



WildWings

Midway Atoll

Breeding Pacific albatross and tropical seabirds

Quote “ Midway was fantastic, blew me away, such a spectacle” ” K.C April 2011

Nearly 2 million seabirds breed on this tiny island group in the centre of the Pacific Ocean including the world’s largest colonies of Laysan and Black-footed Albatross. Closed to the public for many years the US Fish and Wildlife service re-opened the area in 2008 for a very few lucky people. We have again a limited number of small group departures, the avian spectacle that is offers is simply second to none, with point blank views of almost everything, it is simply seabird heaven! 2011 brought heavy storms and overwash from the Japanese tsunami but in spite of this the wonderful news that Short-tailed Albatross bred for the first time on Eastern Island.

The atoll consists of three small islands and a shallow white sand lagoon, sheltered from the open ocean by a coral reef with pristine turquoise waters. In addition to the breeding seabirds and visiting shorebirds (including Bristle-thighed Curlew and Wandering Tattler) it is also home to the endemic Hawaiian Monk Seal, Pacific Green Turtles and is frequently visited by Hawaiian Spinner Dolphins, plus offers superb snorkelling with a myriad of colourful tropical fish. Strict rules apply to access ashore, all to protect the wildlife of course and our small group trips also allow an opportunity to assist the scientists and staff in their ongoing work for those that wish. In addition to the fore mentioned two species of North Pacific albatross, Midway also sometimes hosts Short-tailed Albatross, in 2008, a non-breeding sub-adult pair were present throughout most of March, and were seen displaying to each other, hopefully in preparation for future breeding. In both 2009 & 2010 up to 5 birds were seen, the last during April. In November 2010 a female Short-tailed Albatross finally laid an egg and hatched a chick. They both survived the tsunami wash of March 2011 and the chick fledged and flew! A new species of ‘Little’ Shearwater has also just been claimed, from a specimen found on Midway in 1963, new christened Bryan’s Shearwater although we are not aware of ‘field’ sightings of these birds yet. Christmas Shearwater and Grey-backed Terns return to breed from March onwards on Eastern Island, which you will visit at least once during your stay. Wedge-tailed Shearwaters return from April. Clouds of Red-tailed Tropicbirds fill the skies in spring with their raucous calls and display flights. Another global goodie is of course the re-introduced Laysan Teal, now successfully breeding. Bristle-thighed Curlew also winters in reasonable numbers, they are usually present until late April.

November to July is the peak albatross breeding season and March/April time offers the highest variety and numbers of breeding seabirds of all. The days pass very quickly as you walk amongst the thousands of displaying young albatrosses and fluffy chicks waiting for their parents to return from the ocean with more food. In fact, when you look out of your room window, you will see courting and nesting albatross's everywhere and as you lay in your bed you can hear them calling and bill clacking as you drift off to sleep. As dusk descends, so do the Bonin Petrels, returning from the sea in their thousands, yet another amazing sight. A veritable paradise for photographers, videographers, remote island and seabird fanatics alike. If you have not been convinced to make the pilgrimage yet, just read Carl Safina's magical book, 'Eye of the Albatross'.

Our trip report from our March 2009 visit is on our website or available from us.

Breeding seabirds of Midway Atoll

Short-tailed Albatross
Laysan Albatross
Black-footed Albatross
Christmas Shearwater
Wedge-tailed Shearwater
Bonin Petrel
Red-tailed Tropicbird
White-tailed Tropicbird
Brown Booby
Masked Booby
Red-footed Booby
Great Frigatebird
Brown Noddy
Black Noddy
Sooty Tern
Gray-backed Tern
White Tern

Itinerary

Day 1: Fly Honolulu to Midway (special charter flight, 4.5 hours duration).

Days 2 – 7: Guided wildlife and historical sites excursions. Weather permitting, at least one visit will be made to nearby Eastern Island. One boat based snorkelling trip and unlimited beach snorkelling. Optional participation in service projects (eg beach litter clean-ups, seabird counts etc). Lots and lots of free time, to take photos or just enjoy!

Day 8: Return flight Midway to Honolulu.

Note: The flights arrive and depart after dark on Midway, to minimise disturbance to the seabirds.

Holiday Information

Dates: 12th – 19th March & 16th – 23rd & 23rd – 30th April 2012

Naturalist: Wayne Sentman

Price : £4635 per person sharing a twin room with private facilities.

Single supplement: £299.

Deposit: £750

Max group size: 17 plus naturalist/guides.

Price includes: Return economy class charter flights Honolulu – Midway Atoll (the majority of the cost!), 7 nights accommodation in rooms with private facilities, guided excursions as per itinerary including services of naturalist guide throughout (transportation by golf cart), two boat excursions, all meals on Midway, water, juices, tea and coffee, taxes and fees.

Price excludes: Flights UK - Honolulu, fuel surcharges if levied, pre/post hotel in Honolulu, travel insurance, other drinks, gratuities and other items of a personal nature. Golf Carts may be rented for US\$25 per day, Bicycles for \$5 a day. Snorkel gear can also be rented if required.