

R. W. Merrill
1964

AT SEA

Monday 3 August 1964

0900 AM Underway - Was below decks
AND never realized we were
moving until I had finished
stowing gear and came above.
Found we were half out of the
harbor.

10:30 Came off watch - Saw one
Common Noddy Tern. We are
clear of harbor heading in
a westerly SSW direction.
The sea is a deep beautiful
blue. The ship is taking about
10° rolls. Most things in
DRAWERS roll ~~joyously~~ joyously about.
There are 6 Smithsonian personnel
and 2 oceanographers aboard.

2345 In bed for the night. So hot.
Ship takes constant 20° rolls. Conditions
fine. Have started seeing different birds
None shot today - Paul shot at 2 Wedge-tails.
Will read a little & go to sleep.
No sea sickness yet.

R. W. Merrill
1964

AT SEA

Tuesday August 4 1964

Up at 6:00 because flock of Wedgetails was sighted. Paul + I were at the guns going in. I got 2, Paul got 3. 3 were retrieved 2 got away by the time we had turned about.

About midday the engine room reported loss in air pressure and we had to drift for a couple of hours. In the afternoon Paul + I shot 1 bird each. Both were retrieved.

During the day we took many 30° rolls and a couple over that. One smoke bomb was a dud today. We had a fire + boat drill today. Now we know where to go in case we sink.

Observed phosphorescent fish tonight. Really interesting. They emit light when disturbed. The best place to see them is the bow.

Spent all day on deck and am just about wore out with the sun.

R. W. Merrill
1964

FA Sea

Wednesday - August 5, 1964

Very few birds sighted today.
Shot once, Paul shot once. No
collecting done. Engines slowed to
 $\frac{1}{2}$ speed during mid-day to regain
AIR pressure.

Sea relatively calm. MANY flying
fishes. Saw one small whale this
morning.

Not much to record. because very little
EARTH shatter events ~~occurred~~. occurred.

R. W. Merrill
1964

FN SPA

Thursday 6 August 1964

Began watch at 0500 ~~at~~

No flocks - Very few birds today

Passed Johnston Is. Atoll at

1030,

shot 1 Red-footed Booby (imm.)

dropped it on the neck.

at 1330. Spent rest of day

putting it up. - Only shot fired today

After evening watch spent time

in the bow waiting for waves to

crash over. Real neat. Bobbing every

which way.

Many 30° rolls. Today crashing

in the galley every time it rolls.

R. W. Merrill
1964

AT SEA

FRIDAY

August 7, 1964

Nothing EARTH shattering today.

Hardly any birds seen

First day on the grid.

Shot 1 immature White Necked Petrel.

Only bird shot today.

Made one leg and bottom of leg
of grid today. started up other

leg at 1:AM Sat.

Saw lots of birds on
bottom leg white on 9-12 pm watch.

R. W. Merrill
1964

194 SEA

Saturday August 8, 1964

'Tis naught to say about today,
but mist and rain and grey all day.

No birds collected. The shots were fired
and all we did was grow more tired
of pitching, rolling, bumping, crashing.
And all day long the sea kept thrashing.

The worst by far is the constant tilting
never steady always tilting.
No matter where, you can not hide
from shifting winds and washing tide.

So I will end my poem tonight,
and hope I do not take to flight
from out my top bunk as I sleep
and wind up on the deck - a heap.

R. W. Merrill

ATSCA

1964

Sunday - August 9, 1964

Nothing happened today worth mentioning. We saw less than 1 bird per half hour and didn't fire a shot. Beautiful day tho. Too bad there wasn't a little more action. Oh well maybe tomorrow.

Monday

August 10, 1964

Not a very exciting day. Not many birds were seen until 5:00 pm when a flock was sighted. But we were not able to catch them. One White Tail Tropic bird was shot by A. SKUA was seen. We have hopes for tomorrow.

P. W. Merrill
1964

177 SEA

Tuesday - August 11, 1964

Well, today we had a little more excitement than usual. Spotted a flock in the morning and tho we chased it we couldn't catch it.

