



MIDWAY ATOLL
National Wildlife Refuge

**Gooney
Gazette**



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

Friends of Midway Atoll Newsletter

Summer 2009

Midway Needs Your Help!



The Friends of Midway (FOMA's) Board would like to step up our ability to financially support the Refuge, and we want to start by asking you, our members, what you might be able to do to help.

Do you have Board experience for this type of organization, and some time to serve? Do you have any experience in finding grant money or fund raising for worthwhile causes? Any experience in sales, marketing, PR, that might help the group? Do you have any friends that might just enjoy being a member of FOMA and keeping in touch with this very special place?

Also, if you have any connections to any of the former resident's groups, history or military groups interested in Midway, please consider asking them to get involved in a project to help Midway.

Please send any questions or offers to help to darlenemo@parallax.ws. Also in an effort to broaden our coverage, we would like to encourage you to send this email/newsletter to anyone you know who might be interested in Midway, its history and wildlife. **Visit our website:** www.friendsofmidway.org

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■ FOMA Board Visits Midway

Six of the eight Board members visited Midway May 29th to June 5th. Refuge Manager Matt Brown and his staff gave us an update on conditions and needs of the refuge. In addition to getting structural and financial updates, we dug our hands in the dirt, pulling the prolific, invasive *Verbesina*, and replaced it with native bunch grasses. *Eragrostis* (Kawelu) plants are raised and divided in the Midway greenhouse. We also participated in collecting Marine Debris and saw the debris test plots where research is being done, which is part of the grant FOMA is administering. We saw the results of the rat eradication project on Sand Island, that has led to a population increase in the burrowing Bonin Petrels from 80 pairs to almost a million birds!

On what I like to call “Matt’s Depression Tour”, we got to see the challenging side of Refuge management. Matt showed us the old seaplane hangar and cable houses that are in bad shape, 1.4 miles of seawall that needs to be replaced, huge piles of debris that needs to be loaded on a ship for removal, and acres of habitat that is overrun with invasive plants. (photos pg 1). An estimated \$300 million worth of projects that will not likely get in the frugal USFW budgets. The Board has voted to explore a project that would be the eradication of all invasive plants on Eastern Island. The refuge staff thinks it would be a good bang for the buck and be a model that might inspire support of similar projects.



FOMA Board on Midway



Back L/R, Mike Logan, Dr. Scott Fisher, Matt Brown- Refuge Manager, Avery Loy. Front L/R, Darlene Moegerle, Dr. Fern Duvall, Cindy Waddington.

■ 67th Anniversary of the Battle of Midway June 4-7 1942



photo credit: Avery Loy

The Battle of Midway was a major naval battle, widely regarded as the most important of the Pacific Campaign of World War II. It took place between 4-7 June, 1942, approximately one month after the Battle of the Coral Sea and six months after Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor. The United States Navy decisively defeated an Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) attack against Midway Atoll, inflicting irreparable damage on the Japanese navy and seizing the strategic initiative.

The Japanese operation, like the earlier attack on Pearl Harbor, aimed to eliminate the United States as a strategic Pacific power, thereby giving Japan a free hand in establishing its Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. It was hoped another demoralizing defeat would force the U.S. to negotiate an end to the Pacific War on conditions favorable to Japan.

The Japanese plan was designed to lure the United States' few remaining carriers into a trap. The Japanese also intended to occupy Midway Atoll as part of an overall plan to extend their defensive perimeter in response to the Doolittle Raid. This operation was considered preparatory for further attacks against Fiji and Samoa. The plan was handicapped by faulty Japanese assumptions of American reaction and poor initial dispositions.

American codebreakers were able to determine the date and location of the attack, enabling the forewarned U.S. Navy to

set up an ambush of its own. Four Japanese aircraft carriers and a heavy cruiser were sunk in exchange for one American aircraft carrier and a destroyer. The heavy losses, particularly the four fleet carriers and their aircrews, permanently weakened the Imperial Japanese Navy. Japan was unable to keep pace with American shipbuilding and pilot training programs in providing replacements.



