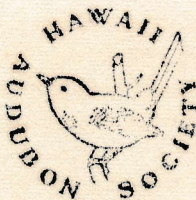


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of Wildlife in Hawaii

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FURTHER ADVENTURES IN THE JAPANESE ALPS -- SUMMER OF 1949. By Chester Fennell

Part I.

Around three o'clock in the afternoon of the 3rd of July, 1949, I once again stepped onto the station platform at Matsumoto, the gateway into the Japanese Alps, loaded down with binoculars, cameras, seeds of color film, notebooks, light meter, and approximately sixty pounds of miscellaneous, more or less concentrated food, excited and rarin' to get started on my fully-scheduled three weeks of vacation freedom. Luck was with me from the very beginning for as I opened the door of the transportation office, my old friend Paul Imafuuku, who so kindly and overwhelmingly welcomed me the previous summer, when I came over from Korea on vacation, once again warmly grasped my hand and relieved me of all my heavy burdens. As he pulled up a chair for me and I began to tell him of my present plans he at once set about making them all possible with the least amount of trouble and worry on my part.

The next electric train to Shimajima, where it was necessary for me to go in order to catch a bus, which in turn finally carries a person to Kamikochi, the Zermatt of the Japanese Alps, didn't leave till seven o'clock the next morning so that there was no other choice but to remain in Matsumoto that night. Paul soon found a room for me at the nearby Ichiyama Hotel and within only a few minutes had me comfortably lodged, gear and all. Since the Japanese train, which I had boarded at Nagoya at six o'clock that morning, had passed through no less than fifteen or more tunnels en route, I was a sorry-looking, sooty mess and I lost no time in jumping into the good, hot bath which awaited me at the hotel.

Paul returned at dinner time to share with me a very delicious Japanese meal served in typical Japanese style from a low table right in my room. After our repast we slowly sauntered out to the southern outskirts of the town to see the old Namakura Castle, a large, beautiful, black structure of granite and framework dominating the entire Matsumoto plain and once the stronghold of the ruler of this whole area. A beautiful, blood-streaked, sunset sky provided a most dramatic backdrop for the imposing bulwark and we lingered in admiration till the long, extended fingers of darkness enclosed the scene and dimmed its outline. As we reluctantly turned our geta homeward and clopped our way along the cobbled streets, Paul related certain outstanding historical episodes of this particular region of the country; of the old feudal wars and strife among the lesser rulers of ancient days, of the consequent hardships and poverty imposed upon the middle and lower classes, of the ancient customs and ceremonies, etc., etc.

Promptly at six-thirty the following morning, Paul was at the door of the hotel with his bicycle ready to guide and help me to the train. I quickly paid my hotel bill - 1200 yen or the equivalent of \$3.35 for my lodging and breakfast and dinner for two - bade my kind host a fond adieu and dashed along in the trail of Paul's already fast moving bike. The single-coach, dinky, little tram was patiently

awaiting our arrival and as soon as I was seated slammed shut its doors, tooted its squeaky, high-pitched whistle and jerked into erratic motion. Slowly it worked its way up into the foothills of the towering range to the west, stopping every now and then at little stations to pick up a hiker or guide heavily laden with bulging knapsacks, ice axes, crampons, ropes, etc. Nearly all wore the sign of the guide, a square of kamoshika skin and fur, a species of mountain antelope, closely akin to the Swiss Alps chamois. An animal peculiar to Japan.

Some forty-five minutes of belabored effort brought us to Shimjima and the end of the line. Only six of us were destined for Kamikochi and the bus driver decided to wait for the arrival of the next train in order to make the trip really worthwhile. I, meanwhile, amused myself by watching a pair of house martins, which had their mud nest plastered up under the large, over-hanging eaves of a nearby rustic building, which apparently served as a combination hotel and general store. Altogether, I observed five individuals of this species in the general vicinity and presumed that the others probably had nests somewhere among the crannies and crevices of the vertical rock cliff directly across the river on the south side of the canyon. Bush warblers were all over the place and filled the gorge with their loud crescendoes of "ho-ho, ho-kekkyo." Meadow buntings "zit-zittered" in the underbrush along the stream bed and flashed their long, white, outer tail feathers as they jerkily flew from bush to bush.

