

NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 8, 2016

CONTACT
Ann Bell
(808) 954-4814, Ann_Bell@fws.gov

Wisdom hatches a healthy chick at 65+ years old at Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge

The oldest known bird in the wild, a Laysan albatross named Wisdom – at least 65 years old – is a mother again at Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge, part of Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument. The chick was observed still coming out of its shell on February 1, 2016 and days later was named Kūkini, which is a Hawaiian word for messenger. Wisdom’s mate had been on the nest since January 20 when he took over incubation duties while Wisdom headed out to sea. Wisdom returned just as the Super Bowl ended yesterday with her belly full. Shortly after Wisdom arrived, Wisdom’s mate was on the march towards the shoreline and immediately took flight in search of food.

“Wisdom is an iconic symbol of inspiration and hope,” noted Robert Peyton, Refuge Manager. “From a scientific perspective, albatrosses are a critical indicator species for the world’s oceans that sustain millions of human beings as well. In the case of Wisdom, she is breaking longevity records of previously banded birds by at least a decade. With over a million albatross on Midway Atoll alone, this shows just how much is left to learn about the natural world around us.”

Wisdom has raised at least eight chicks since 2006, and as many as 40 in her lifetime. Just as astonishing, she has likely flown over three million miles since she was first tagged on Midway Atoll in 1956.

“That is up to six trips from the Earth to the Moon and back again,” noted Bruce Peterjohn, Chief of the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center’s National Bird Banding Laboratory. “What is also miraculous is that biologist Chandler Robbins, who banded her as a breeding adult in 1956 on Midway Atoll, sighted her 46 years later near the same nesting location.” Today at the age of 97 Robbins still comes to work on occasion doing what he loves to do.

Wisdom’s chick is not the only bird in town! Albatrosses arrive on Midway Atoll in late November by the hundreds of thousands. In December U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) volunteers counted 470,000 active nests across the entire atoll – since each nest represents two adults, the total breed population at Midway is 940,000. A low estimate of Midway’s overall population, this number does not account for the non-breeders present in the colony, resting, searching for a mate, and practicing their mating dance skills.





PAPAHĀNAUMOKUĀKEA
Marine National Monument

These numbers indicate Midway Atoll Refuge is responsible for maintaining healthy nesting habitat for the world's largest albatross nesting colony. While side-stepping around nests on every square foot of available island surface, a team of Service volunteers and staff monitor 13 species of birds and accomplish hands-on management of nesting habitat by out-planting native plants while suppressing aggressive and invasive plant species that once displaced nesting habitat over 40% of the atoll.

For more information and updates on Wisdom at Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge and the Battle of Midway National Memorial, go to: http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Midway_Atoll/.

VideoNewsRelease/Interviews/Photos of Rearing and Chick Hatching from Midway Atoll Refuge: <http://bit.ly/20kCr1g>

Facebook Updates: [Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument Facebook page.](#)

Tumblr: <http://usfwspacific.tumblr.com/>

Twitter: [@HawaiiReef](#)

Video and Photo Chronology 2002 to Present:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwspacific/albums/72157632891366006/with/23750818490/>

Papahānaumokuākea is cooperatively managed to ensure ecological integrity and achieve strong, long-term protection and perpetuation of Northwestern Hawaiian Island ecosystems, Native Hawaiian culture, and heritage resources for current and future generations. Three co-trustees - the Department of Commerce, Department of the Interior, and State of Hawai'i - joined by the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, protect this special place. Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument was inscribed as the first mixed (natural and cultural) UNESCO World Heritage Site in the United States in July 2010. For more information, please visit www.papahanaumokuakea.gov.