Sincere thanks to the Chugach Thai workers who made this wreath for the 2009 ceremony. It was absolutely beautiful and dedicated to those brave men who sacrificed and suffered during the Battle.

Remembering Midway Island -late 1950's

by: Dick Hackett ACW2, VW-12

During the latter half of the 50's, the Cold War, between the US and Russia, prompted the government to establish a DEW (Distant Early Warning) line across the top of the American continent and on both coasts of the United States.

On the Pacific side the Navy Airborne Early Warning Squadrons would patrol the line from Midway Island to Adak, Alaska with non-stop flights originating from Sand Island at Midway.

A new hanger was built to accommodate the servicing of the radar-equipped Lockheed Super Constellations known as the Willie Victor (WV-2).



New barracks were built to house the members of the squadrons involved in the operations. Although home base for the squadrons was Barber's Point, Oahu, Hawaii, crews would rotate to Midway for the barrier flights.

I was a member on one of the crews, which consisted of approximately 22 men. There were two operating squadrons, VW12 and VW14, and a maintenance squadron, AIRBARSRON-2. The flights were an average of 14 hours duration. Because of the long flights, the different stations on the

plane were manned in shifts. The aircraft had a galley for cooking and bunks for the crew. Food was supplied by the Midway base mess and was very good with special meals for holiday flights. Take offs occurred day and night, every day of the week, on a 4 hour interval, to form a continuous radar barrier to detect approaching aircraft and ships. The danger of a bird striking an aircraft on take off, especially a large Laysan Albatross, known as the Gooney bird, was very real. It did occur and caused damage to the leading edge of the wings (Rubber de-icing boots). Fortunately, I had not heard of any striking the cockpit area of an aircraft. The Navy tried every means possible, without hurting the birds, to prevent the Gooneys from settling down on the runways. There was limited success.

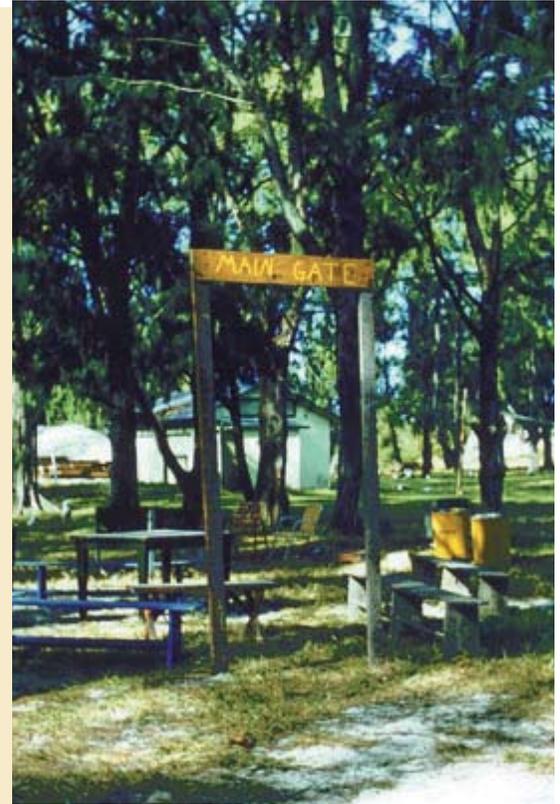


I recall on a Christmas morning flight; our crew was designated as the primary crew to connect with the “Today” show hosted by Dave Garraway. Our plane was equipped with special radio gear. We were excited at the prospect and wrote home to the folks reminding them to listen to the show. We were not too far from Midway when our Commander made contact with the show. Unfortunately, we lost power in one engine. That meant an automatic return to Midway and hence loss of contact with the show. I was told that the backup crew, on another aircraft, tried unsuccessfully to contact the show. It was very disappointing for all.

