

# 'ELEPAIO

Journal of the  
Hawaii Audubon Society



For the Protection of  
Hawaii's Native Wildlife

VOLUME 42, NUMBER 4

OCTOBER 1981

## CAPTURE AND RELEASE OF A LAYSAN ALBATROSS ON HAWAII ISLAND

By Barbara Lee

During Easter week of 1981, a Laysan Albatross (*Diomedea immutabilis*) landed on the Kona coast of Hawaii Island, and had several stressful experiences before returning safely to sea.

The "seabird" was first spotted about 4:30 p.m. April 16 at the Natural Energy Laboratory on Keahole Point, one mile south of Kona Airport. While under observation, it landed on the 1801 flow of broken pahoehoe (lava) on or close to the entrance roadway to the Laboratory. The bird was chased and captured by several workmen. They attempted to feed it (unsuccessfully), then kept it captive overnight in the tire well of a pickup truck, covered with a canvas tarpaulin.

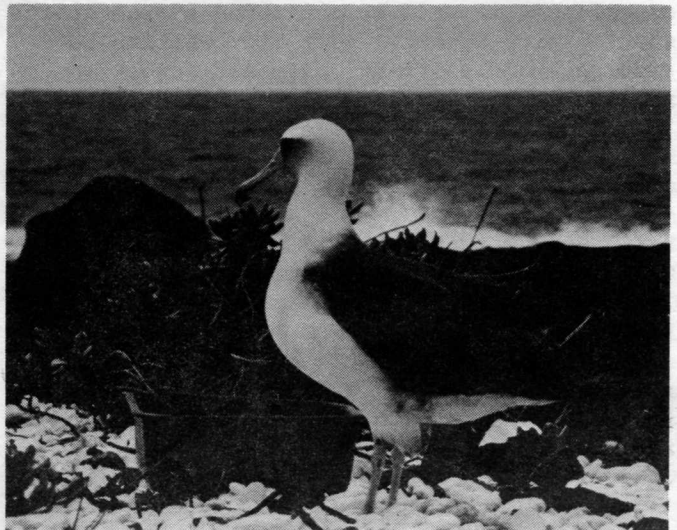
Early the next morning, on the Good Friday holiday, Laboratory Director Larry Hallinger transferred the bird to a fenced enclosure. He notified Kona police, who contacted Jimmy Paul, State Conservation Enforcement Officer, who in turn called me at about 12:30 p.m. I arrived at the Laboratory at 2:00 p.m. and checked the bird's description by telephone with Kay Kepler, who confirmed its identification as a Laysan Albatross.

The bird was inside a fenced area covering approximately 3 acres of graded, rough lava chunks 5 to 15 cm in size. It was in a far corner nearest the ocean. The plumage seemed in good condition except for the tail and the primaries on the folded right wing. It was sitting on the lava, alert, with eyes clear and with no visible signs of injury. I approached to 1 m distance trying to provoke it to rise. It snapped its bill, but refused to stand. The right leg, visible under its plumage, was flesh-colored, tinged with gray. Slight abrasions were noticeable on the leg and web, but were not bleeding. The eye and mandible membranes appeared moist, although still drier than seems characteristic of terrestrial birds.

We caught and examined the albatross; it was not emaciated and its crop was at least half full. We applied Furacin to the abrasions and gave it approximately 2 cups of water by tube. We checked the wings, legs and other body parts and found no noticeable injuries. The bird seemed weak but still "snappish".

We removed it from the compound to a sandy road area, and faced it into the wind for possible maneuvering for takeoff. It was stressed, and panted heavily for the next 30 minutes. It then moved awkwardly into a naupaka clump, lowered itself onto the sand, and remained in that position for an hour and a half.

At about 4:45 p.m. the prevailing wind died. By now the bird appeared calm and alert but still showed no sign of wanting to attempt a takeoff. We provoked it into walking the short distance back into the compound where



Laysan Albatross photographed on  
land near Kona.

Photo by B. Lee

