



**NOAA Teacher at Sea  
Christopher Harvey  
Onboard NOAA Ship OSCAR ELTON SETTE  
June 5 – July 4, 2006**

**Date:** June 16, 2006

**Time:** 6:30 PM Hawaii

**Location:** Still bouncing around in the Pacific Ocean!

**Entry**

There is talk today that the President has made the Northwest Hawaiian Islands (NWHI) a national monument, whatever that means. Bob informed me this morning and I am inclined to think he is the resident expert on the matter since he has the most riding on the line (i.e., his job is on the line). From my understanding, the NWHI would become like Rocky Mountain National Park or Yosemite National Park, and would be completely off limits to commercial fishing. This would have a HUGE impact on the fishing industry out here, since many companies are awaiting Bob's findings about whether or not the NWHI can sustain commercial lobster fishing or not. If in fact the NWHI are now a national monument, then our mission has been undercut by legislative action (Yippee! Oh boy! My first time being in the middle of crazy government legislation!)

Regardless of the rumor, we continued work today as normal. So did the trade winds. So too did the swells. I was in a great position as a stacker to watch my fellow scientists cracking the traps against the threat of one breaking wave after another. At one point I thought we would lose Aris, the little one, to a swell that must have been about 15-20 feet from trough to crest. I was relieved to see that he was still cracking away after the water had subsided, and could only laugh at the great luck I had not to be a cracker today! (That said, I think I can sense my waxen wings beginning to melt.)

We finished late again today. And other than fighting the rough seas, nothing much happened. I have taken to watching the swells- as my old man taught me- but from the surfer's point of view instead of the scientist's point of view. I anticipate great waves in the distance while everyone else is "ooo-ing" and "awww-ing" at the ones near the ship. And it is always these distant waves that turn out to be trouble. I see the swells in sets, unpredictable of when, except that I know that they will come. And when I see a large face of a wave, I think to myself, its time to start paddling or else I'm going to miss it. But I catch myself, sadly, when I remember that I am on a ship in the middle of the Pacific Ocean where I would not have a chance of catching a wave anyway--there is no bottom for the swells to catch. One hope for me is that someone will catch the waves, when they touch ground and build into beautiful things. Some surfer on the North Shore is doing exactly what I am doing, watching the set and waiting, because the swells I see today will be the surf he rides tomorrow.