Just within the entrance of a little curio shop stood a mounted specimen of a kamoshika, which, in spite of its poor preparation and general unkempt condition, afforded me no little thrill and interest for it gave me my first idea of just what this rare species looked like. The fur, which is short and matted close to the skin is protected by long, coarse guard hairs and in this particular individual appeared to be a dark brown in color. The majority of patches of fur I have seen the guides wear and full-sized, prepared skins I have seen since have appeared to be a light, tannish-gray with black-tipped guard hairs so that there seems to be quite a large variation in the color of this species. Perhaps the brown, mounted specimen was in its summer coat.

Finally, around ten o'clock, the second tram arrived with some six more adventurous souls and the bus driver decided it was load enough. Slowly we chugged our way up out of the village and along the narrow, deeply-rutted dirt road cut high into the canyon walls first on one side of the river and then on the other. Several times we met large, old, beat-up trucks coming down heavily loaded with logs from the forested country above. These meetings on the narrow road presented no minor problem and often made it necessary for the bus to back downgrade several hundred feet before it could find a spot large enough to back into to allow the lumber truck to pass. The guiding call of the Japanese girl conductor to the bus driver rings in my ears to this day and her high-pitched, oft-repeated cry of "Arai! Arai! Arai!" (our "all right!") has almost become an aural symbol of safety and guidance to me of that entire Alpine country. It took far more than cries of "arai!" however, to make the trip physically comfortable, and I must confess that those 32 miles from Shimajima to Kamikochi were the roughest 32 miles I have ever traveled in my life - Oahu's Windward Transit routes not excepted! I, along with all eleven other passengers, clung dearly and desperately to the arm rests, to the bottom of the seats or to any other handy protuberance which presented itself every inch of the way in mad efforts to remain at least somewhere in the general vicinity of our proscribed resting places. The first half hour or so I considered rare fun and laughed heartily watching everyone else get bounced and thrown around in between bounces and tosses of my own, but there is a certain physical limit to even the most hilarious

of sports and my fun slowly simmered down into sheer exasperation and weariness. Protecting my own body from permanent injury was task enough in itself, but then I had my knapsack, binoculars, cameras and lightmeter to safeguard also. The knapsack finally became firmly wedged in between two seats so that I didn't have that to concern myself over any longer, but the other items kept me in a constant state of juggling in frantic attempts to hang on to them. Momentary relief eventually arrived, however, when we pulled up to one side of a gaping gorge over which the road bridge had been washed away by heavy rains only a few days before. A flimsy foot bridge now led over to the opposite bank where another bus waited to transport us the rest of the way.

In spite of the comparative physical discomforts which we suffered en route, the scenery was quite breathtaking in spots and the combination of well-forested mountainsides, rushing white waters and spectacular rock cliffs is ever a joy to behold. It all strongly reminded me of the approach into Yosemite National Park along the Merced River Highway, although the road itself was more suggestive of what perhaps that now famous route may have been like in the very early days of the Park's history.

At long last, just at noon, we rounded one last turn and entered the mountain-secured valley of Kamikochi. Truly, another Yosemite if I ever beheld one, though less spectacularly sculptured. It lies at approximately 5000 feet elevation, averages nearly a mile in width and is some ten miles long. Yake-Dake, the only active volcano in the area and some 8500 feet in elevation, majestically welcomed us with feathery plumes of smoke and steam from its summit craters and struck a bold outline against the clear, blue sky. It stands at the very entrance of the valley like some noble guardian of the alpine fastness. At the northern end of the valley the mighty wall of the Hotaka massif rears its snow-capped crest, including the 11,000 foot peaks of Oku-Hotaka, Mae-Hotaka, Minami-Hotaka and Kita-Hotaka. Within the shadows of these magnificent fortresses we sputtered our way along a single-track lane bordered on each side and often overhung with noble specimens of birch, pine, fir and larch.

