

A. Binion Amerson, Jr.
4020 Brookhaven Club Drive, Apt. 1520
Dallas, Texas 75234
214/241-1726

CHRISTMAS 1983
December 17, 1983

Greetings:

George

Yes, Christmas 1983 has arrived. Yesterday morning, "Old Man Winter" turned Dallas into a winter wonderland with from two to six inches of snow over various portions of the area. Of course it didn't last very long, but it sure got everyone into the Christmas spirit real fast. Additional snow is predicted for tonight and tomorrow. Maybe Dallas will have a White Christmas after all!

The year 1983 has been very productive for me. My Senior Technical Writing position with American Micro Products, Inc. (AMPI), 705 N. Bowser, Suite 125, Richardson, Texas 75081 (214/238-1815) has kept me extremely busy writing and editing instruction manuals for computer software for such major computer companies as Epson, NEC, Radio Shack, Sharp, Texas Instruments, Timex-Sinclair, and Xerox. I am certainly enjoying the exciting work. Also, I am learning a bit about computers in the process.

The long awaited publication of my two volume monograph "Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat of American Samoa. Volume I. Environment and Ecology, Volume II. Accounts of Flora and Fauna" by Amerson, Whistler, and Schwaner (edited by R. S. Banks) became available in March 1983 (actually published in December 1982). A free copy may be obtained by writing to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Division of Federal Aid, 500 N.E. Multnomah Street, Suite 1690, Portland, Oregon 97232.

Some of my spare time has been spent trying to improve my physical fitness. For most of the year, I have been swimming laps (up to a mile) several times a week. Also, in October, I started working out on Nautilus equipment three times a week. The hard work is paying off; I certainly feel a whole lot better.

I also have found time to do a little free-lance editing and environmental/ecological consulting. I'm presently involved with completing an important wetlands document for my previous employer--Environment Consultants, Inc. (ECI), Dallas, Texas--as part of mitigation measures for construction of the Southern Tier Expressway in Western New York for the New York State Department of Transportation.

Again this year I'll be spending Christmas with my Mother in Macon, Georgia. I am certainly looking forward to visiting with family and friends over the Holidays.

Here's wishing you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!!!

Best regards,

Binion

P.S. Thanks for the DEIS concerning Johnston.

DALLAS, TX 752
PM
MAY 11
1983

FIRST CLASS MAIL

DALLAS, TX 752
PM
MAY 11
1983



MAY 1983

DEVOÉ
1907 Honolulu

JOHN
Ford
FWS



A. B. Amerson, Jr.
AMERICAN MICRO PRODUCTS, INC.
705 North Bowser
Richardson, Texas 75081

TO:

Dr. George Balazs

Hawaii Inst. of Marine Biol

P. O. Box 1346

Coconut Island

Kaneohe, HI 96744

RETURN POSTAGE GUARANTEED

Konoheki
Fishing Rights
Report No. 2
1954

FIRST CLASS MAIL

Mr. A. Binlon Amerson, Jr.
4020 Brookhaven Club Drive
Apartment 1520
Dallas, TX 75234.

May 10, 1983

Dear George -

Enjoyed talking with you last night. After locating the Agard correspondence, I just had to let you know about it ASAP. Hope it useful in your turtle research. I'll let you know if I find anything else.

I look forward to reading the material about Johnston. Even though I'm in Dallas, I still am very much interested in that entire part of the Pacific. Your comments about my completing the FRS History has once again gotten me interested in that MS. Yes, I should work on it again and bring it up to date. Then get it published. I'm also working on a popular book about Finding Birds in Sonora.

Pardon my scribbling, but I thought you wanted the Agard letters ASAP.

Best regards

A B Amerson Jr

1089-A Ala Moana Blvd.
Honolulu, Hawaii 96814
July 1, 1969

Museum of Natural History
Smithsonian Institution
Washington, D. C. 20560

Dear Mr. Benion Amerson

Read an article in today's Honolulu Advertiser by columnist Bob Krauss wherein you sought information about French Frigate Shoals. This letter will outline my experience regarding the shoals.

In September of 1946 I first arrived at the shoals by plane to take charge of operations for our newly formed fishing company. The Navy had left in 1945 and thereafter two separate fishing vessels had profitably operated thereabouts.

Using a combination of fishing boats and airplanes my work in and around the shoals extended from 1946 through 1959. I have had widely varied experiences concerning the shoals and possibly the longest tenure there as a working individual. Your observations indicate your awareness of the areas bleak desolation and lack of conveniences which did create many problems. Were it not for a youthful pioneering spirit I do not feel many of us would have ventured to such a place. In retrospect the original idea seemed premature. Much knowledge was gained during the years of operation though not much profit.. It is my opinion that the supply of sea food at the shoals will come into its own eventually, particularly since the Hawaiian Island fishery (inshore) is being depleted steadily.

If I can be of service feel free to write. I do still have some photos and movies and newspaper stories and clippings about the place.