Every base has a Main Gate, as an entrance to the base. Midway was not to be outdone in this respect and had its own Main Gate. It led to the Island’s picnic area.

When not on flights, we had plenty of time to relax and to enjoy fishing, the beaches, and the wildlife the island provided. The island was a wonderful place to observe the variety of birds.

The Laysan albatross, known as the Gooney bird, was, to many of us, the most comical of the birds on the island. Having web feet and requiring a great deal of wind to take flight, the birds would run, like crazy, to get airborne on calm days. The flapping of the feet was very audible. It was not uncommon at times to see a bird walk behind a plane, which was warming up, and use the wind created by the propellers, to just flap its wings to take off. Landing was, at times, a problem in calm conditions. It consisted of a three point landing with two feet and a beak hitting the sand.



On one occasion, I observed a Gooney running down a street, very focused for its takeoff. As it headed for an intersection of the road, a bicyclist approached from the cross street. Both, unfortunately, reached the intersection at the same time. The bird hit the bike and went tumbling. The cyclist went over, too. The bird got up, shook its tail and wings, and walked away. The cyclist got up gingerly, checked the bike, got on, and resumed his journey. Fortunately, neither got hurt, but it was a very comical occurrence.



In addition to the Laysan Albatross, the islands served as a refuge for Black-footed Albatross, Sooty Terns, Tropicbirds (We called them Bosun Birds), Red-footed Boobies (We called them Blue Bill Boobies) and Frigate birds.



Glass balls about 6 or 7 inches in diameter in a variety of colors, often times, would wash up on the beach. They were used as floats to hold up fish nets used by Japanese fishermen. They were prized by the men who found them.



On one occasion a few of us, from my crew, had the opportunity to visit the uninhabited Eastern Island for a day. The old hangers and buildings, pictured below, were still standing. The runways, however, were overgrown with plants and populated with birds. Besides the Red Footed Booby and the Frigate birds on that day, the only other inhabitant was a seal sunning itself on the beach. It was a wonderful experience with the feeling of having stepped back in time. I truly enjoyed my experience at Midway. It is a place and time in my life I will not forget.

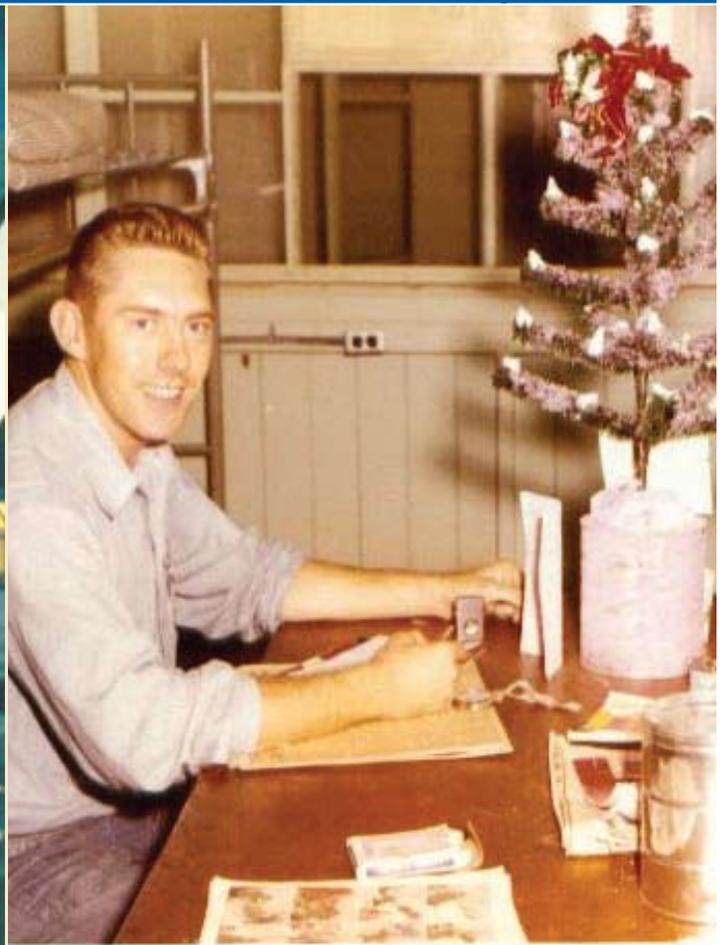
Dick Hackett ACW2, VW-12 See photos of Dick then and now on next page!

