

NEWS RELEASE

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Albatross Chicks Take 1300 Mile Plane Ride from Midway Atoll to New Home on O‘ahu

Kahuku, Hawai‘i- James Campbell National Wildlife Refuge has 25 new residents! On February 16, 2019, a group of ka‘upu (black-footed albatross) chicks made the 1,300 mile journey from Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge and Battle of Midway National Memorial in Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument to O‘ahu. Their new home is inside a 16-acre predator exclusion fence at James Campbell National Wildlife Refuge near Kahuku. These chicks are part of a long-term partnership effort to create new albatross colonies in the main Hawaiian Islands that will be safe from predators, future sea-level rise, and to help perpetuate our relationships with these culturally significant bird species.

Culturally, ka‘upu and other albatross species are kinolau (body form) of the Hawaiian deity Lono. The birds’ return to land for mating coincides with the beginning of the makahiki season, occurring between October and November, and an important aspect to some practitioners’ ceremonies during that time. Currently, ninety percent of the world’s ka‘upu population nests on Midway Atoll, Laysan Island, and Tern Island. All three of these locations within the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument have very low elevations and are predicted to be highly susceptible to storm surges and sea-level rise in the coming century. Ka‘upu are particularly at risk because they tend to nest along the shoreline where there are no plants to provide protection.

“Midway Atoll is home to one of the largest black-footed albatross colonies in the world. As conservation managers, it is important we use good science to evaluate other options that might protect these seabirds into the future,” said Midway Atoll Refuge and Memorial Project Leader Bob Peyton. “Refuges like Midway Atoll and James Campbell provide the healthy habitat that black-footed albatross, and other seabirds, need to thrive.”

“We are thrilled that the Refuge can provide a safe place and a new home for this species on O‘ahu,” said Glenn Klingler, Refuge Manager at James Campbell. “This translocation is another step toward creating a new colony of albatross in the main Hawaiian Islands and ensuring the albatross will be protected for future generations.”

The chosen translocation site at James Campbell National Wildlife Refuge is high enough that it is less at risk from rising sea-levels and increasing storm surges. Additionally, birds nesting within the predator-free enclosure are protected from non-native predators that are prevalent in the main islands, such as mongooses, rats, and feral cats and dogs.

The three-week-old chicks will be fed a diet of fish and squid and closely monitored by biologists



for four to five months, until they are able to fly out to sea and feed themselves.

Ka'upu chicks imprint on their birth colony at about one month of age and they will return to breed at the same colony as adults. By moving the chicks at this critical one-month period, they will imprint on their new home at the James Campbell National Wildlife Refuge and become the seeds of a new colony when they return as adults to raise their own chicks.

Pacific Rim Conservation translocated 50 mōlī (Laysan albatross) chicks from the Pacific Rim Missile Facility on Kaua'i to James Campbell from 2015 to 2017, and 40 ka'upu chicks from the Monument to James Campbell in 2017 and 2018. Eighty-two of those albatross chicks successfully fledged - took flight as adults. After they fledge, juvenile albatross stay at sea for 3 - 5 years before returning home to find a mate and begin breeding. In 2018, the first James Campbell fledgling - a mōlī named V106 - returned to the colony.

"We are very hopeful that this colony will continue to grow provide a safe and stable home for albatross on O'ahu," said Klingler.

Partners on these projects include [Pacific Rim Conservation](#), [Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument](#), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of Defense, the [National Fish and Wildlife Foundation](#), and the [David and Lucile Packard Foundation](#).

For photos of the translocation visit: <https://rebrand.ly/0ae10>

More about Pacific Rim Conservation: *Our mission is to maintain and restore native bird diversity, populations, and ecosystems in Hawai'i and the Pacific Region. Pacific Rim Conservation was founded in 2006 as we saw a need for research-based management on native species, particularly birds, throughout Hawai'i and the Pacific. Island species, particularly those in Hawai'i, are some of the most imperiled on earth and with so few individuals of some species, research was sorely needed to inform management actions. For nine years we filled that niche operating as a small business and in June 2015, we converted from a business to a 501(c)3 non-profit organization in order to better reflect our goals and to ensure that as much of our funding as possible was used to achieve our conservation projects.*

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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.