Very truly yours,

Louis K. Agard Jr.
Louis K. Agard Jr.

aba

20 August 1969

Mr. Louis Agard, Jr.
1089-A Ala Moana Blvd.
Honolulu, Hawaii 96814

Dear Mr. Agard:

Many thanks for your letter of 1 July. My apologies for not writing earlier, but I have only recently returned here to Washington. I am delighted you responded to Bob Krauss' article about French Frigate Shoals. I had tried to contact you as well as Frank Opperman, by phone several times while in Honolulu, but never was successful.

I am enclosing a copy of the first draft of my section on the fishing industry at French Frigate Shoals during 1946-1948. So far, I've mainly gotten the information from newspaper articles and Hawaii Aeronautics Commission correspondence. I found a few references to the fishermen in the log books of the East Island Coast Guard Station. From this data and hopefully your help I can "beef up" this section considerably. Since I will not be back in Honolulu in the near future to discuss this with you, I suppose we will have to resort to letters. I will now list several questions the answers to which would be helpful to me.

Was your company Seaside Fishing Co., Hawaiian Tuna Packers, or something different? Who else were owners in your company and do you know who owned the others? Also, how many men were involved; one reference said their ages were from 18 to 67, is this true? You said you first arrived at French Frigate Shoals in September of 1946 and that prior to that time two fishing vessels had operated thereabouts since the Navy pulled most of their men away in 1945. What was the names of these vessels and what others were later involved. Did they go back and forth to Honolulu periodically or did they work solely out of Tern Island? How often did your plane come to French Frigate Shoals? Were you using Transair Hawaii (a DC 3?) or a plane of your own?

The Coast Guard log for 5 September 1948 says "1600 LCM departed for Tern Island to meet Transair Hawaii plane and pick up mail and supplies - 2050 LCM returned;" and for 7 September "1100 Agard and party put ashore to await message from Honolulu - 1330 Agard and party departed." Did you bring mail and supplies to the Coast Guard station often? Another series of log entries reads: "21 July 1949 - 1130 Fishing boat (converted wash boat with gray hull hove into sight standing in for French Frigate Shoals... 26 July - 1425 Agard plane Lockheed Lodestar N 5601V over East enroute Tern Island..."

27 July - 0945 Received mail from Aero Fisheries. Mr. Jack Beatty, Buzz Agard, and Capt. Stanley Jabihon (USAF) on board. 1100 Visitors departed. ... 17 August 1949 - 1020 Established radio contact with Aero Fisheries plane... 1055 Plane engine conked out... 1112 Advised CCGD 14 by dispatch giving course speed and latest position of the plane... 1401 Port Allen Radio (CAA) advised that plane N5601V had landed safely at Barking Sands, Kauai." Would you comment on this incident and were there others?

Would you go into detail as to the fishing operation itself? What type fish were you after and how did you catch them? Did you fish both inshore and offshore? Was the operation seasonal? Did you take turtles? If so, do you have any recollection as to numbers taken? Did you ever have refrigeration on Tern for holding your fish? If not, how did you keep them fresh? Did you fish around any of the other Leeward Hawaiian Islands while operating from French Frigate Shoals?

Did you visit or work off any of the other islands at French Frigate Shoals besides Tern? There are some metal pipes in the water on the lagoon side of Trig and Whale-Skate Islands (the latter is now one combined island). The pipes are small (approximately 1 to 2") and are set in a line (3 in one place, 2 in another at Whale-Skate; 2 at Trig) running perpendicular to the shore line. There are also two rather large (5-6") pipe sticking out of the lagoon beach of Whale-Skate Island; both are rusted off at ground level. Also on Whale-Skate we found what looks like a fish trap. Several metal hoops covered with poultry wire (1" mesh) were found partially buried at the west end of the island. At the other end we found a long piece of poultry wire (1" mesh). Might these have been placed there by your fishing company?

You mentioned in your letter that you have photos, movies and newspaper articles about French Frigate Shoals. Would you be willing to loan them to me and would you let us duplicate them? I have seen many of the newspaper articles but may have missed some. I would of course return the loaned articles to you. Did you or any of your men keep a journal, log book, or diary while at French Frigate Shoals? This would be of interest to me also.

Photos would be very valuable, especially if they contain wildlife. Very little is known about the animal life at French Frigate Shoals during and just after World War II. I have been going to French Frigate Shoals each year since 1963 (except 1964) and have spent some six months there in all. I am currently writing a biological report about our work at French Frigate Shoals. I'm summarizing all that is known about the terrestrial animal life (birds, mammals and reptiles). In writing about man's influence on the French Frigate Shoals wildlife, I've gotten involved in writing a history of the atoll. My first draft is already quite lengthy and I've got a lot more to add. The Navy and Coast Guard have been very helpful in obtaining official logs, correspondence, and other records.