Within another quarter of an hour we reached the end of the lane and came to a final choking, spluttering halt near a group of buildings picturesquely spaced along the banks of the Azusa-gawa. Paul had phoned in ahead of me that morning and made a reservation for me at the Shirakabaso Hotel so that as soon as we drew to a stop the porter dashed across the suspension bridge and guided me to the Inn which I was to make my headquarters for the next few days. The Shirakabaso Hosteru was a modest little structure neatly situated across the river at the opposite end of the bridge which is called the Kappabashi. The word kappa meaning river imp which at one time was supposedly to have been seen at this spot. It commands an excellent view of the entire valley and surrounding peaks and the sound of the river provides the finest of music throughout the day and night.

To be continued.

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LEARNING THE BIRDS
By J. d'Arcy Northwood
Reprinted from The Elopeio, v.1,no.7
October 1940

These notes are meant to help those who want to be able to recognize our birds. Recognition is the first step towards a better knowledge of them.

In the forest hearing is a much easier and more certain way of identifying a bird than sight. It is not easy to get a good view of a small bird among the leaves of the trees and if the bird be alarmed it makes matters more difficult by concealing itself. If a person knows the calls and goes along listening for birds and not looking for them he will recognize many more than if he relied on sight alone.

First one has to know the calls. The easiest way to learn them is to go with someone who already knows them and can instruct. In this way many people who have been on our Audubon bird walks have learned to identify the birds. Although it is the easiest way, it is not the most interesting and I am glad that I had the satisfaction of finding out for myself. I learned as much about the birds from books as I could, though it is difficult to describe a call or song and convey to the reader an idea of the actual sound. I well remember my difficulty with a call that sounded like a thin screech. It was some time before I could get a good view of the author of this call and found that it was an amakihi. Henshaw gives "a low sweet 'tweet'" and Perkins "a squeaking call note," though these descriptions may refer to the Hawaii amakihi.

Going along the trail I would hear an unfamiliar note. I would stop and sit quietly, hoping to get a view of the bird. In most cases this would be successful and I would be able to make a note of its characteristics. It is best to stop and keep quiet, the bird is probably alarmed at the sight of an intruder and is still further alarmed and will only fly away if one attempts to approach it. By keeping quiet the bird's alarm subsides and often its curiosity is aroused and it will give better chances of a close view and of learning something about its habits. Thorpeau says, "You only need sit still long enough in some attractive spot in the woods that all its inhabitants may exhibit themselves to you by turns."

It is movement that frightens birds; I have often sat with a friend talking quietly when watching birds without alarming them. The sound of the voice is accepted by them as one of the many sounds of Nature, but a movement means the approach of an enemy.

Have a small notebook and pencil handy and write down at the moment all that you see and hear. Recollections some hours or days later are likely to be mistaken and the fact of writing helps to clarify impressions. First the size of the bird, is it as big as a sparrow (6 inches) or a mynah (9 inches). Then its color, marks, notes, habits and anything else that may strike you. Field glasses are almost essential, preferably with a large field and a magnification of 8. Wear them slung around the neck already focussed. ...

Perhaps it is practice that enables one to hear bird notes above all other sounds. One becomes more receptive to faint impressions, and without wishing to encourage unsociability, one who wants to see birds at their best and learn their ways must go alone. That does not mean that bird walks in the company of a

congenial group are a failure. Far from it, they are often the only means most people have of learning even a little about birds, but the more people there are the fewer birds will be seen.