Photo credits- Dick Hackett





Dick Hackett after a flight.

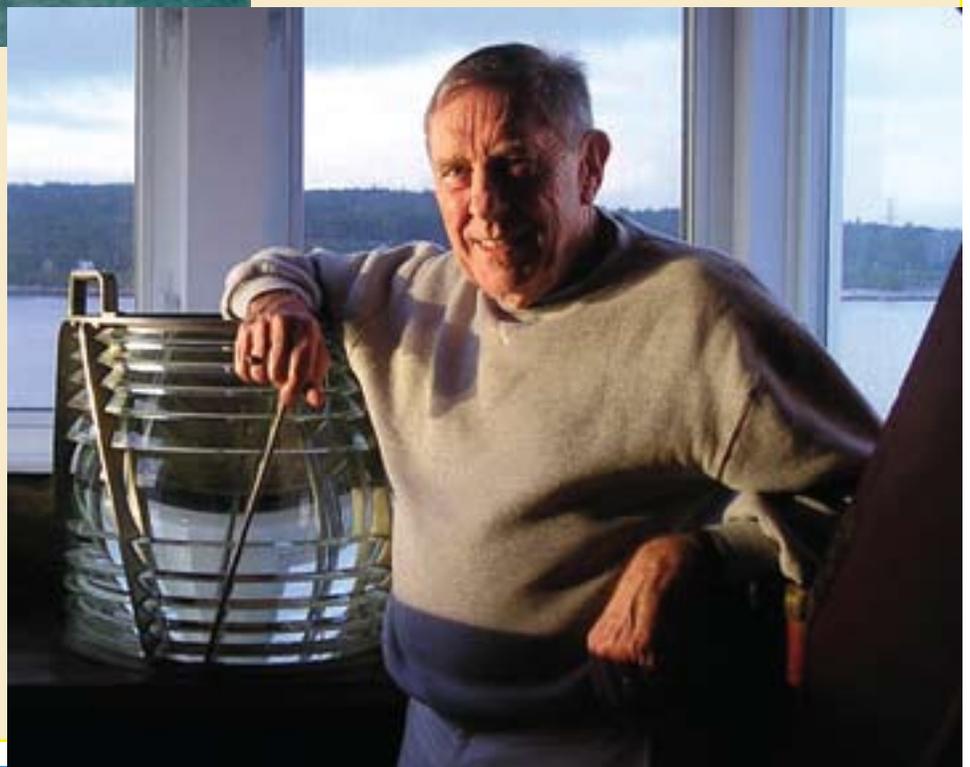


Christmas tree in the barracks- 1958. The tree is decorated with shaving cream and a few ribbons some of the guys found.



Dick on Sand Island-above and Dick now- pictured on right.

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Introducing FOMA Board Member, Dr. Fern Duvall II



Pythons, Parrots, Dart Frogs, and “Big Cats”

By Teya Penniman, MISC Manager

When bizarre animals land on Maui, there’s a good chance Dr. Fern Duvall II will see them or help mastermind the effort to capture them. As the Vice Chair of the Maui Invasive Species Committee (MISC), Fern is on the front lines—helping to protect Maui Nui’s natural resources from the onslaught of unwanted and often illegal invasive vertebrates. Work on invasive species is not technically part of Fern’s job description. His regular duties as a wildlife biologist with the DLNR’s Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW) keep him plenty busy. On any given day, you might find him clambering onto the rocks of Molokini to band ua’u kani (wedge-tailed shearwaters), descending a lush and treacherous path down the north flanks of Haleakala to census native forest birds, or crouched in the dark on Lana‘i’s Munro Trail, listening for the eerie calls of the nocturnal ua’u (Hawaiian petrel). He may be called to respond at odd hours to a disoriented deer on the Hana Highway or pick up an errant seabird from one of the cruise ships. Fern’s no slouch in the plant department either. Active on several local boards, including the Hawai‘i Native Plant Society, he helps protect rare and endangered plant species, such as ma’o hau hele (*Hibiscus brighamii*), by pulling weeds

