

# HOWLAND ISLAND



Photo : Space Imaging

## KEY SPECIES

### Birds

White-tailed tropicbirds  
Red-tailed tropicbirds  
Masked boobies  
Brown boobies  
Red-footed boobies  
Great frigatebirds  
Lesser frigatebirds  
Gray-backed terns  
Sooty terns  
Brown noddies  
Blue noddies  
White tern  
Pacific golden plovers  
Ruddy turnstones  
Bristle-thighed curlews

### Reptiles

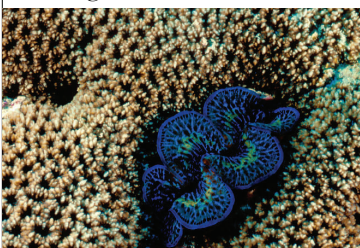
Green sea turtles  
(threatened)  
Hawksbill sea turtles  
(endangered)

### Invertebrates

Giant clams  
(globally depleted)  
93 species of stony corals  
4 species of benthic cnidarians  
11 species of macro-invertebrates other than cnidarians

### Fish

342 fish species  
Gray reef sharks  
Blacktip reef sharks  
Tiger sharks



Tridacna maxima

Photo: J E Maragos

## PROPOSAL

- Establish a National Monument that includes Howland Island and its surrounding waters
- Expand US Fish and Wildlife Service management authority from 3 to 12 nautical miles (nm)
- Manage the island and nearshore waters to 12 nm as a fully protected National Wildlife Refuge under authority of the Secretary of the Interior
- Establish appropriate conservation measures to protect and conserve the wildlife in the waters and on the seafloor surrounding the fully protected refuge, in particular shallow and deepwater corals, large predatory fishes, and seabirds. This zone from 12 to 200 nautical miles would be managed by the Secretary of Commerce acting through NOAA

## IMPORTANCE

- Localized upwelling off the western side of the island from the Equatorial Undercurrent supports higher levels of marine productivity
- Nesting seabird species have increased from 4 to 12 since the FWS eradicated cats from Howland Island in the early 1990s, and approximately 162,822 birds are present
- Restoration potential exists for seven more species, including the blue noddy (the world's smallest tern, exclusively found in the central Pacific), the phoenix petrel, and the white-throated storm-petrel. These last two have been extirpated from most of their range in the Pacific due to vulnerability to rats and other mammalian predators
- Exploited for guano and phosphate rock deposits in the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century
- Strong cultural value for the early history of Polynesians and Micronesians; the last reported destination for Amelia Earhart's ill-fated attempt to fly around the world
- During WWII, Howland Island was occupied by American troops and a US military airfield was built in 1937

## SITE DESCRIPTION

Howland includes approximately 453 acres of emergent reef and land and nearly 32,096 acres of submerged lands. Howland Island and surrounding waters from the shore to 3 nautical miles are managed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service as part of the Pacific Remote Islands Area Refuge Complex and the refuge is closed to all uses.

Howland Island is home to a wide variety of terrestrial and marine species, many of which are threatened or endangered, including the globally depleted *Tridacna maxima*, commonly known as the small giant clam.

## THREATS

- Localized upwelling around the island attracts illegal foreign commercial fishermen and shark finners
- Potential shipwrecks, groundings, and oil spills from commercial fishing vessels in refuge waters
- Potential for transiting vessels to ground due to poor charts
- Invasive marine species destroying natural ecology
- Lost fish aggregating devices (FADs) wash up on reefs and beaches as marine debris and entangle and kill wildlife; potential groundings by trespassing vessels retrieving FADs