In the evening or late afternoon (5:50 P.M.) we saw another flock. We chased and tho we fired & fired we only got 2 wedge tail Shearwaters. Paul got them both AND I none. For all my efforts all I got was a right arm that is black & blue at the shoulder. From now on I will not do the shooting and will let some of those who have been giving "Expert" information on how to shoot do the shooting. After all, they sound like they should provide good entertainment.

We saw a tug pulling a barge today. I hope we are as fortunate tomorrow as we were today and have as much excitement. We'll see.

R. W. Merrill
1964

At Sea

Wednesday - August 12, 1964

Nothing exciting happened. Today
Hardly a bird was seen. Paul
shot at one - missed.

We did have an abandon ship
drill and that was about the
only thing worth mentioning.
Wrote a poem on watch - Ode to a
Tern (or why a Tern turns)

Thursday - August 13, 1964

Well, we're out of the gyris area.
And just after we were out Paul
shot a tropic bird (white tailed)
and kerplunk! into the water.
We all watched as we pulled the
ship around and as we approached
it she flew away. That's the
breaks. This was the end of the
all night watches - 3 or 4 days
and we'll be at Pearl & Hermes
Reef. Probably Monday. Time
about $\frac{1}{2}$ gone. We're on the
home end of the RWH.

R. W. Merrill

1964

AT SEA

Friday, August 14, 1964

Well today we had excitement.
Ran into a big flock in the
After noon ⁽²³⁰⁾ and shot it up til 5:00.
Got 10 birds in all.

Paul got 2 Sooty terns in the
morning and I got a Bulwer's Petrel
about 2 P.M. then all the rest
were Wedgetails - I got 1 or 2 Paul
about 4 and a sailor another.

Sound like a war at times.

I hope we get some good ones tomorrow
I winged a Adult Brown Booby but
he kept going. Guess I just ruffled him.

Tomorrow we must start and get
ready for our Islands. Lots of stuff in
the hold to look over.

Saturday, August 15 1964

Today we went through a
couple of flocks. Also scatterings
Paul got some Sooties, Wedgetails, and
a Frigate bird. Doug Whitman a ^{RT} Tropic
bird. And me a Sooty Tern.

Since my arm is knotted up I've been
doing all my shooting from the hip.
For the last 3-4 days. Dropped the
Sooty with 1 shot from the Long Tom.
Supposed to get to Pearl & Hermes tomorrow into

R. W. Merrill

1964

AT SEA - Pearl & Hermes

Sunday

August 16 1964

ARRIVED Pearl & Hermes Reef
4:30 Sighted ABOUT 3:50

The next 3 nights + 2 days
will be spent ashore on Southeast
island.

Landing made at 5 PM. AND CAMP
set up. ISLAND SURVEY was made.

A number of tagged seals were found.

Noticable animals include: Seals, LAYSAN
ALBATROSS, Red-footed Boobies, Brown Boobies, Blue faced
Boobies, Great Frigate birds, Sooty Terns, Fairy Terns
Common Noddy Terns, Hawaiian Noddy Terns,
Red-tailed Tropic birds, Wedge tail shearwaters,
Christmas Is. Shearwaters, Bulwer's petrels
Bristle thigh curlews, Ruddy Turnstones, Golden
Plovers.

AFTER the camp was set up AND SURVEY
done we set out to band Sooty Terns
AND Wedge tails

R. W. Merrill
1964

AT SEA Pearl + Hermes

Monday August 17, 1964

During the morning I dug up the skeleton of a Hawaiian monk seal. It was an old or seemingly large seal, much of it was missing but it will be sent back anyway. The skull is all there and one of the rear flippers is somewhat all there and a taken skeleton in between. Much of it was below the surface and I had to scrape meat (rotten) off the bones. I washed them in sea water and got them as clean as I could. Not much of a skeleton but maybe it will help someone.

The afternoon was spent banding the large birds on the island and some immature sooty terns. The others had banded large birds during the morning.

The night was spent banding sooty terns and wedge tail shearwaters.

R. W. Merrill
1964

AT SEA - Pearl & Hermes

Tuesday

August 18, 1964

Today we took the Rubber RAFT
And visited: Bird Is., Sand Is., Grass Is.
And Seal Is. We observed Kittery
from the shore of Seal Is.

All of these Is. lie in ~~a~~ westward
from Southeast Is.

