

sciences. In the tradition of Laura Thompson, it contains concise and detailed ethnographic description, and hopefully will stimulate more research and insight in this line of inquiry.

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Isles of Refuge: Wildlife and History of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, by Mark J Rauzon. University of Hawai'i Press, 2001. ISBN 0-8248-2330-3; ix + 205 pages, including figures, maps, photos, glossary (pronunciation of Hawaiian words), appendix, bibliography, and index. Paper, US\$29.95.

In *Isles of Refuge*, Mark Rauzon takes the reader on a journey through time and space, island-hopping northwest from the main Hawaiian islands. He weaves together natural history, human history, and personal experiences as a member of the US Fish and Wildlife Service, serving in the Northwest Hawaiian Islands. Each fascinating islet, atoll, or group of ship-destroying reefs is described through summaries of its geological and evolutionary history, overlain with stories of human discovery, destruction, and tragedy. Rauzon leads us from the days of rampant destruction of habitat into a more environmentally friendly era of conservation and ecotourism.

The natural history of these islands began with their growth from the sea floor as the central Pacific hot-spot built layer after layer of lava. Eventually, as the Pacific plate lurched northwest, a trail of islands formed from

the Aleutians of Alaska to Hawai'i's Big Island, this last still being created by that same hot spot. As soon as lava cooled, whether under water or above, plants and animals began to make themselves at home. As old islands eroded and sank, corals and coralline algae formed encircling necklaces growing upward, staying in the lighted surface zone, forming an atoll. Islands older still were carried northwestward into water too cool for coral reefs and gradually sank below the sea. The most southerly of the Northwest Hawaiian Islands, Necker Island and Nihoa, still raise their basalt cores above the sea. In a chain to the north, but still within the zone of coral reef development, are French Frigate Shoals, Gardner Pinnacles, Maro Reef, Laysan and Lisianski Islands, Pearl and Hermes Reef, Midway Atoll, and Kure Atoll. All provide refuges of exquisite if stark beauty for sea birds, reef fishes, sea turtles, monk seals, and their neighbors, predators, and prey. Storms have wiped out whole populations, climates have shifted, and the Pacific plate continues to move. But enough land and near-surface reef remain for recruitment and recovery of most of the populations. Rauzon describes the islands and reefs from south to north, details the life history and behavior of their residents, and emphasizes the importance of these refuges to so many threatened species.

The human discovery of the Northwest Hawaiian Islands, as with the main islands, came in two waves. We know that the ancient Polynesians who became Hawaiians visited and probably spent extended periods on at least the most southerly islands. But we know too little about their tenancy

—how long they lived there, how frequently they visited, and what they thought about these small places, so different from their main islands. Rauzon describes archeological sites and gives us some insight into the feelings of the Native Hawaiian community as it became more aware of this little-known part of their ancestral domain.

The second wave of human discovery and exploitation was disastrous for many members of the resident flora and fauna. This second wave led to surface mining for guano, harvesting whole colonies of birds and their eggs, hunting seals, overfishing, and damaging shipwrecks. Luckily, most of these destructive activities occurred in a spotty fashion, leaving gaps of time, or bypassing some islands while exploiting others. This hit-or-miss devastation allowed many species, though not all, to survive and return to these islands, reclaiming territory as the people moved out. Rauzon gives a forthright, mostly nonjudgmental picture of human exploitation, greed, murder, and wanton destructiveness, as well as human courage and tenacity.

Isles of Refuge would be much less interesting without Rauzon's personal stories of his own experiences. Many of us can identify with his problems with seasickness while getting to the islands, and can feel with him the fascination of islets so nearly cut off from the usual places of mankind. Although not Hawaiian himself, Rauzon exhibits sensitivity and understanding in his explanations of returning the ancestral remains to Necker Island. He also had the chance to accompany a *Hokule'a* training voyage that planned to sail to Nihoa, but fell

short due to unfavorable winds. Someday . . .

Most of the Northwest Hawaiian Islands have been part of the wildlife refuge system since the days of Teddy Roosevelt. Midway was an exception as an important World War II battle site, military base, and refueling station. It was finally turned over to the US Fish and Wildlife Service in 1996. Because of the increasing visibility of Midway as an ecotourist destination, and because of recent controversial policies to reduce overfishing in the Northwest Hawaiian Islands, this book is an especially timely addition. I have been to Midway only once myself but am planning to return with a group of students in March 2002. I have chosen *Isles of Refuge* as our course textbook because I believe it will provide the students with the historical context and natural history they will need to fully appreciate their coming trip-of-a-lifetime in this very vulnerable and enchanting place.

In conclusion, I found *Isles of Refuge* a smooth and enjoyable read, with just the right mix of historical facts, legends, nature stories, and human-interest tales. Personally, I would have liked more information on the Hawaiian presence in the northwestern islands, and a little more emphasis on how much we have yet to learn about these ecosystems. (For instance, new species of seaweeds, corals, and fish are being recorded quite regularly, some completely new to science, others never before recorded for Hawai'i.) However, on the whole, this is an excellent and accessible summary of the available knowledge about the Northwest Hawaiian Islands. The compendium

of literature citations will be of great value to scholars wishing to delve more deeply. The maps, drawings, and photographs are well chosen to familiarize readers with the places and animals described. I highly recommend *Isles of Refuge* for everyone who wants to learn more about these fascinating but underappreciated islands.

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Distance Education in the South Pacific: Nets and Voyages, edited by Richard Guy, Toshio Kosuge, and Rieko Hayakawa. Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, The University of the South Pacific, in association with Pacific Islands Nations Fund, Sasakiwaka Peace Foundation, 2000. ISBN 982-02-0143-8; 315 pages, maps, figures, tables, photographs, abbreviations, notes, bibliography, index. Paper, US\$10.00.

Distance Education in the South Pacific: Nets and Voyages is a comprehensive description of distance education practices in the South Pacific (Melanesia, Micronesia, Polynesia) in historical, geographic, economic, political, and technological contexts.

This book is a gem. The authors' distinctive styles and backgrounds reflect the great diversity of the region. Each of the seven chapters is a polished facet. Themes introduced in one essay are elaborated and extended in others, combining to both define specifics and encompass the larger issues. It has application beyond the limits of the region.

The volume came out of a conference of educators at the University of Hawai'i held in 1995 to consider how distance education could be used collaboratively in the Pacific. Distance education provides an opportunity for Island nations, particularly those with scarce natural resources, to strengthen their political and economic bases, through developing the skills and knowledge of their people in this information age.

Guy sets the stage by giving the background history of the South Pacific. Much of the variation in current educational practices is due to legacies of suzerain countries, whether British, New Zealand, French, Indonesian, or American. However, institutions such as the University of the South Pacific and University of Papua New Guinea advanced in response to regional needs. Collaborations in educational programs are important for developing a sense of regionality and addressing the complex issues of Pacific Island identity.

Matthewson, through research and poetry, relates the history of distance education in the region and particularly at the University of South Pacific. Supported and governed by twelve nation states, the University of the South Pacific is one of few universities in the world that is truly regional. It functions in a vast area, reaching small islands with hundreds of languages. It is also remarkable because distance-learning classes use the same faculty, "without prejudice" (63), and at the same pay, as for conventional courses.

The University of the South Pacific supports a centralized model of distance education including administration, curriculum development, and