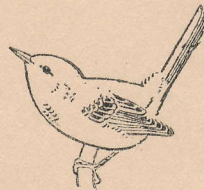


# ***The Elepaio***

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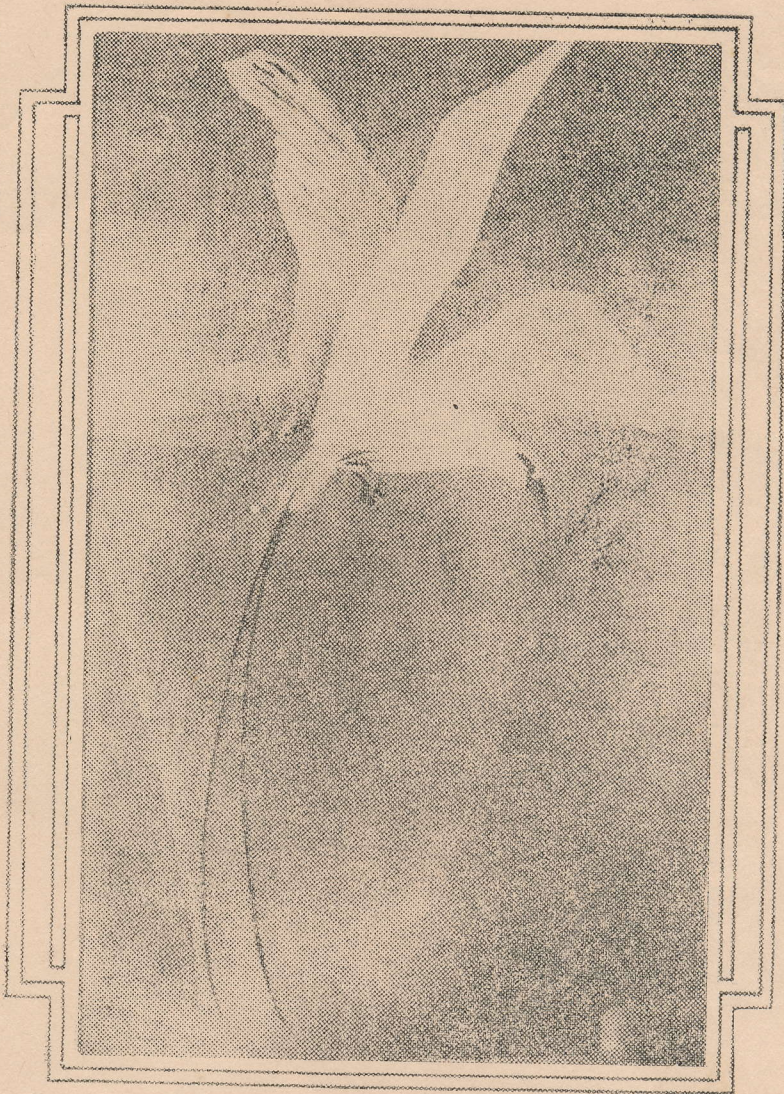
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Advisor



Red-Tail Tropic Bird

Painting of Margaret Fleming



The Elepaio  
By J.d'Arcy Northwood

This is the little bird that was chosen by the Society as its emblem and whose likeness appears on our membership cards, so that it is fitting that it should be the subject of our first sketch of a Hawaiian bird.

In contrast to all our other birds its friendly attitude marks it at once. Perhaps it would be more correctly called its inquisitive attitude but at any rate one has only to go a short way into the forest and soon one hears a scolding "chack-chack" or a whistled "whee-whee-o" and a little brown bird is seen flitting nearer and nearer. It may pause to pick an insect off a leaf or to drop to the ground to capture some small creature but if one keeps still it may soon be only arm's length away, fearlessly examining the intruders into its quite haunts.

It is mostly brown, lighter below, with flecks of white on the wings. The tail is carried high, often at right angles to the line of the back. The males have a black bib across the breast and the young birds are russet where the old ones are white. It belongs to the flycatcher family, yet its habits and appearance are more like those of a wren. It builds a deep compact nest closely woven of moss and fibers with lichens outside, usually in the slender twigs of an ohia or other forest tree, though sometimes it will nest quite low down. It lays two or three eggs whitish ground color, thickly sprinkled with reddish brown dots.

Other species of Elepaio are found on Hawaii and Kauai, differing slightly from the Oahu bird but with very similar habits. It is not found on Maui, Molokai or Lanai.

It occupied a prominent place in the mythology of the Hawaiians. When a canoe was to be built the tree had first to be chosen and then felled. before the work proceeded further the kahuna watched the movements of the Elepaio as it examined the fallen trunk. If the bird began to peck it was a bad sign but if it called "Ono ka ia", without pecking, the wood was sound. The late Charles Judd



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has pointed out that there is more than a grain of truth in this augury. If the wood were infested by insects the birds would naturally peck in search of food, while if there were no insects it would call "Elepai-o" and fly away.

Good luck to the Elepaio, it is heart warming to hear his cheery whistle and watch his confiding approach on the forest trails.

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Records and Notes, Elepaio

Under the above heading it is hoped to publish observations of interest each month. Will members please help by sending in reports and suggestions?

