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HAWAIIAN BIRD NOTES

By George C. Munro

The Bristle-thighed Curlew (Numenius tahitiensis) Gmelin.

In the National Geographic Magazine of December 1948 there is a story by Arthur A. Allen, Professor of Ornithology, Cornell University, in which he says: "Up to June 12, 1948, one bird - and one only- of the 815 species of North American birds had successfully hidden the secret of its nesting place and summer home from the eyes of man." Then followed a very complete description of the nesting place of the Bristle-thighed Curlew. It is accompanied by beautiful photographs of the bird, its eggs and chicks, taken at Curlew Lake, near the mouth of the Yukon River, Alaska. Although only two nests were found, about 20 of the species were seen. I quote (p. 770): "This indicates that the area we discovered is undoubtedly a part of the main summer range of the species, which may extend northward for several miles, and even into the foothills of the Brooks Range."

Mr. Scott B. Wilson in "Birds of the Sandwich Islands," Wilson and Evans, 1894, says: "I could not ascertain that the Kioea nests in the islands: some natives, however, assured me that it does. The Honorable Walter Rothschild, Ph.D., in the Avifauna of Laysan and the Neighbouring Islands," 1893-1900, says: "According to Schauinsland it is quite evident this bird though very frequent on Laysan never breeds there." Rather a sweeping statement for a scientist to make. Professor H. W. Henshaw in his "Birds of the Hawaiian Islands, 1902, says: "I was assured by Mr. Sam Kauhane that a few actually remain all summer, and he believed some nested." In Birds of Hawaii, 1944, I say of this bird: "Though a migratory winter visitant, like others of this class, some stay through the summer and it was known to the natives as sometimes breeding here. Mr. John Rennie, who lived many years on Niihau, told me he once saw one nesting there." I spent November 1st and 2nd of 1939 on the small island of Niihau and remarked the tameness of the bird there, 7 of which I saw feeding out on the grass land. My companions counted 17 and Mr. Rennie said he sometimes saw 40 or 50 at a time. I don't know if Rennie told me anything of the nest or eggs or whether the bird he saw hatched her young. I probably did not realize at the time that its summer haunts and nesting place were unknown. I had not seen the bird for many years in the Hawaiian group. A flock of them followed me along the beach on the Midway Islands in 1891, and I had seen some on islands to the south in 1924 and 1938. I saw but few when I ranged over the country on Molokai between 1899 and 1906, though Perkins, about seven years before, had seen them in "large flocks which fed on the open uplands and the mud-flats along the coast." They have been almost exterminated by shooting on all the islands except Niihau, where fortunately the Robinson family, owners of the island, carefully protect the birds. Guns are prohibited on the island, and when a wild turkey is needed for the table, it is caught with the lasso. Had there been an Audubon Society in Hawaii at the time Rennie found the curlew's nest and had he been a member, we might have had a description of this bird's nest, eggs and young many years before its summer nesting place was discovered. Through scarcity of interested corresponding members on other islands we are no doubt at this time

losing valuable records. It is not at all impossible when the Hawaiian Wildlife Refuge is established that the Bristle-thighed Curlew will frequent it with the other birds. We now know that its summer nesting place is a safe one as told by Dr. Allen: "...one of the most forlorn stretches of tundra in North America, deserted by all other birds and still largely covered with snow..." This remarkable bird is now under protection in the Territory of Hawaii. As those that come to Niihau increase they will undoubtedly spread again over the whole group.

Diseases in Birds.

In the Elepaio of December 1948, Vol. 8, No. 6, Mr. Paul H. Baldwin has notes on tapeworms in Drepanine birds. I mention in Birds of Hawaii, when writing of disease in the Kauai akialoa (Hemignatus obscurus procerus) that "Perkins found them with tapeworms." My authority for that is Fauna Hawaiiensis, Vol. I, part IV, "Vertebrata," 1903, by R.C.L. Perkins, p. 325. I quote: "The Kauai Hemignathus is also subject to the attack of internal parasites of two kinds, the remarkable Apororhynchus hemignathi of the Acanrhocephala and the tapeworm Drepanidotaenia hemignathi. The former is the sole representative of a (so far) peculiarly Hawaiian family (Apororhynchidae); the latter is cogeneric with the tapeworms of other birds. A second species of tapeworm attacks the Loxops of Kauai and I think the Hemignathus as well." Baldwin says that so far as he knew "cestode parasites have not previously been recorded from the Drepanidae." He is wrong there, but they may not have been found in Chlorodrepanis, Himatione and Vestiaria in which he found them and may not have been found on the island of Hawaii.

