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The Rights Of Animals Are Ignored In Navy's Bombing Plans

There is also a duty to protect the cultural and religious significance of Ka'ula Island.

By [Dylan Armstrong](#)

October 4, 2024 · 4 min read



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Anthony Quintano/Civil Beat

There are so many things I wish to write regarding the Environmental Assessment for the Pacific Missile Range Facility training and exercise mission on Ka'ula Island. But I must summarize.

Overall, the stark inadequacy of our environmental policies is made abundantly clear to me.

For the 18-different **nesting bird species** on Ka‘ula — sooty terns, brown noddies, boobies, and wedge-tailed shearwaters, etc — who at least used to numerate at 100,000 or so, I can’t fathom the impact that inert bombing or its proposed increase (near doubling) have to these. Native Hawaiians said that “Hāika Ka‘ula i ka ho‘okē a na manu” — there isn’t room enough on the island of Ka‘ula, for the birds are crowding.

So is the existing impact analogous to a major hurricane hitting Ka‘ula Island every year? Is the proposed increase analogous to a major hurricane every month?



The U.S. Navy has used the small islet of Ka‘ula for target practice since the early 1950s. It’s also a refuge for nesting seabirds, including federally protected albatross species. (Courtesy of the U.S. Navy Pacific Fleet)

I’ve watched the piebald moli fly at PMRF. I know that the military can use at least some land without wanton destruction to sensitive and endangered species. I know, too, good people work there.

I also know as a science-trained professional that there is a great difference between what we feel and observable evidence, and that the scientific process must divorce the two. I am always open to persuasion, as science demands.

However, the political process is not one of cold impartial evidence, to both its aspirational merit and its deep detriment.

Cultural And Historical Heritage

I do not choose to first emphasize other factors which I also consider important — Native Hawaiian cultural access, the U.S. military's cruel history with Native Hawaiians — though these are deeply important to me.

I will note that I recognize the traditional, legal right of Native people to sustainably harvest the birds, eggs, plants, and sea life at Ka'ula Island. That right like all others is counter-weighted by probable impacts to species—e.g., we don't allow the harvesting of honu (turtle) anymore.

None of which undoes the duty to protect to cultural and religious significance of Ka'ula Island as a site with known oral history, archaeological resources, and community attachment. I affirm such rights, but others can and have presented this better than I can.

Underlying Values

People can debate resources all day. Such is the purview of the U.S. Department of the Interior, the Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources, and non-profit interest groups like the Sierra Club, all three of which have to various degrees used me as a “resource” in the past — something inert, something to be exhausted and discarded.

I recognize that our system of rights is deeply contradictory. It's also violative of something anyone with a brain and a conscience can clearly know. All animals as living beings have a right to exist.

Where does our right to destroy them, their bodies or their homes, en masse, come from? We've the right to kill to eat animals, to live. That's as self-evident a right as any, for we'd never have lived to debate vegetarianism if none of our ancestors had eaten any meat.

Yet the right to kill for survival we do abuse so blatantly.

All animals as living beings have a right to exist.

But does the right to kill animals in context, for right reasons, then extend to a bombing mission? If the latter is so, who gave us that right?

Is it from God? Is it from human conquest? Is it simply a kind of delusional egocentrism, elevating human desires past a reasonable level of priority?

The latter gave our planet a biodiversity crisis. This crisis threatens our extinction.

Yet all of society, from the U.S. government, to the state, to any local or other human groups who focus on animals not as sovereign beings, but only relevant to “our” rights to their lives — is deludedly selfish, and wantonly destructive.

I don’t fault the Navy exclusively for this prejudicial and ecocidal attitude permeating everything we do to rare species. But I do take exception to the blatant expression thereof.

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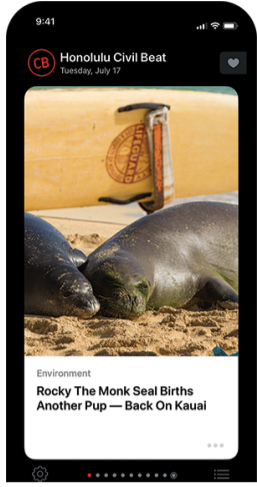
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Dylan Armstrong is an urban planner and conservationist. He served as the chair of Manoa Neighborhood Board from 2019–2022.





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