in enclosures created to keep out feral cattle, goats, and deer. He has personally co-discovered two new plant species and his home garden in Makawao is a riot of orchids and unusual native plants. It was the critically endangered alala (Hawaiian crow) that brought Fern to Hawai‘i. He headed up the captive propagation program in Olinda—a natural fit, given his doctoral work at the University of Berlin on the social behavior of crows. Around the time that Fern left the alala project to become a DOFAW wildlife biologist, MISC adopted a policy of “No New Vertebrates” for Maui County. Fern was asked to be DOFAW’s point person for MISC and the rest, as they say, is history.

It’s hard to imagine a person better suited to the challenge of identifying and tracking mystery animals than Fern. Growing up near Lake Huron in Michigan, Fern displayed an early interest in wildlife. The Duvall property became a second home for turtles, birds, lizards and a host of other creatures, with his mother drawing the line at snakes. As a teen, Fern could be seen pedaling the rural roads, followed closely by two low flying Canada geese he had reared as goslings. Besides an enduring interest in wild animals, Fern’s photographic memory comes in handy when dealing with the unexpected. When asked, “What was the most unusual animal you’ve ever encountered on Maui?” he didn’t hesitate to describe, in detail, the thorny tailed lizard that a Ha‘ika resident captured. Upon seeing the animal trapped in a plastic bucket, Fern immediately visualized the book and page (in German!) where he had seen this animal and properly identified it.

His ability to remember identifying characteristics and his encyclopedic knowledge of animal morphology and behavior help immeasurably when answering phone calls that begin with, “I saw this weird animal...” His keen observation skills are evident to anyone who has worked in the field with him. Fern sees the patterns, shadows, and tracks that mean there is a creature attached to the branch, where others see only a tree or dark spots in a maze of color. Fern’s attention to detail no doubt spills over into one of his less-well-known talents: capturing the essence of Hawai‘i’s plant and animal life in wonderful pencil and ink or watercolor portraits. MISC regularly draws on Fern’s expertise to



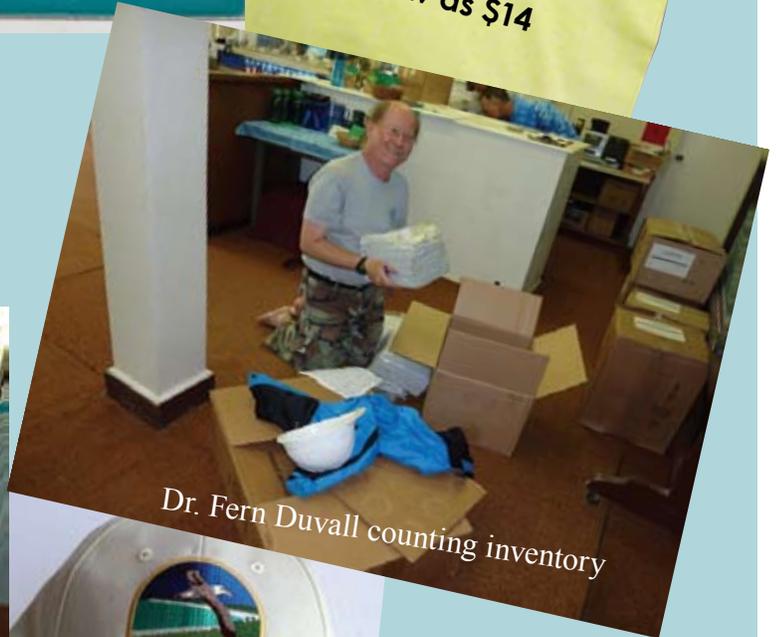
train staff and help craft our management strategy. He holds the title for MISC partner who has spent the most time in the field with the crew, earned mostly on veiled chameleon and snake hunts. It’s a practice that is consistent with his philosophy of “hands-on management,” which keeps him in touch with what’s happening in Maui’s backyards and native landscapes. In the process, MISC and all of Maui Nui are the beneficiaries. We are lucky to claim Dr. Fern Duvall II as one of our key supporters and partners.