Deposits on Rocks.

Quoting from Oceanic Birds of South America, Vol. 1, 1936, by Robert Cushman Murphy, p. 150, writing of St. Paul Rocks off the east coast of South America: "During even calm weather, however, they are usually beset by strong surf, which splashes them with spray to their summit and tends not only to wash away the guano of the sea birds but also to cause it to precipitate its salts in the form of dense, shining glassy layer, which has been described by Darwin, Sir James Clark Ross, the 'Challenger' naturalists, and other explorers. According to Moseley (1879, 72) this enamel-like crust is hard enough to scratch glass. It is here given more than passing notice because a similar encrustation is found upon one or more islands off the west coast of South America northward of the arid zone." Page 100: "A cream colored enamel on the rocks at sea level similar to the 'guano glass' of St. Paul Rocks and the Lobos Islands, has been reported at Barrington Island by Mann (1909, 41)." This explains what has been a puzzle to me for a long time. It is a band of what is evidently the same substance running along the coast of Lanai. It shows as a darker strip than the surrounding rock just above high water mark, which can be seen from the sea for about a mile from the start of the cliffs at Manele Bay on the southeast side of the island. At the Manele end where I once examined it, the smooth exposed tops of small boulders embedded in the shore are coated with this glassy substance. I had no geological hammer to break out a good specimen, but with a stone managed to knock off a small piece which was subsequently lost. Consequently it was not submitted to an authority, and the matter went unexplained until I took up Robert Cushman Murphy's remarkable book.

Evidently in the remote past the area of brown sand by Manele Landing to the west of the cliffs was the nesting place of sea birds in large numbers, hence this deposit on the rocks to the east. This locality is now mostly a forest of algaroba trees excepting a patch of drifting sand which sometimes buries the trees. The sea at that time may have been a little higher than at present, or it may be

that the deposit was made by the higher spray above the usual high water mark, as this band appears above the water. The Hawaiian tern (Anous minutus melanogenys Gray) still nests in a cave in Leinohaunui Pali on the end of the peninsula, that figures in one of the legends of Lanai. Dr. Kenneth Emory thinks that the platform on the rock Puupehe, about 150 feet from the shore, might be a birdcatcher's shrine. He says these exist in other parts of the islands. He, with Hector Munro and Kawano, climbed the perpendicular 80 foot cliff in 1922. Legend says the platform, 21 feet long, 6 feet wide and 3 feet high is a human burial place, but Emory found no human remains in his investigation. He found bird bones and egg shells, chiefly of terns, on the 70 foot wide summit and bones of what is probably Bulwer's petrel in the crevices of the platform. Bulwer's petrel nests in such places. The name Puupehe means "owltrap hill" which also connects it with the birds. Certainly if any sea birds still nest on the top of that rock they are safe from the cats which roam the shore. There are no mongooses on Lanai.

An examination of the shore at the bottom of the cliffs at Ulpau Head, Oahu, would likely reveal a deposit of the same substance from the guano washed from Moku Manu Island three quarters of a mile off the shore, or from an ancient bird nesting place at Mokapu Point on the mainland of Oahu where the boobies came to nest a few years ago and are now established. They probably instinctively returned to a nesting place of their ancestors or possibly were guided by some very old birds. Instances of this I have referred to previously. In passing fairly close to the cliffs at Ulpau Head in a boat last year I thought I saw a similar dark band between Pulaulua and Hahakili Leap to the north of Mokapu Point. It might be worth while for someone to investigate this.

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AS I WATERED MY GARDEN

By Ruth R. Rockafellow

Those who have visited me will smile when I mention my garden because it consists of a little stairway lined with plants, leading into my garage-top apartment. Fate has seen it wise to curtail my gardening efforts and I, not to be too submissive, have in turn done the most possible with my cramped living conditions.