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LETTERS AND GENERAL NOTES

Mid-Pacific Country Club, Oahu: ... Saturday, January 7, it rained all day, and by five o'clock I could stay indoors no longer, so I donned a raincoat and set out for a walk through the Mid-Pacific Country Club to see what birds I might find. And rich, indeed, was the reward. On entering the fairway near Kailua Road, I saw numbers of plover, doves, mynahs, Kentucky and Brazilian cardinals. I walked out on an abandoned bridge, and across the stream I saw a gallinule with red bill and shield bobbling and tail twitching as it swam leisurely downstream. Another gallinule jumped out of a low bush to join it and together they browsed the water and grass. Looking around I saw a night heron take off from a grassy place, and then another one sailing away. Feeling as if I were watching a three ring circus, I was so busy trying to see all the birds and not miss anything, I crossed a foot bridge and followed a path up another fairway toward the seventh hole along the edge of a swamp. Up ahead about 50 feet from the lawn, in the swamp, was a bare bush and on one leafless branch was a brown something that looked as if it must be a bird. I moved quietly toward it and when I came to within about 60 feet of it, I could see a Hawaiian owl solemnly watching me as intently as I watched him. We surveyed each other a few minutes and then he soared off, showing his roddish bronze color with dark mottling.

On I went wondering what else I might see. On every hand were plover, Kentucky cardinals, and both lace neck and barred doves feeding. Suddenly ahead, a flock of shorebirds, probably turnstone, came up out of the swamp onto the grass. They soon saw me and flew off. I retraced my steps then, and on the way back I again saw two night heron and the two gallinule. Just before I left the area I saw a group of 16 Brazilian cardinals feeding on the grass. I went home with wet feet, but elated at the bird life I had been privileged to watch. -- Myrna Campbell.

Koko Head, Oahu: ... The evening before Thanksgiving, my Partner Naturalist and I were driving home after work by way of Koko Head. We arrived opposite the rifle range at the foot of Koko Crater at about 5:45 p.m. when my pn called my attention to a frigate bird flying rather low in the saddle over the range. We stopped the car to watch, and saw that the first bird was followed closely by thirteen more, arriving in a single line and perhaps three hundred feet apart. They circled until all arrived, and then started climbing in a wide spiral, until they were about 2000 feet high, and then headed out in a more or less straight line towards Moku Manu. We didn't have glasses with us, but watched until they were out of sight. Almost immediately, others started arriving and repeating the same performance until thirteen had arrived, and they too headed out in the same direction.

There is probably some significance in the fact that two separate groups, totaling 27 birds, used the area for an assembly point before starting home. Perhaps some favorable air currents near the crater make it easy for the birds to attain the desired altitude for their homeward flight. Others who have flown airplanes may have some explanation to do with holding or homing over the range. -- H. Paul Porter.

Yosemite National Park (written from Kobe, Japan): ... Did I tell you Grenville of the experience with the great gray owls in Yosemite? Throughout the entire three years I worked in the Park I was on the lookout for them but was never successful in seeing a single one. A year after I left, my good friend Fitzpatrick, reported having seen one along the Glacier Pt. road on the south side of the valley, and after that several others reported seeing one every now and then. On the 3rd of October this year, while visiting Fitz in the valley, we drove up to Crane Flat on the north side of the valley where a pair had been regularly reported throughout the summer. Sure enough, after about half an hour of looking around we discovered them sitting on a large stump smack out in the center of a meadow approximately 500 feet from the road. They were quite unafraid and calmly sat there in the full sunlight of midafternoon staring at us from out of their huge wondrous facial discs and occasionally dropping down into the grass to investigate some promising movement of mouse or grasshopper. It was the thrill of a lifetime for me, and we remained in the general vicinity for a couple of hours watching their actions and making the most of the adventure. They frequently gave vent to the most peculiar un-owl-like, high-pitched cry imaginable. Wholly incommensurate with their size and appearance.

Oddly enough, that very same morning, Fitz had been successful in attracting the pigmy owl, one of the smallest of the family, into the top of a cottonwood tree along the river and directly above our heads where we enjoyed, again, one of the finest views we had ever had of this species. Altogether, the day totaled 26 species and approximately 130 individuals and I was left high well breathless with the excitement of renewing so many old avian acquaintances. -- C. Fennell.