I have asked you too many questions in this letter, but I hope you have time to answer most of them in a return letter. I am enclosing a franked self-addressed envelope as well as a mailing label. The latter can be used for sending the photos and movies. Please register the package containing your photos; the frank should take care of the cost of registering it.

If you have access to a tape recorder, you may want to tape your answers instead of writing them. If so, I'll send you a mailable tape. In any case, I'll be anxious to hear from you again.

Best regards,

A. Binion Amerson, Jr.
Research Curator
Pacific Ocean Biological Survey Program

enclosures

1089-A Ala Moana Blvd.
Honolulu, Hawaii 96814
August 25, 1969

Dear Mr. A. Binion Amerson Jr.

Read with interest your letter and enclosures. Yes, I will try to fill in the general outline of events and note any significant happening.

Your first question of paragraph three, the name was Hawaiian American Fisheries in a joint venture with Seaside Fishing Co. Hawaiian American was my company and Opperman and Haines had Seaside Fishing. The first person to visit the shoals fishing was Jake Hoopa with the boat Simba (later to become famous when it disappeared without a trace and all hands lost). The early trips of the Simba were profitable and then Hawaiian Tuna Pkrs. sent the sampan Sailfish down to work successfully with Trans-Air Hawaii for a few trips flying the fish back from the former fighter air strip. Our venture followed both the Simba and Sailfish trips.

To start we had chartered the small inter-island freighter "Maizie C" to carry the land equipment, nets and skiff boats to Tern Isle. A Trans-Air plane (DC-3) ferried down the crew and more equipment. Both the boat and plane rendezvoused on time to begin operations. As for the mens ages, it is true in fact one youngster was only sixteen at the time and the oldest Hawaiian man, "Steamboat" claimed to be 67. The Simba made between 4 and 8 round boat trips to the shoals. The Sailfish made one round boat trip with two plane loads thrown in between. We worked only with skiffs and outboard motors the first two and one half months, living ashore in the deserted Navy quarters and using the DC-3 aircraft to ferry in the fish loads.

A new company Trans-Air Hawaii using the DC-3 or C-47 made all the initial flights. Yes, our charter flights carried in the Coast guard mail, perishable supplies like milk and ice cream and also personnel on short leaves. These flights were more frequent, something like once a week, than the regularly scheduled ship arrivals spaced at about once in three weeks. Outside of the sought after mail new movie films were most cherished and we carried this in also on charters.

In early 1947 I ran a converted landing craft (LCM) the "Silver" from Honolulu to the shoals to resupply the station and use as a work boat. This is one of the longest open sea voyages for this type blunt nosed vessel, more than 600 miles.

The entry regarding a converted crash boat maybe the "Alika" later mentioned in the log. The entry 26 July - 1425 Lockheed Lodestar N 5601V was my own plane purchased to ferry back and forth between the shoals and Honolulu. This craft was a Navy surplus bomber modified to FAA specifications. The name of the Company at that time was Aero Fisheries and the two gentlemen named on board on arrival were shareholders. Another entry on the plane is correct when it lost one engine (starboard) due to loss of oil. This was the only incident of this kind.

As for the actual fishing, we were mostly netting in shallow in-shore reefs for uhu, palani (surgeon fish) moi and sholehole. This was when we first arrived or between 1946 and 1948. We did some trolling for Ulua (crevelle) with success and other small tuna types. Only after being on the atolls for awhile did we find other varieties such as akule (later becoming our chief quarry) weke and menpachi (squirrel fish). We did almost no offshore fishing during 1946 through 1948. The operation was mostly seasonal and depended on good weather conditions. Being all open to the winds and much seas fishing was difficult.

When we first arrived there seemed to be a great many turtles and we captured these for butchering and the market. Turtle meat became one of the mainstays of our diet, supplementing beef. The previously untouched turtle stock dwindled and could no longer be considered a commercial undertaking. I would guess we took about 200 turtles in the time we were there.

When we first set foot on Tern isle there was only quonset huts and shop type buildings without refrigeration. We had shipped in equipment to rebuild the reefer box used by the Navy. It worked well and we used it regularly to hold the fish catches until a plane load was ready to be transported. Our first plane shipments were all iced fish. The ice had been shipped by the freighter "Maizie C" in insulated boxes and each plane flight into the shoals carried ice.

As for fishing around any of the other Leeward Hawaiian islands while working the shoals, no. Although in later years with my own sampan I did fish all the Leeward islands from Honolulu to Maro reef.

We did live on and work off all the islands in the French Frigate lagoon area. Setting mostly day nets and sometimes working at night. We did construct large fish traps both stationary and portable with only poor to fair success. Large fish, sharks and ulua would damage the traps and render them useless. Any strong weather creating seas would batter traps also to make them ineffective. There were other trap operations conducted there by fishermen after we left in 1960.

I am enclosing some pictures taken there when we first started and will label the backs to explain what they depict. Also there is an article which you may not have seen by a good co-pilot friend. I did keep a log of the operation mostly to determine when the fish made their runs but it has long since been lost.

