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BIRD COLONIES ON CANTON ISLAND By H. Paul Porter

I spent my birthday, April 1st, driving around Canton Island twice. As you know, Canton is a big coral atoll, consisting of one "C" shaped island about thirty miles around and, in some places, not more than 100 feet wide. The airfield and the new CAA development is at one end of the "C", and the Pan American Hotel and living quarters on the other end. The ends are separated by a narrow channel, across which Pan American runs a ferry to avoid the long drive. One of the reasons for my trip was to investigate the condition of the road around the island with a view to moving some housing to the new housing area, and it afforded me one of the biggest thrills I've had in birding.

In the thirty miles of road we saw a colony of either frigate birds (Frigata minor palmerstoni), red-footed boobies (Sula sula rubripes) or blue-faced boobies (Sula dactylatra personata) at about quarter-mile intervals. In addition we saw plover, sooty terns, red-tailed tropic birds (Phaethon rubricauda) and the lovely little fairy terns in large numbers.

The Frigate birds were most interesting. There were literally thousands of them. Many of the males were still sitting in conspicuous positions on the clumps of *scaevola frutescens*, with their great red sacs inflated under the throat, trying to look appealing to the females. Others had found mates and were busily bringing nesting materials to their mates, wearing their deflated sacs like wattles on a turkey. I had little time to stop, but saw one egg and one young frigate bird in a nest.

Nest building was going on at a great rate. The male would fly in and hover over the female sitting on her chosen site, carrying nesting material (sometimes twigs eighteen inches long) in his bill and uttering soft "Quark, quark" sounds. As soon as the female heard him, she would turn her opened bill upwards, whereupon the male would drop the material into her open mouth and fly off in search of more. The female would then tuck the material carefully into place. At least I suppose she thought she was careful, for she would take quite a bit of time getting it properly into place. I thought the nests looked pretty sad.

Knowing the frigate bird's propensity for "pirating" fish from boobies, I was somewhat surprised to find that the two species mingle in apparent amity. They fly in the same groups and, in places, their nesting colonies overlapped. Perhaps if the more aggressive peoples of the world could be gathered together in some isolated place where they had to agree or else, they might find a way as these birds have done.

REMINISCENCES OF THE PAST

By George C. Munro

In "Time" magazine of December 12, 1949, is a review of a book, "The Strange Life of Charles Waterton," 1782-1865, by Richard Aldington. In the Honolulu Advertiser of December 18, 1949, is a story, "Death of Christmas Tree Discoverer Still an Enigma," by Tom O'Brien. These two stories take me back to the days of my boyhood.

Most interesting to me in the review of the book about Waterton is the statement that Waterton was "the pioneer among travelling English naturalists preceding Darwin, Wallace, Huxley..." and that "he brought taxidermy to the status of a fine art" and that "around the great park of Walton at a cost of nearly 10,000 pounds he built a wall three miles long and thus created the first bird sanctuary."

An early urge to study nature was probably awakened in me when a very small boy my brother John read to me from Waterton's "Wanderings in South America." Later I read with avidity Charles Darwin's "Voyage of the Beagle," Bates' "Naturalist on the Amazon," Alfred Russell Wallace's "Malay Archipelago." As I grew older I waded through Darwin's "Origin of Species" and "Descent of Man," and Lyell's "Principles of Geology." These and many others of their kind helped to stimulate my passion to study nature, learn taxidermy, collect birds and travel in remote places. But my first inspiration most likely came from "Waterton's Wanderings." I was eager to make the study of nature my life's work. However, it was incumbent on me to earn money and opportunities to do this in the natural history line were limited at the time where I lived. So the study has remained a hobby with me and perhaps better so. It certainly has been a great joy to me all my life. The satisfaction experienced by the naturalist in finding something new, hitherto unknown to science, is a great exhilaration and sufficient reward for time and energy expended. I had the good fortune to acquire this in my early manhood.

I knew Charles Waterton's brother Robert when he lived near my home in New Zealand. He was a kindly natured, easygoing individual. I remember him coming into a considerable sum of money from the ancestral estate in England. He married one of my earliest school teachers. They had a son named Charles, but I don't think any of the family was a naturalist like their renowned uncle.

