

## No-no's On Board

Watching the Southern Cross appear closer and closer to the horizon, the voyagers knew they were getting closer to Hawai'i. Six voyaging canoes, the *Hōkūle'a*, *Hawai'iloa*, and *Makali'i* from Hawai'i; the *Te Aurere* from New Zealand; and *Te Au Tonga* and *Takitumu* from the Cook Islands, were twelve days out of the Marquesas. Each night, the sky was looking more and more like the Hawaiian sky. It had been a wonderful trip, but everyone was eager to see family and friends again. Then came the radio contact with the startling news.



Kimo Lyman radioed from the voyaging canoe *Hawai'iloa* to Master Navigator of the Polynesian Voyaging Society, Nainoa Thompson on the *Hōkūle'a*, that some of their crew were being bitten by *no-no* flies. Crew member Pi'ikea Miller's heart sank when she heard the news. She was well aware of the damage that *no-no* flies could do to the environment, health, economy and quality of life of Hawai'i.

All of the crew had seen the children in Nuku Hiva with bandages wrapped around their *no-no* bites to keep them from scratching and infecting the sores. Some of the crew had been bitten in the Marquesas, too, and they had no desire to bring these biting pests into Hawai'i. *No-no* flies breed in beach sand or streams. When these flies are at their peak, they can inflict from 1,000 to 10,000 bites to one person in a day! Imagine going to the beach and being surrounded by a swarm of biting flies that bite your arms and legs and burrow into your ears. Each bite causes a welt that itches for a week or more. Imagine how these flies would affect the quality of your life. And think about how island tourism could be affected.

The voyagers were determined to keep these flies from landing in the Hawaiian Islands. The first step was to get help and get it fast. The canoes were only four to five days out of Hawai'i. Pi'ikea called Alan Holt, director of science and stewardship at The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i, to ask for help. Nainoa talked

to Alan and explained, “We are going to do whatever it takes to keep these flies out of Hawai‘i. We just need to know what that is.” Alan contacted the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Health to come up with a plan.

The word came back to the canoes to drop their sails—they were to come no closer than 100 miles to the Hawaiian Islands. The crew then had to get rid of any possible habitat for the *no-no* flies. That meant they had to throw overboard all of the plants and fresh produce on board: onions, potatoes, carrots, and bunches of bananas. It also meant that any dark areas where the flies could breed, in the hulls and sleeping compartments, and everything in them had to be washed down. The crew dragged out food and water containers, extra sails, and other gear and washed everything in the sea. Then came a Coast Guard C-130 plane with an air-drop of insecticide cannisters and face masks for the crew to wear as they sprayed the canoes. It was a lot of hard work, but no one wanted *no-no* flies in Hawai‘i.

When the canoes got close to Hilo, they were asked to wait outside the harbor for inspectors to come out and board the canoes. But the weather turned bad with heavy squalls so the canoes were finally allowed to enter Hilo Bay. Then inspectors came on board to check for *no-no* flies. They found none; all of the crew’s hard work had paid off. Then the canoes were docked at Hilo Harbor and *immediately* tented and fumigated as a final precaution. It wasn’t the homecoming they had anticipated.

When the six canoes finally sailed together into Kualoa on O‘ahu, they had completed another important chapter in the voyaging story. They had also demonstrated that people working together can keep unwanted pests out of our islands. The next time you go to the beach, sit in the *no-no*-free sand and say a *mahalo* to the voyagers.