

Penguin expert now studying isle seabirds

Holmes focuses on endangered species

By Jon Letman
Kaua'i People

Quick! Name three things Kaua'i has in common with Antarctica.

Here's a hint: Both are extremely isolated, face challenging human-wildlife interactions and have fascinating, highly adapted bird life.

It's not a connection most people would make, but for Dr. Nick Holmes, coordinator for the Kaua'i Endangered Seabird Recovery Project, the similarities are striking.

Before moving to Kaua'i in 2006, Holmes completed his doctorate in environmental science on his home island of



photo by NICK HOLMES

The Kaua'i Endangered Seabird Recovery Project crew, from left, Trevor Joyce, Cary Deringer, Ed Conrad, Jessi Hallman, Nick Holmes, Emily Haber (back, right).

Tasmania. He went on to conduct five years of research on Macquarie Island, a small is-

land 1,000 miles southeast of Australia, and on the Antarctic Peninsula.

As an ornithologist, Holmes examined the effects of human activities on four species of penguins: gentoo, king, royal and southern rock hopper. In these Antarctic and sub-Antarctic environments, Holmes observed first-hand the need for careful management of human activity near wildlife in fragile environments.

With this field experience and his life-long interest in polar and island ecology, Holmes was primed to accept a bird conservation position on Kaua'i after responding to an online job posting.

"We weren't seeking to come to the tropics, but Hawai'i puts us closer to my American wife's



See BIRDS page 11

THIS AUTUMN S.O.S. (SAVE OUR SHEARWATERS)

The Newell's shearwater ('a'o) is a federally endangered seabird that visits Kaua'i between April and October only to breed - the remainder of the year they remain at sea. The 'a'o breeds in remote parts of Limahuli, Wainiha and Kalalau valleys in wet montane native forests building nests in burrows beneath native trees like 'ohi'a lehua and lalalapa.

At sea, their foraging grounds are not well-known, but they have been sighted in seas west of Mexico and just north of the equator.

'A'o can live 30 to 40 years but lay only one egg per year. If disturbed they will not re-lay that year - one reason why their population is especially vulnerable.

Every autumn between September and November, 'a'o fledglings emerge from their burrows and make their way from their forest homes to the sea for the first time. These birds are highly light-sensitive and easily confused by man-made lights which can cause them to crash to the ground and fall victim to cats, dogs and cars.

The Save Our Shearwater program is an annual community conservation program developed by the Division of Forestry and Wildlife in 1979 and run with the support of Kaua'i Island Utility Cooperative since 2004 and in 2008 by the Kaua'i Humane Society. More than 32,000 Newell's shearwaters have been collected by the public for SOS since 1979.

What can you do to help minimize the risk and help Save Our Shearwaters?

- Turn off unnecessary out-



photo by NICK HOLMES

A young 'a'o (Newell's shearwater) safe in its burrow. Between 75 and 90 percent of the known remaining population of 'a'o nest on Kaua'i where they rely on native vegetation for safe landings and secure nesting grounds.

door lights (backyard, ball park, poolside)

- Be a responsible pet owner - keep your pets inside or leashed at night

- If you see a downed bird, pick it up ASAP. Use a towel or shirt to gently wrap the bird. Despite its long bill, shearwaters are very docile and easy to handle.

If you rescue a downed shearwater:

- DON'T try to release the bird into the air; birds may be exhausted or injured

- DON'T give the bird food or water; they will be better without it

- DO take the bird to any of the 18 shearwater aid stations, including all Kaua'i fire stations

For more information, visit www.kauaihumane.org/ or call the SOS coordinator at 632.0610 ext. 109.

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Birds: switching from penguins to petrels

Continued from page 10

family and is still about half-way to Australia," he said.

Relocating to Kaua'i also allows Holmes to continue his research with seabirds in remote island settings without being gone for six months at a time.

So today, instead of penguins, Holmes studies petrels and shearwaters for the Kaua'i Endangered Seabird Recovery

Project under the University of Hawai'i, Division of Forestry and Wildlife and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Holmes has an office in Waimea but more often than not, he and his five colleagues are in the field developing ways to protect and monitor Hawai'i's rare seabirds.