I do have a cassette type recorder so if you would like for me to use it and send you some tapes on questions you ask, I will try. In reviewing the record of ships visits to French Frigate I recognize several. The Alika 19 Apr 1950 worked with us. The "Naia" 19 May 1950 was my vessel and sailed back and forth between there and Honolulu with catches. The "Joyita" worked with us also and became one of the most mysterious vessels ever. (ref. 3 Aug. 1950) Under the command of "Dusty" Miller she was found floating in the south Pacific a deserted derelict and no clues to this day as to what happened.

Other fishing boats operating there were "Osprey" 26 Jun. 1952, which shipped water and sank west of and close to the shoals. The "Taihei Maru" a frequent visitor to the area and only surviving sampan today. The "Koyo Maru" which also sank in a hurricane while operating around the shoals and all hands lost. ref. 23 Sep. 1955) These sampans were a part of a larger fleet of deep sea fishing boats all of which were somehow lost in the process of conducting operations.


Looking over your draft, I find it interesting and presenting the story as it was. We did contact the Territories offices to use the strip on a permit basis with the understanding that we would maintain it. We also contacted the offices of the fish and game department to obtain permission to use large fixed traps in the area. During the winter of 1947 and 1948 we had men on the island (Tern) continuously to preserve the equipment and watch it against theft.

In 1959 another joint venture was started. A plane was purchased from Pacific Airmotive (formerly belonging to United Airlines) and used for ferry flights. Also a refrigerated vessel "Oceanic" was purchased to work at the shoals, hold fish for ferry flights to Honolulu.

Just as an added note, and filmed, the only woman I know of to step on the island was Irma Agard in 1947 off of a Trans-Air Hawaii plane?

I have tried to answer your questions, perhaps not fully enough, but you can write for more clarification if needed.

Very truly yours,


Louis Agard Jr.

11 September 1969

Mr. Louis Agard, Jr.
1089-A Ala Moana Blvd.
Honolulu, Hawaii 96814

Dear Mr. Agard:

Thank you very much for your informative letter of 25 August. It was exactly what I needed. The pictures were very good and I am currently having several of them copied; I will return them as soon as they return from our photo lab. I also read the news article with interest; I am returning that with this letter.

the end of

Also enclosed is a new draft of/the Tern Island Navy Station section, the Commercial Fishing section, and a new section on Pacific Oceanic Fishery Investigation. Please read this over and comment on it if you desire to do so. I have included a lot of material from your letters and the article. If you find anything wrong, or if anything should be added, let me know. Do you know any more on the Simba and the Joyita? For instance, when did they disappear and were they on a fishing trip in the FFS area at the time? You mentioned that Irma Agard visited FFS in 1947; I assumed she was your wife (see draft).

I am presently revising my entire manuscript draft and plan to send it to the U.S. Naval Institute in Annapolis, Maryland, for possible publication in book form.

Thank you again for your help and I look forward to hearing from you again.

Best regards,

A. Binion Amerson, Jr.
Research Curator
Pacific Ocean Biological
Survey Program

14 October 1969

Mr. Louis Agard, Jr.
1089-A Ala Moana Blvd.
Honolulu, Hawaii 96814

Dear Mr. Agard:

Your letter of 6 October and the enclosed logs, correspondence, and other material concerning French Frigate Shoals arrived this morning. I am again most thankful for your contribution to my FFS history. The new material means that I will have to slightly rewrite the Commercial Fishing section, but that is fine for I hope to make the entire history as complete as possible. The typist in our office is presently almost finished with the entire manuscript; I'm working on the Literature Cited section. The entire MS should be well over 200 pages when completed.

In rechecking my early history data, I find that the first woman to visit FFS was in 1888, 3 more were there in 1891, and another in 1937.

On 22 April 1948, your log says: "Shae's barge grounded at Twin Islands." First, are you referring to Whale and Skate Islands (which are now joined)? And second, might this barge be the one that is still present about 100 yards offshore (in the lagoon) of Whale Island? It is grounded and appeared to have been driven onto the reef. I had thought this may have been a barge that belonged to the East Island C G Station; they gave it to the Navy for a fishing float and after that I don't know what happened to it.

In regard to your 16 mm films, I think it best not to send them to me here in DC. Unfortunately our field director has now left Honolulu, otherwise he could have viewed them. The only value they would have would be for the wildlife, especially birds on any of the ~~islands~~ islands. If you think there may be bird pictures in the film, I will write Mr. Eugene Kridler, the present Refuge Manager for the Hawaiian Islands Wildlife Refuge, and see if he would view the film there in Honolulu.

I am returning your material you sent me; I made copies for our files. I am also returning six of the photographs you sent me earlier; the remainder still have not come back from the photo lab.

Thanks again for all your help.