Bird Is. and Sand Is. are only
small sandy upcroppings which have
no vegetation. Both had Bluefaced Boobies
and Hawaiian Noddys roosting also probably
other occasional visitors at times. Both
had a few seals.

Grass Is. was of considerable size
after visiting the last two. It had
good vegetation at one end and an abundance
of Frigate birds of which the chicks were
banded. There also were Red footed Boobies
Blue faced Boobies, Red Tail Tropic birds, Common
Noddy terns, Ruddy Turnstones, Fairy Terns,
wandering Tattlers and a few others,
Wedgetails, seals etc.

Seal Is. had dense vegetation in the
center at one end. containing Wedgetail
burrows and Red Tail Tropic birds, There
were also G. Frigates, Fairy Terns, Common Noddy
Terns and perhaps other wanderers.

When we got way westward we made
a radio check with the ship and they

R. W. Merrill

1964

AT SEA Pearl + Hermes

came down to pick us up. We had
dinner on the ship then steamed our
Little Raft back to Southeast.

The evening was spent banding Wedge Tails
and Sooty Terns.

Tomorrow we go to North Is.

R.W. Merrill
1964

At sea Pearl & Hermes

Wednesday August 19, 1964

We and loaded the raft today. Then ~~the~~ motored northward across the atoll to North Is. On the way Paul found a large fish ball floating in the water.

We arrived first on what the map shows as just a sandy spit awash at high water. Now however it has grown to be about 10 ft. above sea level and has meager vegetation - 4 species of plants.

Many seals here also, two of which put on quite a show near the raft. There were Fairy Terns flying overhead common Noddys and lots of Blue faced Boobies present. One Blue faced Chick also. No wedgetails. Just a general survey was done and then we went on to North Is.

North was quite large and reminded us of Southeast because it had more area than the other little islands.

North has; Wedgetails, Fairy Terns, C. Noddy Terns, Hawaiian Noddy Terns, Laysan Albatross chicks, Red-tailed tropic birds, Blue faced Boobies and seals.

There were 2 mother seals with pups

At night wedgetails and Blue faced Boobies were banded.

R. W. Merrill
1964

At Sea Pearl + Hermes

Thursday

August 20, 1964

The morning was spent cleaning up any banding and completing surveys. We left about 2 pm. The sea was very, very calm. Yesterday the Shearwater had sailed up outside the reef to find an opening ~~to~~ for us to get out safely. Most of the area is surrounded with very high reef sticking out of the water most of the time.

We got aboard and prepared to land on Lisianski the following morning at 8 AM.

R.W. Merrill
1964

PT SEA LISIANSKI

Friday August 21, 1961

8 AM Arrived AT Lisianski Is.
Most predominant sight seen is the two
PALM trees on the Island.

Landed and set up camp. Immediately
we noticed the flies were very thick. This
was to be the only drawback on the whole
Island.

A survey was made and 143 seals
were found, more than on any other island.
One with a pup. Also 3 Hawkbill turtles were seen

The vegetation was very very thick in the
interior mostly consisting of Scabola around

the edges and Lepturus in the center.

Also there were viney areas of ~~Ipomoea~~ Ipomoea

The island was loaded with birds and only

A estimate was tried because there were
so many that it was impossible to do
any sort of counting. Those in greatest

numbers were Sooty Terns, Frigate birds,
Wedgetail shearwaters and Bonin Is. Petrels.

Others that were there were Bluefaced Boobies

Red footed Boobies, Brown boobies, Fairy Terns,

C. Noddy Terns, Hawaiian Noddy Terns, Laysan

Albatross chicks, Bristle thigh Curlews (groups of
10-12 or more were seen) ~~and~~ Ruddy Turnstones,

Golden Plovers,

R. W. Merrill
1964

Ht Sea Lisianski

That night we banded Sooty Terns. and
it was quite a job tramping through
waist high grass all the time. Also
Fairy Terns and Hawaiian Noddys and Bonin
Is. were done.

R. W. Merrill
1964

AT SEA LISIANSKI

Saturday

August 22, 1964

Finished banding just at ~~sunrise~~ dawn. Good thing too because the sooty's were getting harder to catch as it became light.

Got a couple of hours sleep but the flies became too bad by 8:30 so had to get up. Had a good swimming area so when flies got too bad we went for a swim.