On Sunday morning, July 31st, I was out as usual "working in my garden." It is the morning set aside for a serious talk with my plants and their day for a treat, namely Hyponex. All was going well; I cultivated one, pulled weeds in another, transplanted and watered. As I moved upward with my sprinkling can to water some Vanda orchid plants, growing contrary to rules and regulations with their feet in coffee cans and their heads resting on hapu all nailed against the uprights of the stairway, a bird fluttered toward me and lit on my shoulder. I was amazed, but the bird was not. It leaned forward toward the water I was pouring so I assumed the little thing was thirsty. Gently I reached - the bird did not seem to mind - so I placed it on the fence and started after water suitable for birds.

Out I came with an individual side dish. Promptly the bird settled itself on the edge of the dish, drank a few sips and flipped the water with its bill. Knowing a bit of the habits of canaries I recognized a bath sigh, and before I could put down the dish, the bath was had right in my hand. It bathed until no water remained, then hopped on my shoulder to shake and dry. My amazement knew no bounds. I thought it was a wounded bird, also I was a bit annoyed at myself

inasmuch as I know so little about birds. My chief interest is the green plant. I could not reconcile my meagre information of birds with the behaviour of the bird in my hand--it really and truly was IN MY HAND.

After repeated efforts to put the fellow on the fence it always flew back on my shoulder. I parked the bird, this time on the floor, and appeared with bread soaked in milk, not taking time to hard boil an egg which I am told is the proper food. I placed the saucer near the bird to watch results. Again I was in for a surprise. Up it flew and lit on my shoulder, which seemed to be its favorite landing field. Picking up the saucer I held it - yes, it ate from my hand. Finishing its meal it hopped to the other shoulder. I began to think I must have something akin to Cleopatra's perfume about me to so attract the bird.

Not knowing what next to do, as I did not care to house the bird, and being afraid of the many cats in our neighbourhood, I decided to help it on its way. It was very windy and remembering how boobies head into the wind I gently tossed it upward. It took flight only to land on a nearby limb and severely scold me.

Deciding to finish my gardening I entered my apartment, and soon appeared again with more water and, believe it or not, back the little fellow came and again settled himself on my shoulder. Feeling that there would be no end to the game we were playing, I placed the bird on the floor behind a plant and continued my watering. This was not the right thing to do because the bird hopped up on my bare foot and nestled between the folds of my housecoat. Well, what now little bird? I tried walking about with the fellow on my foot and it did not mind at all--sat perfectly still and made the rounds with me. We talked back and forth, neither understanding the other but it was good fun. It was cunning the way the little thing would look up at me, twisting its head from side to side and chirping, trying its best to put on a good show.

I finally decided this could go on forever and made one more effort to send it on its way, knowing now that it was not injured and well able to take care of itself. Again I tossed it into the air and it flew, as before, to the nearby branch; however, before it could return I went into the house. Waiting for about a half hour, I looked out--all seemed under control. Cautiously I stepped out--the bird was gone.

Oh! yes, what kind of a bird was it?

At first I thought it was an immature sparrow; however, its behaviour was quite unusual as I did not know that they would be so tame. My family called on me that afternoon and I recited the above performance. My brother-in-law gave me the first inkling that it might be a linnet. I called Miss Hatch and she confirmed his identification, inasmuch as the little thing had pronounced bars and stripes on its breast, though its feathers were very much ruffled. She mentioned that it was probably somebody's pet. Truly it never occurred to me that it was a PET.

The above account no doubt means that my membership in the Audubon Society will be cancelled, however, on second thought, they are all such kind and gentle people, maybe they will give me another chance. Yes? No.

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LETTERS AND GENERAL NOTES

Lohr a. Main, Germany. August 17, 1949. The sudden immigration of the Turkish dove--Oriental turtle dove (Streptopelia nisoria decaocto) has drawn our attention for two years. Wandering westward from India, it has been a home bird in Constantinople since the 16th century. Until 1930, it had not come further into South East Europe than Macedonia. In 1930 it suddenly appeared in Hungary and quickly settled down in the whole country. Since 1943, it has overflowed German Austria. In May 1948, the first one was caught at Augsburg and recognized as a Turkish dove by an extraordinary chance. An ornithologist there, Anton Fischer, one day went to see a friend in an Augsburg suburb, and noticed that the latter had gotten a Turkish dove among his Indian turtle doves. The man had caught it in his garden just before. Later in 1948, it was found at the Ammersee (in the surroundings of Munich), in Nurnberg, Stuttgart and Celle (Hanover)--thus it had reached the Atlantic Coast. It is not known what circumstances--since 1930 and then again since 1943 have suddenly raised the apparently inborn wandering instinct of this bird again. Turkish, Indian turtle dove and turtle dove, if not singing, are distinguished with difficulty in the open field. But their voices are astonishingly different. A breeding Turkish dove has not been found up to now in Germany, so it is uncertain whether it will permanently enrich the bird life of the area. -- Dr. Hans Stadler.