Fun new designs in Store now! Show your support - shop today!



Cindy & Jim Waddington, Kathleen Loy



Dr. Fern Duvall counting inventory



Cindy and Mike Logan



Key Chain \$5



Ball Cap \$18



Darlene Moegerle & Dr. Scott Fisher



Satya Fisher our little helper!

Give a Unique Gift of Midway Merchandise!
Contact Board Member: Ellen Cashman at: ellcash@comcast.net More items to choose from - Not available anywhere else on Planet Earth!

President's Message

by Darlene Moegerle

Being on Midway in June, it was easy to remember just 10 years ago when a very small group of visitors formed the first FOMA board. It was June of 1999 when Rob Shallenberger, Refuge Manager, invited Molly and Art Krival, mentors for the Fish and Wildlife Service, to Midway to discuss the possibility of forming a Friends group for this remote refuge. I happened to be on Midway at the same time volunteering with the dolphin research group. This was my second trip to Midway, having been there in 1998 to volunteer with historical preservation.

As we shared meals in the large galley, the visitors got acquainted and shared our particular reasons for being on Midway Atoll. There were ham radio operators, thrilled to be able to contact people around the world from this remote spot. Others were excited about the abundant bird life they witnessed and were anxious to share the number of species that they had added to their log. Our dolphin group discussed what time the dolphins had entered the lagoon and through which entry. Several veterans shared their memories of life on Midway during the Cold War.

On our next to last day, I heard about the possibility of forming a Friends group for this beautiful refuge. Not living near a wildlife refuge or national park...I didn't know about Friends groups!! Quickly I was brought up to speed and after several more discussions around the table, it was decided that it was possible to form a group of supporters for this magnificent refuge. Three of us were interested enough to take on the responsibility of forming the Friends of Midway Atoll. With the guidance of Molly Krival, we applied for our incorporation papers and our tax-exempt status. We started slowly, gaining members at first from the visitors who had recently traveled to Midway.

Gradually, the word spread and within a year or so, our number was up to about 50 members and our board had grown to six. Our membership is now about 150 families and individuals most of whom have been FOMA members for over 5 years. We have members in almost every state and several foreign countries.

Through your continued support, FOMA has had a very positive influence on the plants, animals and quality of life on Midway. The board of directors thank you so much for your sustaining support and continuing interest in maintaining the beautiful atoll we all know and love.

2010 Oceanic Tours to Midway

Calling all travelers who want to experience Midway. Here are the Oceanic dates for 2010 and the per person costs.

2010 Dates:
March 22-29
April 19-26
April 26-May 3
May 3-10
May 10-17
December 6-13

2010 Cost: \$5,075 (includes \$2,200 airfare from Honolulu/Midway/ Honolulu).

Wayne Sentman will lead, Oceanic Society Natural History ecotours to Midway in March, April, May and December of 2010. Group size is limited to 15 participants. Costs include all meals & accommodations during your 8-day visit, refuge fees and chartered flights from Honolulu. In June of 2010 Oceanic will also offer a Historic Restoration service program, allowing visitors to assist with FWS efforts to preserve historic sites such as the cable buildings and WWII gun emplacements. For more information download Oceanic Society's "2010 Preview Catalog" at their website www.oceanicsociety.org



Here are two visitors making a "Marine Debris" Rainbow on North Beach. Karen Ireland on the left (shorts) and Rebecca Jackrel on right.

