



Australia-Oceania :: Howland Island
(territory of the US)

Introduction :: Howland Island

Background:

Discovered by the US early in the 19th century, the island was officially claimed by the US in 1857. Both US and British companies mined for guano until about 1890. Earhart Light is a day beacon near the middle of the west coast that was partially destroyed during World War II, but subsequently rebuilt; it is named in memory of the famed aviatrix Amelia EARHART. The island is administered by the US Department of the Interior as a National Wildlife Refuge.

Geography :: Howland Island

Location:

Oceania, island in the North Pacific Ocean, about half way between Hawaii and Australia

Geographic coordinates:

0 48 N, 176 38 W

Map references:

Oceania

Area:

total: 1.6 sq km

country comparison to the world: 251

land: 1.6 sq km

water: 0 sq km

Area - comparative:

about three times the size of The Mall in Washington, DC

Land boundaries:

0 km

Coastline:

6.4 km

Maritime claims:

territorial sea: 12 nm

exclusive economic zone: 200 nm

Climate:

equatorial; scant rainfall, constant wind, burning sun

Terrain:

low-lying, nearly level, sandy, coral island surrounded by a narrow fringing reef; depressed central area

Elevation extremes:

lowest point: Pacific Ocean 0 m

highest point: unnamed location 3 m

Natural resources:

guano (deposits worked until late 1800s), terrestrial and aquatic wildlife

Land use:

arable land: 0%

permanent crops: 0%

other: 100% (2001)

Irrigated land:

0 sq km

Natural hazards:

the narrow fringing reef surrounding the island can be a maritime hazard

Environment - current issues:

no natural fresh water resources

Geography - note:

almost totally covered with grasses, prostrate vines, and low-growing shrubs; small area of trees in the center; primarily a nesting, roosting, and foraging habitat for seabirds, shorebirds, and marine wildlife

People and Society:: Howland Island

Population:

uninhabited

note: American civilians evacuated in 1942 after Japanese air and naval attacks during World War II; occupied by US military during World War II, but abandoned after the war; public entry is by special-use permit from US Fish and Wildlife Service only and generally restricted to scientists and educators; visited annually by US Fish and Wildlife Service

Government:: Howland Island

Country name:

conventional long form: none

conventional short form: Howland Island

Dependency status:

unincorporated territory of the US; administered from Washington, DC, by the Fish and Wildlife Service of the US Department of the Interior as part of the National Wildlife Refuge system

Legal system:

the laws of the US, where applicable, apply

Flag description:

the flag of the US is used

Transportation:: Howland Island

Ports and terminals:

none; offshore anchorage only; note - there is one small boat landing area along the middle of the west coast

Transportation - note:

Earhart Light, a day beacon near the middle of the west coast, was partially destroyed during World War II but rebuilt during the 1960s; today it is crumbling and in poor repair; named in memory of famed aviatrix Amelia EARHART

Military:: Howland Island

Military - note:

defense is the responsibility of the US; visited annually by the US Coast Guard

Transnational Issues:: Howland Island

Disputes - international:

none