Best regards,

Binion Amerson
Pacific Program

7 November 1969

Mr. Louis Agard, Jr.
1089-A Ala Moana Blvd.
Honolulu, Hawaii 96814

Dear Mr. Agard:

Enclosed are the ~~8~~^{seven} remaining photographs you sent me. Thanks again for sending them to me. I don't know how many of them I'll end up using, but I'll definitely use the small one showing the group, as well as the one of the Maizie C.

My history is now completed and is being reviewed by the Smithsonian Press and U. S. Navy officials. I'll also send it to Coast Guard for approval. It is some 286 pages long. I'll keep you posted on its final outcome.

Thanks again for all your help.

Best regards,

A. Binion Amerson, Jr.
Pacific Program

**The Fishermen Have Brought A New
 Product To The Hawaiian Industry**



been putting this surplus property to
 good use for over a year.

Probably several readers have been
 aware of the competition of fishes
 from Island when they had occasion
 to hunt for them.

them. Sometimes they rear out in
 a small boat to do a little spear fish-
 ing in the nearby coral shallows. Or
 perhaps they will try their luck with
 a hand line from the deck, and better
 or worse, however, succeed, catching fish

Keep an eye open for
 sharks and rays, and
 do not worry them
 more than necessary.

Incidentally

BY
 THE AUTHOR OF
 THE HAWAIIAN INDUSTRY

in the air in an uneasy, queasy way
which these inches on sandy pilots
above are notched and clipped back
back in wooden tubes.

Perhaps the pilots will be ambitious
taking off from Tern is conflicting with



Left: M. Jones, operations manager for Trans-Air Howell and the captain of
the UC-3 in the background peers on the French Frigate Shoals runway on
his return from an unfruitful spear-fishing expedition.

ing the cool flaps and releasing the
brakes for the takeoff run.

The 3,100 feet is plenty of runway
for a UC-3, but if the wind is light
and the co-pilot is inexperienced—as
I was—recollections of the tale of a
Curtis Commando that "went off" the
far end are liable to thicken appreci-
atively across his brain as the main
wheel will slip sluggishly along the
strip's third quarter.

Airborne at last, he will eagerly
lean down to snap up the landing gear
retracting handle at the captain's ges-
ture (with the right thumb). Upon
looking back outside, there will prob-
ably be nothing visible except the
white claws of vitrolite blue brine
swatching swiftly and in seemingly

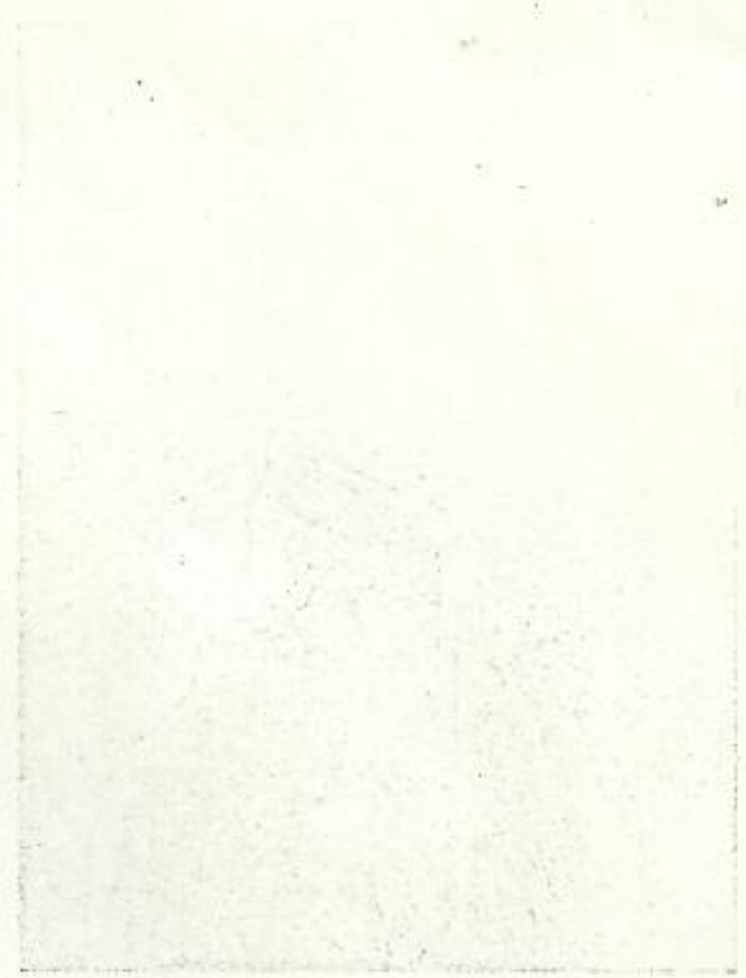


Right: Part of runway UC-3, the three tabs in the foreground held
in place.

ing they think that trade winds and
unusually far Nibon to meet in a
reaching "estimated" approximately
step underneath. Then, with main
homing to the left, they see the
gradually from their own throats
foot altitude and reflexively
it won't be long now."