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Three unusual migrants have been seen lately by members.

Pectoral Sandpiper. One seen with golden plovers, turnstones and sanderlings on Kalihi mudflats. Oct 22nd, 1939

Black-bellied Plover. One seen with golden plovers at Kahuku ranch. Nov. 5th

Nothorn Phalarope. Two seen with golden plovers, sanderlings tattlers and turnstones. Kahuku ranch by Northwood and Dunn, Dec 24, 1939 Xmas Census.

Other two birds were seen by Mr. J. d'Arcy Northwood.

Skylarks may be heard singing at Wheeler Field.

Cardinals. There have been several enquiries about their absence from their usual haunts during the last few months. After the breeding seasons they seem to take a vacation, perhaps a trip to the mountains, but they should soon return and start singing again. If you wish to see them in your garden put out sunflower seed, 10¢ a lb. from you seed store.

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Mr. George C. Munro's Report from  
Niihau Observation  
Nov. 2, 1939

In cooperation with the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum, Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association, Board of Agriculture and Forestry and Hui Manu I started a survey of the birds of Hawaii in 1935. The part connected with the six largest islands was finished in 1937. However, a good deal remained to be done on the smaller islands and these had to await fitting opportunities. This research work has since been carried on in cooperation with the Bishop Museum.

In this connection by courtesy of the Robinson family, owners of the Niihau ranch I have recently been enabled to make a study of ornithological conditions on the island of Niihau. Transportation across the channel from Kauai was by the ranch launch. Horses and guides were furnished; valuable information was given by members of the family, the ranch management and the fine type of well cared for and happy looking Hawaiian employees. Every facility was given to visit places frequented by birds. With these helpful considerations I was able in three days spent there to pass through a great deal of country and see much that was informative and cheering in ornithological study.

I am delighted to be able to tell you that the Robinson's family and employees love birds alive and dislike seeing them killed, the island, therefore, is practically a bird sanctuary, a gun is seldom fired there. This is an extremely satisfactory condition.

There are many lagoons on the island, for the most part temporary. Large areas are under water during the heavy rains and at that time the island is a paradise for the native and migratory swimming and wading birds. These lagoons recede and dry up to a great extent; in the drier seasons most of them dry up entirely. The birds then evidently migrate to other islands of the group and if not adequately protected will eventually be killed out. There had been some good rains before I came and now a fair amount of water stands in a number of the lagoons.

The Hawaiian Stilt held the greatest interest for me on this trip. From counts made on eight or nine lagoons I judge there are several hundred stilts on the island. These probably migrate at times to Oahu, Molokai, Kauai and perhaps other islands of the group. Of this we have no direct evidence but the birds disappear from there and from Oahu at times and as they do not migrate from the group it is reasonable to suppose that they move between the islands according to feed conditions. With this in mind we must all do our part in the protection of these birds if the species is to be perpetuated. We can be assured that any protection we give the birds here will be fully cooperated in by the Robinson's family and this means a great deal due to conditions that prevail on their Niihau ranch. On some of the lagoons we approached quite close to the stilts and also the bristle-thighed curlew feeding on the grass land adjoining. This is direct evidence of careful protection. We can easily obtain these conditions here if we take the proper steps. The curlew is fairly common on Niihau but has almost disappeared from the other islands where it has been at the mercy of the sportman's guns. Its natural tameness makes it an easy prey. We saw several hundred migratory ducks and a few of the native species. The latter is unfortunately much reduced in numbers. It with the migratory birds is under close season at present but will again come under open season

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Unless we have it removed from the list of game birds and permanently protected The migratory ducks will also come under ope season and if wedo not provide sanctuaries on Oahu for them they will leave us for Maui and Niihau and we will be deprived of the pleasure of seeing them on the wing and in the water. Measures are now being taken on the mainland by which these birds can be kept permanently as game birds and retained at a reasonable number. We must cooperate with the sportmen to this end. The Golden Plover and Turnstone are in large numbers on Niihau especially the former. I saw a few of the Wandering Tattler and Sanderling. I was disappointed to find the Coot scarce and the Mudhen almost unknown. The Black-crowned Night Heron seldom vists there.

What do we learn in Bird Protection from this investigation? First; that we cannot afford to relax our efforts to obtain permanent protection for the stilts native duck, mudhen, coot and curlew and even for the golden plover, turnstone, wandering tattler and sanderling. As these birds all migrate under stress of food conditions we must not depend on private owners to save the speices and the public must take an active interest in their proper protection. It is a great advantage indeed to have the cooperation of the landowners. The Robinson's family is certainly taking a big part in saving the birds.

There are many imported birds on the island and sea birds round the coast but time does not permit of my dealing with them now.

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Note; The Honolulu Audubon Society take this opportunity, thanking the Robinson's family in making Mr. George C. Munro trip and observation a success

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The Elepaio and Dr. Arthur W. Slaten are very sorry to have forgotten to mention Mrs. Robert I. Baldwin and the Hui Manuiki of Hawaii. They have done splendid work in the way of bird protection and the school. When in Hilo, Hawaii call on Mrs. Robert I. Baldwin for Birdwalk.

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