

Journal of the
HAWAII AUDUBON SOCIETY

Volume 10 Number 1



For the Better Protection
of Wildlife in Hawaii

July 1949

NATURE IN KAPIOLANI PARK

By George C. Munro

My notes for May will be confined to the Pacific Golden Plover (*Pluvialis dominica fulva*).

It occurred to me in January of this year that there was an opportunity in the Park of finding some additional facts about the somewhat obscure habits of this interesting bird.

My first note in the Park in connection with our plover was on September 5, 1947. One was seen by the tennis court on that date. For about a year one would be seen occasionally on that strip of green grass by the tennis court and band stand. Toward the end of 1948 I began to take the two open fields more into my route and found the plover fairly numerous there. On October 15 of that year, 18 were counted in all parts of the Park. When they rose on wing it was noted that they were silent, not using their well known call. But on December 11 and 14 they called loudly. Since then the call has not been much noticed by me. That, however, may be the fault of my hearing, as my wife heard them in the evening. We made a number of trips together about sundown to find if they grouped and left in a flock to roost. I also went out alone about 4 P.M. This was when the birds were nearing their migration time.

I wanted to find if the pairs stayed together when or if they mated before they left. Their habits made this a difficult study. They would at one time seem to be in pairs, then for a time only single birds would be seen. But after one of these separations very early in March they seemed to be definitely pairing and by the 20th all seemed to be paired. But by the 25th, they separated again and only single birds were seen in the mornings till they left.

In January after the heavy rains they apparently deserted the park for a time but by February had appeared again. They may have gone to the upland pastures on other islands where caterpillars might be increasing. Or possibly they proceeded on their migration to the south and in February others from the north were taking their place. Their numbers, however, were not so large and they were invariably seen singly, each bird having its own territory. They were very busy in pursuit of food, taking their quick, short runs and stops.

In April few were seen in the morning and generally single birds. But in the evenings about sundown they were in groups, four, six, or nine together; on one occasion 11 altogether were seen. We saw a pair leave over the treetops one evening but never a group. The groups might take wing but return to another part of the park. They apparently did not leave till after nightfall. Their flight is difficult to follow in the daytime and hopeless at night in the moonlight. Toward the end in the evening they did not feed much and stood for some time in one place

which was quite unusual at other times. On May 3 I went out alone about 4 P.M. and saw five rise at the south end of the polo field. They alighted on some rough ground by some standing water left from irrigation near the children's playground. I approached to join them there. I took my eyes off them for an instant and when I looked again they were gone, nor were they to be seen in the air, nor afterwards anywhere in the park. They had evidently gone to join a migrating flock and I saw them no more. On May 6 passing through the park about 9:40 A.M. a lone plover rose and flew and I have not seen any since except the one penned in the bird park with the Hawaiian ducks. It has only one wing and seemed perfectly happy in its present surroundings with no apparent desire to migrate. I visited it nearly every morning at migrating time and it was generally more interested in the feed tray than in migration. I had read of confined migratory birds becoming excited at migrating time, waving their wings and trying to fly. It had the golden color on its upper parts and black stripe down the middle of breast and belly running to a narrow band up the neck. Its sides remained gray with no white stripe showing two weeks after the others left. Perhaps it is a young bird or its accident may have affected it. The change of color to the black of under parts and white stripe down the sides of neck was first noticed in one of the birds on March 18, but I found it difficult to detect this under the uncertain light of early morning. The lone bird on May 6 did not seem to have changed.

I never saw plover arrive in the park in the morning unless single birds. They were nearly always on the ground by daylight. If anything they were ahead of the mynahs, their only close competitor for the early worm.

When the plover were scattered, feeding over the park, it was exceedingly difficult to obtain an accurate count. A bird already counted and passed will rise on the wing and pass unnoticed to alight ahead and be counted again. In April until they migrated, single birds had a habit of flying round the pedestrian keeping an even distance away from him. Sometimes arising ahead and flying around in a half circle to alight behind, or arising behind to alight in front. Several times they described a complete circle around me, and one, just before they migrated, made a circle and a quarter circle more before it veered off.

