

NEWS RELEASE
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CONTACT
Megan Nagel, 808-792-6877,
Megan_Nagel@fws.gov

World's Oldest Known, Banded Wild Bird Returns to Midway Atoll in Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument

Honolulu, Hawaii — Wisdom, a Laysan albatross and world's oldest known, banded wild bird has returned to [Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge and Battle of Midway National Memorial](#). At least 68 years old, she was first sighted at her nest site on November 29 and biologists have confirmed that she has laid an egg.

Each year millions of albatross return to Midway Atoll in [Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument](#) to nest and raise their young. Wisdom and her mate, like most albatross pairs, return nearly every year to the same nest site. This behavior is known as “nest site fidelity” and it makes places with large colonies of nesting birds, like Midway Atoll, critically important for the future survival of seabirds like Wisdom.

Albatross often take time off to rest between egg-laying years, but the Wisdom and her mate have met on Midway Atoll to lay and hatch an egg every year since 2006. Wisdom has laid between 30-35 eggs in her lifetime. In 2017, the chick that she fledged in 2001 was observed just a few feet away from her current nest, marking the first time a returning chick of hers has been documented.

“Midway Atoll’s habitat doesn’t just contain millions of birds, it contains countless generations and families of albatrosses” said Kelly Goodale, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Refuge Biologist. “If you can imagine when Wisdom returns home she is likely surrounded by what were once her chicks and potentially their chicks. What a family reunion!”

Raising the next generation of albatross is no easy job. Albatross parents like Wisdom and her mate Akeakamai take turns incubating the egg or caring for the chick while the other forages for food at sea. They will spend approximately seven months on Midway Atoll incubating and raising their chick. When not on parenting duty, Wisdom and Akeakamai take turns foraging for food. Because this process takes up so much time and energy, most Laysan albatross don’t lay an egg every year.

Starting around age five, juvenile albatross begin the process of finding a mate. During nesting season, juvenile albatross can be found all over Midway Atoll practicing elaborate courtship dances that dozens of ritualized movements. They are looking for just that special bird to dip, bow, and preen with, and once a pair bond forms they stay bonded for life.

Nearly 70% of the world’s Laysan albatross and almost 40% of Black-footed albatross, as well as endangered Short-tailed albatross all rely on Midway Atoll. In addition to albatross, there are 20 different bird species that live on Midway Atoll. In total, over three million individual birds call the Refuge and Memorial home.



Throughout the Monument, scientific research and monitoring plays an essential role in managing wildlife, including seabirds. Surveys and banding projects conducted in the Monument and throughout the world help scientists better understand the life cycles and migration patterns of birds. Wisdom was first identified and banded by biologists as an adult in 1956, but the very first albatross was banded on Midway Atoll in 1936. To date over 250,000 albatross have been banded at the Refuge and Memorial. By pairing modern data analysis with detailed current and historical records, biologists can make more informed management decisions that ensure seabirds have the habitat and resources they need in the future.

Biologists with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are working to restore the habitat seabirds need at Midway Atoll and remove threats like invasive predators - because protecting the future for seabirds mean protecting the places they call home.

“Laysan albatross and other seabirds depend on the habitat protected by Midway Atoll and other Pacific remote wildlife refuges to raise their young,” said Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge and Battle of Midway National Memorial Project Leader Bob Peyton. “Thanks to the hard work of our partners and volunteers, we have been able restore the native habitat that the birds need for nesting sites, ensuring a future for these seabirds.”

For photos and video, please visit: <https://goo.gl/ucVV7f>

For more details and shareable social media about Wisdom: <https://rebrand.ly/Wisdom18>

Read more stories about Midway Atoll and the Laysan Albatross at:

- [Midway's Albatross: A New Threat Puts the World's Largest Colony at Risk](#)
- [Video: Battle of Midway Commemoration Film](#)
- [The Return of Midway's Albatross](#)
- [The Laysan Albatross: A Lovesong](#)
- [Midway Atoll: Restoring an Ecological Gem](#)
- [A Future to Count on for Albatross at Midway NWR](#)
- [Discovering Midway's Cultural History](#)
- [War and Peace at Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge and Battle of Midway National Memorial](#)

Located on the far northern end of the Hawaiian archipelago, Midway Atoll Refuge and Memorial is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and located within the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument. It is one the oldest Atoll formations in the world, it provides nesting habitat for millions of seabirds, and it is a touchstone for one of the most significant naval battles of World War II, and in history, the Battle of Midway. To learn more about the Midway Atoll:

https://www.fws.gov/refuge/midway_Atoll/

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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. Four co-trustees - the Department of Commerce, Department of the Interior, State of Hawai'i and 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.