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Oahu, T. H. On Thursday, August 18th, Grenville Hatch and I had an opportunity to check on Hawaiian shore birds and early migrants on Kahuku plantation, both at the beach and makai of the highway, and in the Fort Haase section of Mokapu peninsula. The whole island of Oahu was engulfed in disagreeable weather, so we ran into intermittent showers, drizzling rain and high winds, and a small amount of sunshine at Kahuku.

We stopped first on the causeway which crosses Nuupia pond, about a quarter of a mile makai the Kaneohe Naval Air Station sentry gate. This pond, divided as it is into two or three sections (according to the map it is divided into three, and is bordered on the Heleloa side by a second pond called Halekau), offers a variety of terrain and is rimmed by low shrubs, rocks, grasses and fruit-bearing weeds which attract a diversity of bir s in a small area. A lone Pacific Golden plover was standing on a tiny mud flat about 25 yards from the road. We sat there on the edge of the pond for a half hour and during that time he didn't move. The plover was in his winter plumage of gray and brown, and looked fat and healthy. He was soon joined by three Hawaiian stilts (Hemanoptus hemanoptus knudseni) who came sailing in with their legs trailing behind them and settled down in a few inches of water very near the plover. The plover didn't seem to mind their raucous fussing as we did, for when the Stilts tune up, one can hardly hear any other bird songs or calls above the din they make. The Hawaiian name for stilt, Aeo, fits them so patly, for they remind one of what the word kingpin ought to mean. They puddled about, picking and choosing choice bits of food all the time we were watching them. Observing them closely, we decided that the change of pitch in their constant chatter was accompanied with jerks and nods of their heads. I wonder if this peculiarity is characteristic in other birds

Hawaiian terns (Anous minutus melanogenys Gray) were flying back and forth from one side of the causeway to the ponds on the other side, and it was impossible to keep them in sight and accurately count them. With our binoculars we picked out in the far distance eight frigate birds soaring about and above a small knoll, taking advantage of the fine breeze blowing in from the ocean.

A few ruddy turnstone (Arenaria intepres intepres) flew around the low-lying shrubs at the water's edge. The turnstone are an active, nervous bird, and it is not easy to see the markings and stripes on them.

Wandering tattler (Heteroscelus incanus) announced their presence with their distinctive whistle--whistling both while in flight and while searching for food. And their searching-for-food whistle is different from their flight whistle. We saw only six tattler, but all of them at close range. Their short running start preliminary to flight, their all-over slate coloration, their method of landing--hovering over their perch like a helicopter and then "letting down" their legs--all these things help to identify the tattler.

We spent a short time at the Booby colony, and the colony appears to be unmolested and in good condition, and we estimated there were approximately 500 birds roosting and/or flying about.

Birding in the Kahuku area was definitely disappointing, and we saw there only a half dozen plover and several flocks of turnstone. One suspects that there is enough shooting done in Kahuku to discourage the birds from this area.

Totals for the day: 8 species, approximately 560 individuals. -- P.G. Harpham.

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OCTOBER ACTIVITIES:

FIELD TRIP: October 9, 1949, to Kalena. Meet at the Library of Hawaii at 8 A.M. Please note change of time. Bring lunch, water and car (if possible). Kalena trail is at the northern end of the Waianae Range, reached via Schofield Barracks, and is probably the best trail for close observation of forest birds.

MEETING : October 17, 1949, Library of Hawaii Auditorium at 7:30 P.M. Miss Helen Peterson will show some of her excellent color slides of the islands, including many taken on the trails followed by our group. Miss Peterson has been associated with the Hawaii Color Pictorialists and does fine color photography.

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