I should like very much to know where the plover that frequent the park sleep at night. It is hardly likely that they go to the islands off the east coast of this island. A small group roost on Kapapa Island. They arrive just before dark and alight on a spit of sand on the west end. They are there till dark when they move to the jagged rocks standing above the tidal shelf on the north side. They can be heard in the night but all that I saw of them was a few feathers in the morning. I never heard them on Popoia though akekeke always spent the night there.

Our plover evidently mate before leaving for the north as they nest very soon after arrival at their summer quarters.

I hope to keep a close watch for the return of the plover in July. It will be particularly interesting to find evidence of the early arrivals moving on to the south as some reach as far as the south of New Zealand. If the Wildlife Refuge in Kapiolani Park becomes an accomplished fact and the Board of Agriculture and Forestry take up banding these birds as intended, much new information on them will be obtained.

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THE BLACK-FOOTED ALBATROSS
By Howard Wilder

I have been traveling on the Hawaiian waters for about 8 months now, and the one bird that follows, and stays with us for weeks at a time is the "Gooney Bird" or Albatross. This bird is the most amusing, as well as the most interesting bird that I have ever watched, in that it is almost human in its actions. By this I mean that it has little fear of humans, and will come right up close, almost talk to you, and put on quite a show for a few scraps of food it will gulp down.

One of the most interesting things about this bird is the way that it lands and takes off in the water. They will soar on spread wings for hours, then when tired or after food, they fold their wings, as a brake, lower their feet, and just slide down onto the water. Once on the water, they fold their huge, clumsy wings onto their body. They seem almost to be double-jointed, as their wings fold two ways; this they almost have to be, as their wings are about twice the length of their body. When they want to take off again, they merely spread their wings, lift their body and literally run on the water, then soar majestically into the air. When I say run on the water, I mean just that. They really take about 7 or 8 steps along the surface, getting up speed, then glide into the air.

Although they are always in quest of food that is thrown over the side of the ship, they do not entirely depend on us for their food, although they are only too anxious to get it. They continually soar over the wake all about the ship, and get bits of floating seaweed, or rubbish, dead fish, and even catch flying fish. This I have seen them do on several occasions, while sitting on the bow of the ship. They will soar around the bow, and when a fish is scared into the air by the ship the bird will snatch it out of the air, and devour it. I doubt if the birds could depend on this method entirely for food, as I have rarely seen it accomplished. The fish only fly for a few yards, and the birds are not always there to grab them.

These birds never seem to land on the ship, although they soar within a few feet of it, and closely examine it. They are a very inquisitive bird, and often get hurt because of this. Once one of them flew so close to the ship that he couldn't turn in time, and he hit the aerial. Although stunned, he wasn't really hurt, and later flew again, after being thrown into the water. He couldn't seem to take off from the ship, as he couldn't run far enough on the deck. Another time while we were trolling off the stern of the ship, one of the birds grabbed the hook in his bill and was caught before we could scare him away. We managed to get him aboard and treat him with some iodine. He seemed all right again when we let him go, and still continued to follow us.

These birds seem to have their headquarters on a small island at French Frigate Shoals, which is about 530 miles north of Kauai. On this small island the birds are given the right of way, although it is a Coast Guard base, and they are continually in the way. There is a law against molesting them, and the penalty is about 15 or more hours extra duty if you are caught hurting them in any way, or even scaring them. They seem to know they have the right-of-way, and they make the best of it. They aren't in the least afraid of anyone there, much less the dogs. There are even a few birds that go as far as to walk right into the kitchen and beg food. They build their nests right in the middle of the road and don't even move for the trucks as they go past. Most of the birds, with a little sense, have confined themselves to one end of the island, where there are more than a hundred nests in less than that many feet. Although I haven't been able to see the young

yet, I have been able to watch the mating, and examine the eggs and nests. They do the strangest dance, and utter the strangest noises when mating. You would almost think they were imitating a native dance. They will stand next to each other and knock their bills together, then raise their heads up into the air, and "moo" just like a cow. After this, they jump up and down, and nod their heads up and down, and screech and squeal. Right in the middle of all this, they will calmly stop and pick at an insect that is irritating them. After they have either gotten the insect or stopped its annoying, they will start right in again, just as if nothing had happened. It is really amusing to watch.