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Honolulu, Oahu: ... Once again it is time to make note of the yearly migration or descent from the hills of the Liothrix lutea, the Japanese Hill Robin. A more appropriate common name for it would be the Babbler for it belongs to the Babbling Thrush family of Timeliidae. The Babbler, a native of Asia, was imported to Oahu in 1928 and 1929 from the Orient by the Board of Agriculture and Forestry. On Oahu it has confined itself, for the most part, to the high and deep rain forests. In August 1942 Mr. d'Arcy Northwood reported that a group of them was observed near the water tank back of Woodlawn, which is at approximately 500 feet elevation. On November 3rd, 1944, the birds were seen by Grenville Hatch in the vicinity of Roosevelt High School, and since then have been observed yearly in that area, generally appearing in the first and second weeks in November, and remaining for varying lengths of time. Each year, from 1944 to 1948 there have been increasing numbers of them.

In the 1947 Christmas bird census, taken that year on the 21st of December, a single Babbler was reported as having been heard but not seen in the Pacific Heights residential district by Mr. and Mrs. E. B. Hamilton. During November, 1948, the Liothrix lutea was seen in Nuuanu, Punchbowl, Wilhelmina Rise and Waikiki districts.

This year (1949) Miss Hatch reports that "they came down to Roosevelt on November 2nd and 22nd in numbers, but each time stayed only a part of the day. Unlike other years, however, when there have been a few individuals around from time to time until about the first of the year, this year I have neither heard nor seen any since the above-mentioned dates." -- P.G. Harpham.

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January bird walk - Kaelepulu pond: ... On Sunday, January 22, our bird walk started at Kaelepulu Pond. Heavy winter rains have filled this pond full again and its

main surface as well as the marshy edges were heavily populated with coot. Those on the open water could be seen only as they bobbed up between the choppy wavelets raised by strong Kona winds. No count was feasible. Eight pintail ducks were seen and plover rose, calling, into the air as we walked through the field.

Proceeding on to the Kaneohe Naval Air Station, the ponds and shore lands were surprisingly unproductive of bird life -- coot on the open water, stilt making up in noise for their lack of numbers, the usual noddly terns fishing, a night heron or two, but no ducks. The surrounding dunes offered food to quite a sizeable number of plover (only a portion of which could be counted) and about the same number of turnstones.

At 10:45 a.m. the rains came, in sheets, and the group drove through the storm to Ulupau Head. There the rain abated long enough for us to see that the slope, while fresh and green with new vegetation, gave housing to not one booby bird, at least not at 11:30 a.m. A group of some 15 frigate birds soared unhurriedly overhead, but the fast returning rains sent our party scurrying for home. We will be interested to learn the booby count in subsequent months and other hours. Birds counted for the morning: Frigate birds, 15; Night heron, 2; Pintail ducks, 8; Plover, 25; Stilt, 24; Tattler, 2; Noddly terns, 10; Turnstone, 24. Species, 8; individuals, 111. -- M. C. Porter.

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ERROR: The numbering of the February 1950 issue of The Elepaio is wrong. It should be Volume 10, number 8.

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MARCH ACTIVITIES:

FIELD TRIP: March 12th, to Poamoho. Meet at the Library of Hawaii at 8:00 AM, bringing lunch (and car if possible). The February walk was rescheduled to Kawai-loa trail, so this will be our first trip to Poamoho in 1950; we should see many forest birds with the lehua in bloom.

MEETING: March 20th, Auditorium of the Library of Hawaii at 7:30 P.M. In furtherance of Wild Life Conservation Week the society is sponsoring this as a public meeting at which Mr. William Ward will show his excellent color movies of wildlife, especially Hawaiian shore birds.

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HAWAII AUDUBON SOCIETY OFFICERS:

President: Mr. H. Paul Porter, 335 Manono, Lanikai P.O.
 Vice-Presidents: Mr. E. B. Hamilton, P. O. Box 3679
 Mr. George Sonoda
 Secretary-Treasurer: Miss Grenville Hatch, P.O. Box 5032, Honolulu 14
 Editor, The Elepaio: Mrs. Priscilla G. Harpham, 3661 Tantalus Drive, Honolulu

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