In particular, their work revolves around the Hawaiian petrel ('ua'u), Band-rumped storm-petrel ('ake'ake) and

Newell's shearwater ('a'o). The 'ua'u and the 'a'o (both named for their call) are listed on the Endangered Species list. The 'ake'ake is a candidate species.

All three species, Holmes explains, like penguins, evolved without terrestrial mammalian predators like dogs, cats and rats. Other threats to Kaua'i's seabirds include loss of native flora, invasive species and modification of habitat.

Holmes saw similar threats in Australia and Antarctica.

"Whether its kikuyu grass on Montague Island, rabbits on Macquarie or strawberry guava and rose myrtle on Kaua'i, they all pose a threat to native seabirds," Holmes says.

Holmes points out Hawaiian petrels lives only in Hawai'i and between 75 and 90 percent of the Newell's shearwaters breed nowhere but Kaua'i.

For Holmes, the fact that

these animals face extinction, even as humans try to understand them, is unacceptable. He sees seabirds as irreplaceable elements of Hawai'i's natural heritage - creatures to admire, respect and protect.

"These birds have an air of mystery - there is still so much we don't know about them," Holmes says. "It's a lovely contrast to some of the more developed, well-known aspects of Hawai'i."



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KGTV - Channel 53 (Govt Access)

MONDAY
6:00p Kuleana, Police Commission
TUESDAY
6:00p Kuleana, Police Commission
WEDNESDAY
6:00p Kuleana, Planning Commission
THURSDAY
6:00p Kuleana, Planning Commission
FRIDAY
6:00p Kuleana, County Council
SATURDAY & SUNDAY
6:00p Kuleana, County Council

Frequency of meeting replays depend on the length of meetings. Check www.hoike.org for additional program schedule details.

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KETV - Channel 56 (HTEAC) UNIVERSITY DISTANCE LEARNING:

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KCTV - Channel 52 (Public Access)

MONDAY
12a to 6a IVEB
6:00a Community Camera
7:30a Blusio and the Spoken Word
12:00n OPEN IIC
1:30p-2:30p IVEB
3:00p Community Camera
5:00p Blusio and the Spoken Word
6:00p OPEN IIC
8:00p Church at Koloa
11:00p Employees Today

TUESDAY
12a to 6a IVEB
6:00a Community Camera
7:30a Blusio and the Spoken Word
8:00a Church at Koloa
9:00a Employees Today
12:00n OPEN IIC
1:30p-2:30p IVEB
3:00p Community Camera
5:00p Vegetarian Society of Hawaii
6:00p OPEN IIC
8:00p Calvary Chapel Kauai
9:30p Key of David
11:00p Community Camera

WEDNESDAY

12a to 6a IVEB
6:00a Community Camera
8:00a Calvary Chapel Kauai
9:00a Key of David
12:00n OPEN IIC
1:30p-2:30p IVEB
3:00p Community Camera
6:00p OPEN IIC
7:30p Waimea UCC
9:00p What Every Catholic Should Know
10:00p Astrology w/Rollin Frost
11:00p Vegetarian Society of Hawaii

THURSDAY

12a to 6a IVEB
6:00a Community Camera
8:00a What Every Catholic Should Know
9:00a Waimea UCC
12:00n OPEN IIC
1:30p-2:30p IVEB
3:00p Community Camera
5:30p Astrology w/Rollin Frost
6:00p OPEN IIC
7:30p Gateway Ministries
8:30p Voices of Truth Series
9:00p The Truth Shall Set You Free
11:00p Community Camera

FRIDAY

12a to 6a IVEB
6:00a Community Camera
7:30a The Truth Shall Set You Free
8:30a Voices of Truth Series
9:00a Gateway Ministries
12:00n OPEN IIC
1:30p-2:30p IVEB
5:30p Astrology w/Rollin Frost
6:00p Community Camera
8:00p Huna Talk
9:00p OHA-Ho'oulu Laka'i Aloha
11:00p Community Camera

SATURDAY & SUNDAY

12a to 6a IVEB
6:00a Community Camera
8:30a Astrology w/Rollin Frost
9:00a Aloha Sports
10:30a Local Program
12:00n Local Program
1:00p Employees Today
2:00p Huna Talk
4:00p Aloha Sports
5:30p Community Camera
7:00p Local Program
8:00p Local Program
11:00p Community Camera

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