These birds don't seem to build much of a nest; just a few sticks piled in a depression in the ground is all they want. They seem to have just one egg, although I noticed a few with two eggs. Whether they stole one, or what, I don't know, but they seem to be quite content to hatch it. It is quite a job to make one move off the nest, in order to examine it. They just don't intend to move, and will put up quite a fight in order not to. When you are finished looking, they just walk back, and sit down again. Their egg is about 6" long and about 3" in diameter. It is white, and very thick shelled. These birds are either white and brown, or all brown, the all brown ones being the ones that follow the ships.

They seem to be very neighborly birds, in that right under or beside their nest in a hole will be seen an unidentified bird on her nest, or young one all by itself. These birds are also very abundant on the island, although they aren't nearly as tame, and fly before you can get anywhere near them. The young seem to live in the hole until they are old enough to fly, and the parents bring them food. They seem to be awfully dirty, as they are covered with lice. This must be from living in the ground, though. I haven't been able to see the mature birds up close, but the young can be seen easily in the shallow holes where they hide.

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The foregoing was submitted to Mr. George C. Munro for identification of the unnamed bird. His comments are as follows:

This is a good account of the black-footed albatross. I have not seen any record of it catching flying fish while on the wing itself. Fisher records seeing one catch a flying fish as it flew past while the bird sat on the water. Their regular food is cuttle fish and real fish. They are not double jointed. I think they frequent all the flat islands of the Hawaiian chain.

The name required is Bulwer's Petrel. They were numerous on the largest island of the French Frigate Shoals in 1891. It is pleasing to know that they are still there. Probably rats have not gained access there; no doubt only small boats can land on it, since it is a very low, sand island. It is curious if these are the only birds on that island as there are several terns, Laysan albatross, boobies and wedge-tailed shearwaters on the Shoal, but the others are probably on other of the 20 or 30 sand islands and the high rock at the entrance to the lagoon.

The reference to lice is interesting--perhaps he means the little fly that inhabits the seabirds' feathers on some of these islands, the owl and other birds on the larger islands. It is good to hear that the Coast Guard is following the tradition of the Navy in protecting the birds on the islands.

NEWS FROM CHESTER FENNELL: ... While on a short business trip up to Yokohama and Tokyo only last weekend, I found a beautifully mounted specimen of the Hondo copper pheasant on the Ginza, the very popular shopping street in Tokyo. The same little stand had nicely done specimens of the Japanese jay, Indian kingfisher, Chinese bamboo pheasant and the Japanese fan-tail warbler. I only had yen enough to add the last species to my collection. The others will have to wait till I make another trip. Also found a good mount of a male Mandarin duck here in Kobe this week. The pattern and colors are breath-taking, and I never tire of gazing at it. All these feathered treasures surround me each evening when I come home from work and add no small degree of pleasure and joy to the life here.

Just before leaving Korea, I packed up all my bird skins and sent them to the University of California Museum of Vertebrate Zoology. Since I eventually intend to settle down and live in the Bay Area, I decided that it would be best to have the collection as near as possible. They were, naturally, very pleased to receive them, especially since some of the races were new to their collection. In turn, they have kindly made available to me all their collection and material for study purposes and have offered many valuable suggestions for the perfection of my future work in the preparation of skins. Dr. Benson also wants me to collect bats and a certain species of shrew-mole for him...

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JULY ACTIVITIES:

BIRD WALK:

NOTE - CHANGE OF TIME TO 8 A. M.

July 10th, to Poamoho. Meet at the Library of Hawaii at 8:00 a.m. It was agreed at the June meeting of the Society to start the walks at this earlier hour for better birding. The opportunity of further study of the unidentified bird takes us to Poamoho again.

MEETING: July 18th, Library of Hawaii Auditorium at 7:30 P.M.

Mr. William V. Ward, who has made an extensive study of bird photography and birds themselves, will show his color movies of mainland birds and tell something about the birds pictured.

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