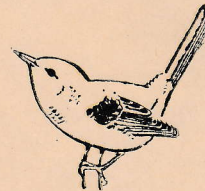


The Elepaio

Official Organ of THE HONOLULU AUDUBON SOCIETY
Honolulu, Hawaii, U.S.A.



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AIMS

The Honolulu Audubon Society was formed in 1939 and is affiliated with the National Association of Audubon Societies. Its aims are: To arouse public appreciation of the beauty and economic value of wild life, and to stimulate action to preserve and protect it; to preserve an adequate breeding stock of all native wild life for the enjoyment and material benefit of mankind; to preserve environmental conditions of ample food, water and cover, on the maintenance of which all wild life is dependent for survival; to fix guardianship responsibility on Federal, State or competent private agencies, to safeguard all species threatened with extinction.

The Society meets monthly at the Library of Hawaii, usually on the second Monday of the month, when talks of interest to bird lovers are given and members can meet to exchange views and information. A bird walk is also arranged monthly on the Sunday following this meeting when members and their friends can enjoy bird observation and learn to recognize our native birds.

The dues are \$1.00 a year, 25c for boys and girls of school age.

Further information may be obtained from the Secretary-Treasurer, Charles M. Dunn, 3227 George St., Honolulu, Telephone 4911

BIRDS OF HAWAII
and
Adventures in Bird Study

George C. Munro

The Ou, continued from Number 4

Mr. Scott B. Wilson in his book "Birds of the Sandwich Islands" remarked on the beauty of the ou, especially when viewed from above as they flew about in an open valley below. The bright green of their backs and their yellow heads showed up to advantage there under the bright sunlight.

Dr. R. C. L. Perkins and Professor H. W. Henshaw both remarked on the similarity of its song notes to those of the canary. Henshaw thought they were sweeter and more melodious and Perkins that they did not reach the quality of the canary's. I have often listened with great pleasure to its first whistled notes and following sweeter song. By its repeated answers to my imitation of its plaintive call I have often sighted the bird amongst the foliage. When sitting still its green plumage blended with the leaves making it almost invisible to the eye alone.

Originally the chief food of the ou was evidently the fruit of the ieie vine (Freycinetia). The development of the bird's strong hooked beak may have been brought about by the adaptability of this form for picking out the closely packed fruit sections from round the straight upright stem. In Kona, in September 1891 when the ieie was flowering, nearly all the native birds, including the ou, were feeding on the pulpy red leaf-bracts which surround the flower. In March 1891 I watched an ou pick the smaller leaflets from the leaf of an olapa tree (Cheirodendron), fly to a convenient perch, hold the leaflet down with one foot and bite off small pieces, which it seemed to eat with a relish.

There is no recorded instance of the nest or eggs of this bird being seen. I made a systematic search on Lanai amongst the masses of staghorn fern but failed to find any. In June 1892 Perkins saw large numbers of the young, some scarcely able to fly, in the thick ieie vine, where the nest would be equally well concealed.

From the few old specimens available of the Oahu bird the Honorable Walter Rothschild described it as a different species but with so little data and the difference in characters so slight this has not been taken seriously by other ornithologists.

The bright green feathers of the ou were used by the Hawaiians in their feather work.

Wilson saya in a footnote: "Mr. F. Gay informs me that on Kauai the male is sometimes called 'Oulapalapa' (ou with the yellow head) while the female goes by the name of 'Oulaevo' (the green ou). Bloxam also called the bird Ohu". However, it has been generally known over the islands as ou.

It is saddening to think of this lovely bird, which was so common, as disappearing from our forests. But had it continued to increase all its beauty of plumage and song would not have saved it from curses as a pest from its fondness for fruits of all kinds.

May 24, 1940.

oOo

In spite of frequent statements that the iiwi is extinct we are glad to say that this is incorrect. Members of the Audubon Society on a bird walk up Kipapa trail on June 16th heard at least six and saw one flying. Their loud metallic notes and especially the call note like a rusty squeak are unmistakeable.

HOW HAWAIIAN BIRDS HAVE BEEN COLLECTED AND STUDIED

1. The Early Collectors.

By E. H. Bryan, Jr.

The Hawaiians were keen students of bird life. They had a name for each of the hundred or more different kinds of birds which inhabited these islands. They knew their haunts and habits. A few they killed for food. A few were snared, choice feathers taken to decorate the royal cloaks, helmets and kahilis, and the birds released to grow a new crop.

The first foreigners to observe and collect Hawaiian birds were Captain James Cook and his companions. Although Cook was killed, other members of the ship's company carried specimens of sixteen species back to Europe, where they were described. The iiwi was the first native Hawaiian species to be technically described, by Georg Forster, in 1780. During the next four years John Latham gave brief descriptions and popular names to nine other species. In 1788 Gmelin gave scientific names to eleven, largely on the basis of Latham's notes.

But unfortunately the types and other specimens of many of these early species were lost or destroyed, and there was considerable confusion in later catalogs, summaries and lists.

In 1825, when H.M.S. Blonde, under command of Captain George Anson, 7th Lord Byron, carried back to Hawaii the bodies of Kamehameha II and his queen, who had died in England, there was on board an enthusiastic young naturalist, Andrew Bloxam. He had been asked by naturalists in England to get specimens of the peculiar Hawaiian birds, but apparently he got very little official encouragement. Despite this, he managed to get specimens of nine species of land birds from Oahu, including the now extinct thrush. He worked hard over his specimens, and placed them, all properly

labelled, at the disposal of the Lords of the Admiralty. But when the report of the voyage came out, the account of the birds was a very sad affair, apparently disregarding much of Bloxam's notes; and shortly after that the specimens disappeared.

In 1836 the American traveller Dr. J. K. Townsend and the well-known naturalist Thomas Nuttall made a trip together to Hawaii. They arrived in January and spent three months collecting on Oahu and Kauai. Returning at the end of the year Townsend found the Prussian naturalist, Herr Deppe, at Honolulu, and with him spent a few months collecting natural history specimens, leaving Hawaii in March 1837. A few of Deppe's birds were described by Lichtenstein, and most of Townsend's specimens have been preserved, many in the Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia. But neither scientist produced a comprehensive report of his observations or collections.

In the course of six months' stay in Hawaii in 1840, the enthusiastic collectors of the U.S. Exploring Expedition, Peale and Pickering, obtained a large collection of birds. Most of these specimens were lost when the Peacock was wrecked. In 1848 Peale's report on the birds was just off the press, and only a few copies had been distributed, when the entire stock was destroyed by fire. John Cassin, ten years later, published a new edition, but it is said to be much inferior to Peale's original work.

In 1852 Dr. Hartlaub wrote a review of Peale's lost work, and later he compiled the first list of Hawaiian birds, published in 1854. It listed 30 species of birds, of which 5 have not been accepted. Of the remaining 25, only 16 were land birds, and only 14 were perching birds.

(To be continued)