nice sandy beaches, clear water with coral reefs, low shrubs and grasses, a patch of coconut trees and even a lake.

Sarah Luecke took us on a tour from the beach where we had landed to the hyper-saline lake in the northern, middle of the island. As with all of the islands, you cannot explore without a guide. Shearwater noddys, Tristan's petrels, and bonin petrels burrow into the ground to make their nests, and if you do not follow your guide carefully, there is a good chance that you could cave in their nests. We managed to cave in only two, and we had to re-dig the tunnels to make sure the birds could continue using them. Birds are everywhere and they have no fear of humans. They behave like barnyard birds, so when you are walking you have to go around them, because they will not move. When they get irritated with you being too close they clack their beaks like plastic toy wind-up dentures. The two breeds that are the most oblivious to human space are the large Laysan Albatross and the black-footed Albatross. The chicks are almost as large as the adults, covered with patches of downy molting fuzz, and are really goofy looking. They plant themselves everywhere, especially on the paths, in front of tent doorways and chairs, and next to your belongings.

It was great to see so many birds, because at about the turn of the century the bird population had been decimated by the Japanese feather industry. An American Guano

contractor had subleased the right to taking wings, breasts, skins, and tons of feathers to the Japanese company. This went on for at least a couple of years before it was stopped but, by then, the damage was done. At least a million birds were killed and three out of the five endemic species became extinct. Fortunately, most of the sea birds came back.

The bird population here had at one time been so dense that you could see the cloud of birds way before you ever saw the island. It was so thick that a guano industry was established here in the late 1800's into the early 20th century. The Japanese immigrant workers who worked for Haole American businessmen based on Oahu, had to use picks and axes to break up the caked up thick layers of it.

There had also been an attempt at rabbit farming by a family, but that didn't work. It did, however, destroy almost all of the vegetation on the island. Through a lot of work and expense, the rabbits were eradicated and an intensive replanting program was established and is still active.

In spite of all of these man-made disasters, the island today, looks like paradise. So it did give me a lot of hope that we may still be able to maintain some of the few precious resources that we have left.

### **Personal Log**

We walked along the beach and saw Monk seals in the water and on the beach. We found a spot where it looked like it would be terrific snorkeling and it was. After that, it was time to go back to the OSCAR SETTE.

Malama Pono, Kazu