After we got up we banded some Sooty Tern chicks. Tried to rest for a while during the late afternoon.

At night we banded more sooty terns Wedge tails and another 100 Bonin Is. Petrels. The Bonin's are in large numbers and at dusk are seen all over the place.

An albino Sooty Tern and a partial albino were collected alive on Lisianski and will be brought to the S.I.

R. W. Merrill
1964

AT SEA

Sunday August 23, 1964

Broke camp at 5 AM and returned to ship. Spent the rest of the day drying out gear and packing stuff in the hold. I spent the afternoon putting the Lab in shape while the rest slept.

Monday August 24, 1964

While not on watch - slept

Tuesday August 25, 1964

While not on watch - slept.

Wednesday August 26, 1964

Same as above

Thursday August 27, 1964

ARRIVAL Honolulu 4:30 PM

R. W. MERRELL
1964

AT SEA LAYSAN

16 September 1964

Landed on LAYSAN Is. About 9 AM.
While looking for a campsite without too many flies I found a wedgetail Shearwater with an orange streamer on its leg. I was unable to catch the bird. Many LAYSAN finches were found. Also Fairy Tern chicks were found on the way to the campsite.

Later on while looking for the streamered ~~the~~ wedgetail two orange tagged Sooty Terns were seen.

About 10:30 A.M. We split into 2 groups of 3. Ken, Allen and myself going around the pond in the interior and Paul, Alan, Doug following the shore line.

In the interior we found innumerable finches
Shore birds were: Ruddy Turnstones About 1500
Golden Plover About 5-800 and Wandering Tattlers
About 35-50. Bristle thigh curlews About 15.

R. W. Merrill

YASER

LAYSAN

1964

17 September 1964

Got up about 2 AM and went out banding.
Did ~~Adult~~ Sooty Terns while others worked on
other species. Returned to camp at day break and rested
until 9 AM. About 10 AM I walked around the
perimeter of the island. Returned at 3:30.
Found imm Grey backs (5) on trip around also
nesting Bulwers and Christmas Is. Shearwaters. Lots of
young of these species. It was a RAINY DARK
AFTERNOON. Found a stick on my trip around.
Many fish balls and old tank cartridges floated
up on the beach. Also a rather unusual
liquid gas container had washed ashore. Had a
stainless steel nozzle on the top etched with:
14557 Rassy SPEC - N45 - 26673 - 1A.

R. W. Merrill
1964

AT SEA LAYSAN

18 September 1964

Walked around the perimeter again. Today I saw an orange streamered Common Noddy tern in a flock on the shore but couldn't catch it. There are lots of Laysan Albatross eggs about and quite a large number of dead carcasses of young. Evidently a rough time for the birds. Laysan is terribly hot and there are a large number of flies to bother us. Seals were numerous and 2 Green Turtles were found.

This evening I banded Fairy Terns and others taking #2 bands. I estimate about 500 Fairy Terns. About ~~100~~ 100 Bulwer's petrels on Laysan. I found a rather good spot with many Bulwer chicks and probably there were more if I had only gotten farther down the beach but I had run ~~out~~ out of #2's and it was 5:30 AM ^(19th) when I finished. Caught 5 Ruddy Turnstones and a wandering Tattler.

R. W. Merrill

At sea Laysan

1964

19 September 1964

Coast Guard Cutter was seen today and they sent ashore a party of 5. Bob Long and Bob Fleet (S.I.) Gene ~~Tridler~~ ^{Tridler} (U.S. Fish & Wildlife) and 2 Hawaii Fish & Game men.

I took the shot gun and walked the perimeter again counting & sexing seals, and looking for the streamered Noddy to shoot. Needless to say the Noddy wasn't seen and the following is a breakdown on seals.

Adult males	56
Adult females	34
Yearling males	35
Yearling females	27
Unidentified Adults	74
Unidentified Yearlings	14
Unidentified Unidentified	<u>12</u>
TOTAL	252

Later the census of Teal were taken and it was found there were 257 teal (approx.)

Went out after Frigate birds at night but the moon was so bright they were impossible to catch. We broke camp 4 AM (20th) and waited for the raft to take us aboard ship. Enough running around Laysan for me!