Also some other links that you may want to explore. Wayne's blog site - stories and photos from recent visitor groups to Midway. <http://naturefinder.blogspot.com> and a lecture he gave for the New England Aquarium about Midway and the Papahānaumokuākea that was recorded and put on the Web see <http://forum.wgbh.org/lecture/midway-atoll-and-papahanaumokuakea-marine-national-monument>.

Reflections by Wayne Sentman

I still remember the excitement on Midway Atoll in 1999. A new “bird” had landed on the island, not the expected seabird, but a woman full of energy and vision named Molly Krival. At the weekly Fish & Wildlife staff meeting, then Refuge Manager, Rob Schallenberger introduced us to the special visitor with a mission of helping the refuge initiate a “Friends” group. Rob described how many mainland refuges had benefited from Friends groups, who assisted those refuges in achieving their diverse goals while at the same time developing a community of educated and committed supporters. As a young researcher on Midway working at various times with FWS, NMFS, and Oceanic Society this seemed too good to be true.

Early on at Midway we often felt very far away from the public and the support they might bring to our projects and needs, even though each week we had tourist groups come and go. A Friends group seemed like a great way to facilitate the on-island organizations and the weekly visitors to join together as a long-term community of citizens eager to participate in helping the refuge define and realize its own long-term conservation goals.

Much like FOMA, Oceanic Society, a marine conservation non-profit based in San Francisco has been a partner to the conservation, research, and education goals of the refuge. Starting in 1996 OS brought groups of ecotourists and eco-volunteers to Midway Atoll. In fact some of the original FOMA board members first came to Midway as part of Oceanic groups. Through 1996 to 2002 hundreds of ecotourists visited Midway with Oceanic, learning about the unique flora and fauna and history of the atoll. In many cases they also assisted in research, restoration, and wildlife monitoring projects directed by FWS. At one time Oceanic Society had six researchers at Midway coordinating programs ranging from habitat and historic restoration to seabird and spinner dolphin monitoring.

As FOMA was conceived and created on the refuge, Oceanic was an early and ardent supporter. With each weekly group of

tourists we encourage our members to join and participate in the FOMA mission. After Midway closed to tourism in 2002, FOMA became the only organization able to occasionally bring volunteers to Midway, many of those early albatross census counters were made up of devoted people who had come to respect and learn about the “new” mission of Midway through the programs described above.

The excitement of again having visitors on Midway is tangible. Our first 9 groups in 2008 & 2009 included visitors from the ages of 8 to 86, Veterans, and people who had been born on Midway or who attended school there in the 60’s, some



returning with their own children. Others had been signed up to visit in 2002 (when all tourism ceased) and had waited patiently, for six years, for Midway to “reopen”. Many of the participants in these first groups had been members of FOMA and Oceanic the whole time, and were kept up to date about Midway events by this very newsletter.

As ecotourism and participatory volunteer programs return to Midway (as I write this Oceanic Society is working with FWS to reinstate visitor volunteer programs in 2010 starting with a Historic Preservation group) FOMA is more active than ever in its efforts to support the refuge goals and put its membership to good use. From the bikes we ride to the many items available in the gift store, FOMA’s support of the refuge is visible to all visitors.

After 10 years FOMA continues to grow. Visitors to Midway continue to be inspired by their experience and once home, joining FOMA represents one of the most important ways in which they can stay connected to a place newly cherished. FOMA answers the desire of visitors to Midway Atoll to continue to participate in the future of the refuge and Papahānaumokuākea, and the promise they represent. Through intimate encounters with wildlife, standing alongside History, and witnessing the dedication of the FWS staff and volunteers, Midway tends to leave a strong impression on those lucky enough to visit. 10 years later FOMA has undeniably proved worthy of all the excitement Rob Schallenberger and Molly Krival promised us, way back in 1999.

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Friends of Midway Atoll

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