

modest sea level rise of three feet would claim 65 acres of the island where Wisdom nests, leaving the “high” islands, or the main Hawaiian Islands where people live and tourists come to play, the species’ hope for the future.

Somehow, the birds must know.

After hundreds of years of absence, these amazing birds that can glide for hundreds of miles and several days across the sea without a single flap of their wings are returning to the main Hawaiian Islands, the high islands. It may only be a fraction of one percent of the total Laysan albatross population, but the numbers are growing. Their nest sites are dotting the islands of Kaua’i and O’ahu.

Unfortunately, that doesn’t mean we’re co-habiting all that well with them. Almost every year, a dog or two attacks a colony, leaving a trail of dead birds. Last year, cats took out a couple dozen chicks. Now, it looks like feral pigs are brazenly going after adults. Just this week, a person—a human—or two desecrated a colony on O’ahu, crushing eggs, mutilating adult birds, and stealing conservation equipment.

So what does it matter? It can all be so defeating. What does anything matter? We are gutted. And powerless. And they are just birds, after all.

But, then, I see something on Facebook. After months at sea, ticking off tens of thousands of the nearly fifty million miles logged thus far in her life—evading fishhooks and sharks and deadly plastic marine debris—Wisdom is back. She’s returned to her nesting grounds where her faithful mate awaits. They consecrate their commitment to each other, he on top of her, and it’s photographed, the news racing across the Internet, clipping across the ocean to the rest of the world at speeds that would put a tsunami to shame.

Weeks later, the miracle happens. It’s near Christmas. The chosen one, encased in blood vessels, grows to the size of a large avocado and travels twice the length of Wisdom’s body in her oviduct to emerge from an opening no bigger than the eraser atop my pencil. An egg. The 64-year-old Laysan albatross has laid an egg. Again. I wonder how many she has left, and I think about endurance and dedication and daring that is this bird, an albatross, Wisdom, who defies odds and teaches me about life and joy and hope.

Madison Jones

Self-Portrait in a Broken Mirror

Driving out through the fields at dawn,
 dry grass resembles the Strofadés
 out along the bank where the cows wade
 in the shallow mud pits,

 and here, the glimmering past is just
 a glimpse in the broken rear-view
 mirror of that Oldsmobile—
 at sixteen, at twenty five,

 again at the field’s edge, hangover thrumming
 with engine hiss,

spring daylight pouring out like a darkling river,
 moving from where I know not
 out toward where I can only imagine.

 Once it is gone, it is gone at
 once into those cracked lines,
 where the light veers forward and away—
 the wet odor of gardenias

in the oppressive summer heat—a memory eating its tail
 and sunning itself like the copperhead
 that writhed along the gravel path, vanishing

beyond the shallow mud pits of the lime quarry
 I would deliver pizza to on Thursdays,

where the ghostly-powdered ground
seemed to ask, *Perché mi schiante? Perché mi
scerpi?*

There the cranes howled and the creeks
would turn the strangest color of blue,
though we would wade in anyway,

drifting with the currents beyond the shallows—out
into the glimmering past
until evening threatens and herds us back
like shadows onto those blue cloth seats with
their cigarette burns

and down the darkening highway
out of the cold, clean air that smells
rich with cow shit and honeysuckle.

Madison Jones

Anthropocene

We won't disappear
like the bees, who forget
us with open mouths,
honeyed like drunks.

The bees who forget,
pressing their dusty bodies
honeyed like drunks
into the dry valleys.

Pressing their dusty bodies into
the sky, a darkening dream
echoing in the dry valleys
with answers we ignored.

Into the sky, a dream darkening
those places we were before.
With answers we ignored,
darkness surrounds us.

Those places we were before
became something new
from the answers we ignored,
forgetting ourselves like a river.

We became something new,
opening our mouths,
forgetting ourselves like a river.
We won't disappear.