Forty-five minutes later the
Rodgers-air smells extra sweet in their
as they taxi over its leads and
waiting tracks.

Along the road on the left, the
part in supplying another Hawaiian
single. In another way can the fish
fresh flavor of such far-flung fish-
be furnished to Oahu tables. As
or fish crops become depleted, Oahu
will undoubtedly become more and
more dependent upon "Flying Fish."



Right: Faded with but after an early morning



Mailing address: P.O. Box 8800, O'Hare International Airport, Chicago, Illinois 60666 Phone 625-1400

Location: Elk Grove Township, Illinois, on Route 52, one-half mile west of Route 83

EXECUTIVE OFFICES

Aug. 13, 1969

Mr. Binion Amerson, Jr.
Museum of Natural History
Smithsonian Institution
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Amerson,

Received Your letter of Aug. 5, 1969 and will try to answer the questions and make a few more comments.

In checking my service record and the date entered my photo album I was on French Frigate Shoals from Oct. 1947 to first part of April 1948. In reply to your question of Navy Aerologist leaving the island; There were two up til the time I left. I was told to come back to fleet weather cntrl-not to wait for a relief-as the weather station was to be closed. So one Aerologist stayed after I left for almost a month to close up station, that would make it about may 1948 when the last Aerologist ~~ix~~ left the island. Our duties as Aerologist was to take a surface weather observation every hour during day light and take an upper wind sounding ever six hours and transmit them to fleet weather central in Honolulu.

I do not remember the Commanding officer's name. As I recall he was a Warrant Officer and not to happy about being there. The station at that time was run very loose. (This might be the reason for the lack of records and reports during this time.) We did no maintenance work on equipment or buildings. As you can tell by some of the pictures we wore just what we pleased. The Commander was very interested in ham radio. He build an elaborate set there and played with it day and night. Very often he would locate another ham close to someones home town and we could send messages home. Each man had his own special job-that is radio man, loran operator, cook and etc and as long as he carried out his job that seemed to be all that mattered to the Commander. This left us with a lot of free time, se we did a lot of swimming, spear fishing and played a lot of poker. The morale was not too bad, only when the supply and mail didn't show for 6-8 weeks sometimes. When a CG Cutter would show up we would grab and eat a loaf of bread as it would taste like take after being out for so long. The supply ship would leave us eight new movies, cigarets and food for a two week allotment, but while I was there they never did get back in two weeks. (Christmas was a very lonely time for us.)

The number of men was 11-13 plus two navy Aerologist ~~at~~ this time. The CG personnel stayed for a year and were suppose to go into Honolulu for two weeks every three months-which ~~it~~ did not always happen. The navy men stayed for six months and reported back to fleet weather central in Honolulu. We had one old weapon carrier, one LCM, three dogs and as I stated a lot of "Gooney birds". It was rumored that there had never been a woman on the island, and I expect not til this day.



Mailing address: P.O. Box 8800, O'Hare International Airport, Chicago, Illinois 60666 Phone 625-1400

Location: Elk Grove Township, Illinois, on Route 62, one-half mile west of Route 83

EXECUTIVE OFFICES

The 1947-48 winter was not too bad-no high winds, tidal waves and etc. We received one tidal wave warning so we all put on life jackets for a few hours then it was cancelled. Nothing of great importance happened during my stay; one man broke his ankle-a plan from Honolulu came and got him. We had no medical facilities what so ever. Of course the mine I mentioned created a little excitement, but that's about it for my stay-very routine and dull.

I am sending all the pictures that I have of the men and island, will make comments on back. Please feel free to make duplicates of any of them you can use. Hope this will be of some help to you. I would be very interested in seeing the final product of your history of French Frigate shoals.

Sincerely,

Forrest Clinard
1 Green Pastures Rd.
Algonquin, Ill. 60102



Mailing address: P.O. Box 8800, O'Hare International Airport, Chicago, Illinois 60656 Phone 625-1400

Location: Elk Grove Township, Illinois, on Route 62, one-half mile west of Route 83

EXECUTIVE OFFICES

July 23, 1969

Benion Amerson
Museum of Natural History
Smithsonian Institution
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Amerson:

A friend in Honolulu sent me the enclosed clipping from the Honolulu paper, dated July 1, 1969.

I was stationed on French Frigate Shoals in 1948 for about six months. At that time there were eleven coast guard personnel, myself and another Navy Aerologist who were on temporary duty assigned to the coast guard to send in weather reports every hour. There were also 3 dogs and several thousand "gooney birds".

At that time the Loran station was located on the small island some 7-10 miles from the large island (called term I believe where a small landing strip was located) which was being used by some half dozen native fishermen, one of whom was Louis Agard. We had a small boat that we used to ~~xx~~ run over and visit the fishermen when we got tired of our own company.

