

## Seabirds

Photo of Laysan Albatross



# Moli or Laysan Albatross

*Phoebastria immutabilis*

### **SPECIES STATUS:**

State recognized as indigenous  
IUCN Red List Ranking-Vulnerable

**SPECIES INFORMATION:** Breed during the months of November-July with egg laying occurring during November-December and chicks fledging in early July. Sexual maturity on average is at 8-9 years, with mate retention high in this species. They feed on the surface by dipping and scavenging the ocean's surface. Feeding has also been found in the wake of ships. While in Hawai'i they feed on squid, deep-water crustaceans, fish, and flying fish eggs, with squid making up over half their diet.

**DISTRIBUTION:** Historically found on ? Currently, their breeding range occurs on all of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands and the main islands of Kaua'i, Lehua, and O'ahu. Wake and Johnston have been recolonized as well.

Map of Laysan distribution



**ABUNDANCE:** The worldwide population of breeding pairs is 630,000 with 586,000 recorded at Midway and Laysan alone. Add the populations found on the main islands and estimate populations for Hawai'i in total are ?

**LOCATION AND CONDITION OF KEY HABITAT:** Low coral and sand islands are the habitat preferred for nesting sites. Typical nest sites are close to vegetation and on flat ground. However, as seen on Nihoa and Lehua, they can also nest in rocky, steep areas as well. A majority of Laysan breed in the NWHI where habitat is considered in good condition. On the main Hawaiian islands, other key breeding areas are Kaena Point on O'ahu, Kilauea Point on Kaua'i, .....? Potential habitat on Kaua'i and O'ahu are deterred by the fact that these sites rest on active military bases with aircraft collision a high risk. Marine habitat is pelagic.

**THREATS:** Historically killed by high seas drift net fishing until an international ban instituted in 1993, current fisheries management requires longline fisheries to implement mitigation measures such as fishing closures and seabird deterrents. Historically also killed by collision with aircraft at Midway, this issue also poses a problem on potential habitat on Kaua'i and O'ahu. Like most ground nesters, threats are mainly linked with mammalian predation (e.g. rats, mongoose, cats, dogs), ant predation, as well as human disturbance (e.g. hikers, mountain bikers trampling nests, etc.). In addition, at Midway, lead contaminated soil is ingested by chicks and affects survival rates. Also on Midway, buildings, lights, antenna wires and other man-made obstacles lead to the deaths of Laysan Albatross. On Kure, Midway, Pearl and Hermes, the introduction of the invasive weed Golden crown-beard deteriorates nesting habitat and opens the door for mosquitoes that spread avian pox.

**CONSERVATION ACTIONS:** The goals of conservation actions are to not only protect current populations, but to also establish further populations to reduce the risk of extinction. Past actions have included efforts to mitigate the impact of longline fisheries, fencing, invasive weed control, and predator control. In addition to common state-wide and island conservation actions, specific actions include:

- Continue restoration of vital habitat for populations;

**MONITORING:**

- Continue surveys of population and distribution in known and likely habitats with attention on creating a rigorous demographic population monitoring program to track population trends including age-specific survival rates;

**RESEARCH PRIORITIES:**

- Analyze and report demographic information from 50 years of USFWS banding data;
- Design a sampling program to estimate breeding populations at Midway;
- Examine mortality rates from fisheries to determine impact to overall populations;
- Continue research and development into mitigation measure from fisheries.

**References:**

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2005. Regional Seabird Conservation Plan, Pacific Region. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Migratory Birds and Habitat Programs, Pacific Region. Portland, Oregon.

IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. <http://www.redlist.org/search/details.php?species=44051>