



**NOAA Teacher at Sea**  
**Christopher Monsour**  
**Onboard NOAA Ship OSCAR ELTON SETTE**  
**June 12 – July 12, 2007**

**NOAA Teacher at Sea:** Chris Monsour  
NOAA Ship OSCAR ELTON SETTE  
Mission: Lobster Survey Western Hawaiian Islands  
Day 3: Friday, June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2007

**Science and Technology Log**

Yesterday we entered The Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument (formerly the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine National Monument). I found from talking to the crew it is the largest Marine Protected Area in the world. The new native Hawaiian name, Papahānaumokuākea reflects Hawaiian traditions relating to the birth of the Islands. Papahānaumoku is the goddess who birthed the islands.

I spent most of today on the observation deck above the bridge looking for birds and waiting for French Frigate Shoals to appear on the horizon. A part of our mission was to deliver supplies to Fish and Wildlife personal on Tern Island, which is part of the shoal. Tern Island was formed into a runway to serve as a refueling stop for planes enroute to Midway during World War II. Some of the buildings remain and could be seen with a pair of binoculars.

I found through some investigating that French Frigate Shoals is an open atoll consisting of a large, crescent-shaped reef surrounding numerous small, sandy islets. The first object that stands out as soon as one reaches the shoal is the steep-sided pinnacle that sticks up out of the water. It is the first land I have seen in 3 days so it may not seem like much, but it was a welcome sight. The pinnacle is named "La Pérouse Pinnacle" after Comte de La Pérouse, who visited the atoll in 1786. As I did some research on the shoals I found that in the moonlight the pinnacle so resembled a full-rigged sailing ship that it lured more than one vessel to her doom on the shoals.

On deck we were preparing the tables and traps for tomorrow as we will set traps tomorrow at 1700 (or at 5:00 p.m.) I asked Garrett who has been on this trip 5 times if I could get bait duty first. This consists of taking a Mackerel and making three cuts so that the muscle is exposed to attract the lobsters and any other organism that may venture into the trap. We will then collect the traps at 0800 Sunday morning. We have set up an assembly line on the side of the ship, which consists of several tables end to end. As a trap comes up, the cracker will open up the trap and take out the organisms that made it in and the old bait. The trap is then rebaited and sent toward the back of the ship. The organisms that were collected will be placed in a bucket and sent to the wet lab to be measured and processed. All of the lobsters that are collected will be returned after data such as carapace length are recorded. The lobsters are not just tossed off the side of the

boat, but are placed in a special cage and dropped to the bottom. This prevents any predators from eating the lobster before they make it back to the bottom.

### **Personal Log**

The days have been going by pretty quickly. I am ready to do some work though. The major event of the past two days has been the meals and watching movies. The food is excellent so I m sure my plan of losing weight on the trip will not come to be. The good part now is that I have the chance to get to know the people I'm living with a lot better. My roommate Mike is a student at the University in Hawaii and knows a great deal about sharks and I learned quite a bit about the behavior of the shark and especially about some of the sharks we may see. I am learning to tie knots that will not come undone when we have large waves and I got to put on my survival suit for the first time during the abandon ship drill. I hope to have a picture to share of that.

### **Animals Seen Today**

Terns  
Frigate birds  
Shearwaters  
Dolphins

### **Question of the Day**

During World War II what impact might the battles (Midway) that were fought near these islands have had on the ecosystem? Could there still be impact today?

Aloha...  
Chris



It has become a common sight for Teacher at Sea Chris Monsour to see in the skies large, black birds, hovering lazily in place. This is the frigatebird. The name "frigatebird" calls to mind the sails of ships and, indeed, frigatebirds sail gracefully in the air currents overhead. Their wingspan is some 7.5 feet and their deeply forked scissor-like tails afford them ultimate maneuverability. Their other common name, however, the "man-o'-war" bird, reflects the way in which they use their flying and maneuvering skill. Frigatebirds are pirates who harass incoming birds until the victim is so upset that it disgorges its catch. The frigatebird then drops with amazing speed and plucks the bolus out of the water, or even catches it before it hits.



This image of La Pérouse Pinnacle was taken by Teacher at Sea Chris Monsour as OSCAR ELTON SETTE approached the French Frigate Shoals to deliver supplies.