None of the rumors that was mention in the paper happened while I was there. I guess the most exciting thing was an old world war 2 mine washed ashore one morning and orders came from Honolulu to blow it up, left quite a hole.

The supply and mail ship was sup ose to come every couple weeks-but it was usually about six weeks-so we were always short of food and homesick for mail. Sometime the fishing company would bring our mail by plane ~~xxxx~~ when they flew out to pick up the fish. As stated in the paper we had to make our own water.

Not knowing for certain what information you are looking for this may not be



Mailing address: P.O. Box 8900, O'Hare International Airport, Chicago, Illinois 60666 Phone 625-1400

Location: Elk Grove Township, Illinois, on Route 62, one-half mile west of Route 83

EXECUTIVE OFFICES

of any help to you. If you have any question that I might be able to remember after 21 years please feel free to write. I also have several pictures of the island, men and etc. that I would send-but would want them back.

Sincerely,

Forrest Clinard
Forrest Clinard, Jr.
1 Green Pastures Rd.
Algonquin, Ill.
60102

No. 150

FEB 1 1972

December 20, 1971

H.M.B. LIBRARY

ATOLL RESEARCH BULLETIN

150. THE NATURAL HISTORY OF FRENCH FRIGATE SHOALS,
NORTHWESTERN HAWAIIAN ISLANDS²

by A. Binion Amerson, Jr.



Issued by
THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION
Washington, D.C., U.S.A.

Fishing Interests

The U.S. Navy, forgetting about French Frigate's status as a federal wildlife reservation and thinking they owned Tern Island, tried to hand over the disestablished base to the Territory of Hawaii. The Territory refused, but discussion on the issue continued. In early November 1948 the Territory's Hawaiian Aeronautics Commission notified the Commandant of the 14th Naval District, Pearl Harbor, that it was "in a position to take over the airstrip and other facilities...and...make them available...to the fishing industry" (Hawaiian State Archives, FFS file #1871).

As early as June 1946 Hawaiian commercial fishermen began to use the facilities. Early fishing boats enjoyed good fishing which prompted the Hawaiian Tuna Packers, Ltd. to send a vessel to the Shoals in mid-September 1946. Both Honolulu newspapers (Beech, 1946a, 1946b, 1946c, 1946d, 1946e; Buchwach, 1946a, 1946b) carried stories on the venture. Two shipments of fish were subsequently sent from Tern to Honolulu by chartered plane.

In a joint venture two companies, the Hawaiian-American Fisheries, headed by Louis K. Agard, Jr., and the Seaside Fishing Co., run by Frank Opperman and Warren Haines, established a fishing base on Tern Island early in November 1946. They chartered a DC-3 from Trans-Air Hawaii for transporting the fish. The companies obtained permission to use the air strip from the proper Territory offices; the Hawaiian Fish and Game Department gave them permission to use large fixed traps (Agard, in litt.).

During the first three years of operation, Hawaiian-American Fisheries grossed over \$73,000 at the Shoals; profits totaled almost \$20,000. Had the company owned its plane, profits would have been greater. Thus, a new corporation, Aero Fisheries, was formed and a plane purchased by Agard and his partners. In late July 1949 one flight was completed. Mechanical difficulties grounded the plane in mid-August and the corporation did not have the reserve finances to continue the plane operation (Agard, in litt.).

Various commercial fishing vessels visited the atoll in the 1950's with varying success. In 1959 Agard started another joint venture, and even purchased a refrigerated vessel and a plane. This too was short-lived (Agard, in litt.).

In August 1948 the Pacific Oceanic Fishery Investigation (POFI), with headquarters in Honolulu, was organized by the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Since 1948, POFI vessels visited French Frigate Shoals on numerous occasions (POFI, ms.).

its arrival at the Shoals, 168 turtles had been collected. Assuming a single adult turtle yields three pounds of tortoise shell (Parsons, 1962), about 346 turtles were taken by the Ada's crew. Turtles were not eliminated, however, for great numbers were present in early 1888 when the Wandering Minstrel visited the atoll (Farrell, 1928), as well as in May and June 1891 when the Kaalokai surveyed the atoll (Walker, 1909; Munro, 1941a).

The USS Rainbow's hydrographic survey of French Frigate Shoals in the late summer and fall of 1914 found turtles plentiful (U.S. Nat. Archives, Mod. Mil. Hist. Div., Rainbow corresp., R.G. 37, 1132-100666). Turtles and turtle eggs, as well as evidence of previous turtle slaughter, were found by Wetmore (ms.) during the April 1923 visit of the Tanager Expedition.

Two commercial fishing companies, the Hawaiian-American Fisheries, headed by Louis K. Agard, Jr., and the Seaside Fishing Company, established a fishing base on Tern Island in November 1946. A great many turtles were captured and taken to the Honolulu market. Turtle meat became one of the mainstays of the crew's diet, supplanting beef. However, the turtle numbers dwindled, probably more as a result of human disturbance than actual killing, and soon turtle was not taken for the commercial market. Agard (in litt.) estimates taking about 200 turtles between 1946 and 1948. Commercial fishermen again took turtle from the atoll in the spring of 1957 (POFI, 1957).

HDFG, BSWF, AND POBSP personnel have recorded turtles on almost all visits during the 1960's. All turtle observations at French Frigate Shoals are presented in Tables 4-9.

Annual Cycle

French Frigate Shoals' Green Sea Turtle population is the largest in the Hawaiian Islands. Turtles have been recorded year-round. The adult population is lowest in the fall, winter, and early spring. The highest population occurs in the late spring and summer and coincides with breeding. Copulation has been observed in early May; nesting usually commences in late May. Infrequent egg-laying has been noted in August and September. Hatchlings probably appear in late July and are commonly seen in August and early fall.

Hendrickson (1969: 90) suggests that French Frigate Shoals' turtle hatchling production exceeds that of all the other Hawaiian nesting sites combined.

Table 4. Green Sea Turtle observations at East Island

Date of Survey	Population Estimate	Breeding Status, Remarks, and References
1955 May 5	2	Medium-sized (POFI, 1955).
1956 Apr. 11	2	Ca. 100 lbs. each (POFI, 1956a).
June 4	6	(POFI, 1956b).
1957 Apr. 24	10-15	(POFI, 1957).
May 11	12	(POFI, 1957).
1959 July 21	4	Dead, appeared to have been killed, but not butchered; 0 adults diurnally; 33 sets of fairly fresh haul-out tracks on beaches; nest pits (POFI, 1959).
1961 Feb. 9	1	In nearby water (POFI, 1961a).
Mar. 4	1	Dead newly hatched turtle (HDFG, 1961b).
July 13	3	(POFI, 1961c).
1962 June	present	Considerable number noted, nest pits (HDFG, 1962a).
1963 June 7-11	20+	Adults nightly; much egg laying (POBSP, 1963).
1964 Sept. 27	5	Dead: 2 adults, 3 hatchlings; 250 nest pits counted (BSFW, 1964b; POBSP, 1964).
1965 Aug. 5-10, 23-28	32+	Adults: 1♂, 31♀; numerous hatchlings; 5-20 adults daily; ♀♀ laying nightly (POBSP, 1965b).
1966 Mar. 23	4	Adults: 2♂, 2 unknown (BSFW, 1966a).
May 13	12-15	Population observed (POFI, 1966).
June 10-14, 16-21	5-24	Adults observed daily; 5+ ♀♀ laying nightly (POBSP, 1966a).
Aug. 18-24, 26-30	1-3+	Adults daily; some laying eggs; hatchlings present (POBSP, 1966b).
Sept. 13-14	86+	1 adult ♀ at night may have hauled up to lay eggs; 85 hatchlings seen on the 14th (BSFW, 1966b).

Estimating the Green Sea Turtles' population is complicated by several factors. Adult turtles of both sexes bask on the beaches during the day, perhaps, as Hendrickson (*in litt.*) has suggested, to aid in digestion of their food.¹ If disturbed by humans, these baskers leave. Adult females lay their eggs only at night and may relay after about a week. Tagging has shown that there is a large daily island population turnover, with new turtles being found each day. Few turtles are seen within the lagoon. This indicates that turtles return to the sea after basking in the sun or laying eggs on the island. In 1965, 86 adult turtles were tagged by POBSP on 3 islands during August; an average of 5 turtles was tagged on each of the 17 days tagging occurred. Thus, if new turtles arrived and departed each day, this would mean roughly 150 using each of the 3 islands during the month, or a total of 450 for these 3 islands for August. But this is a minimum figure for several were lost or missed each day and from 5 to 20 were actually observed each day. Using 10 as a more realistic average, the estimate for these 3 islands then becomes 900. If we consider those using the other 2 turtle islands in the atoll, the August population could range from 650 to as many as 1,300.

The June and July breeding populations are probably higher than in August for as many as 60 turtles have been counted on a single island at one time. The total population using the atoll may be very large. Hendrickson (1969: 90) discussed the POBSP August 1965 estimates and noted that they were "highly tentative," but suggests "that one might assume twice the August number to represent the month of July and take the same increment for the early part of the season. One would then obtain a figure of between 2,600 and 5,200 turtles as the Hawaiian breeding population (1 + 2 + 1 times 650 - 1,300, and ignoring all other island nestings)." He then states "flatly that this estimate has little basis and is not to be trusted," but then notes "that it does not appear to conflict violently with any other available information."

BSFW personnel, assisted by POBSP personnel, inaugurated a tagging operation throughout the Northwest Hawaiian Islands; present and future retrap data will provide more information on French Frigate Shoals' turtle population. These data are being analyzed by Kridler and Sincock.

¹ The surrounding water, being cooler than at other breeding areas, may hinder digestion; basking in the sun would aid the digestive process.