My father bought one of Waterton's farms a few miles from our home farm, and later I plowed its fields. During the noonday rest I collected native ground beetles for my older friend Captain Thomas Broun. An empty watercourse ran through a patch of native New Zealand "bush" in the vicinity. Dead leaves from the trees accumulated on the moist surface of its bed and small beetles took refuge in the daytime under the leaves. Lying prone on my stomach with eyes close to the ground I could detect the insects as the leaves were moved aside. It was an ideal collecting ground, and I secured seven new species there. Captain Broun was then working on his "New Zealand Coleoptera" published in 1893. He was eager to get the specimens and kindly named one for me, Bryaxis munroi, and afterwards sent me the book. That was surely stimulation for a youthful naturalist.

The fact that Waterton had difficulty in landing his South American specimens in England in the early 1800's as recorded in this book, reminds me that about 20 years ago I brought to Honolulu bird specimens I had mounted over 40 years before. I had considerable difficulty in preventing their confiscation because there was a

law prohibiting the introduction of birds' feathers for millinery purposes. We surely should be more enlightened than England was in the early 1800's.

The other story told of the death of Mr. David Douglas, botanist collecting in Hawaii in 1834. Mr. William F. Wilson, who lived in Honolulu for many years, compiled a book from David Douglas' diaries in 1919, "David Douglas Botanist in Hawaii," now in the Library of Hawaii. William Wilson was a neighbor in New Zealand when I was a lad, and I knew him well in Honolulu for some years before he died. He probably knew of the monument to David Douglas raised through the efforts of Forester Lester W. Bryan and Scotsmen of Hilo and the Hamakua Coast. This monument is on the site of the mysterious death of David Douglas in a cattle trap deep in the forest on the slopes of Maunakea, Hawaii. It was unveiled in 1934, 100 years after David Douglas was killed. Were William Wilson alive today he would be pleased to see the picture in the Advertiser and know that more than 50 of the Douglas pines Forester Bryan had planted there at the time the monument was erected were now "towering giants," fitting auxiliaries for the monument to the discoverer of this and many other species of trees and plants of the Pacific coast and Hawaii.

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THE STRANGE LIFE OF CHARLES WATERTON, 1782-1865. By Richard Aldington. Duell, Sloan & Pearce. 231. p. \$3.

One hundred and twenty-five years ago Squire Waterton published his Wanderings in South America - a book which many readers refused to accept as truth, as did they refuse to accept his Essays on Natural History and his Autobiography, which appeared later. Several writers have been attracted by the enigma that was Waterton, and in this book Richard Aldington subjects him, whom he calls an "ornithological Jupiter," and those who have written about him, to a critical and sometimes unsympathetic examination.

The Squire was considered eccentric, a description which always "deeply stung" him, and was often held in contempt by fellow naturalists who questioned his scientific knowledge and probably considered him a sort of Baron Münchhausen. Aldington has faithfully put down his escapades, such as his bare-back riding a cayman; and his achievements, such as his discovery of the method used by the South American Indians in making curaro.

Of greatest interest to members of Audubon societies is Waterton's development of his Walton Hall estate into the first enclosed wildlife sanctuary, a project to which he dedicated much of his income and his time.

Recommended reading to all those interested in the preservation and protection of wildlife. -- P. G. Harpham.

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A RECONNAISSANCE OF THE GAME BIRDS IN HAWAII. By Charles W. Schwartz and Elizabeth Reeder Schwartz. Territory of Hawaii. Board of Commissioners of Agriculture and Forestry. 1949. \$1.00.

This book is a summary for the general public of the findings of the 18 months' survey made by Charles W. Schwartz for the Federal Aid-Wildlife program of the Division of Fish and Game, Board of Commissioners of Agriculture and Forestry and the

United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

It is full of valuable information on our game and non-game birds, written in extremely readable style, and illustrated with Mr. Schwartz' beautiful drawings, and fine photographs. Detailed life histories of the game birds, shorter life histories of what Mr. Schwartz calls "former game birds," with photographs and drawings of the birds, form valuable reference materials for all students of bird life.

The opening chapter gives a concise account of geographic and climatic conditions in Hawaii, with some attention paid to endemic species of plants and wildlife. Many maps show the location of ten vegetation zones, of distribution of various game birds, and of rainfall. Of particular interest are the charts showing plant food of game birds, and the extent to which each species forms a part of the diet.

Recommendations for the handling of various areas in the development of game will be of particular value to those interested in game management, but all of us will find benefit in reading it, because of the suggestions for care of bird life.
-- Grenville Hatch.

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JULY ACTIVITIES:

FIELD TRIP: July 9th, to Aiea Trail. Meet at the Library of Hawaii at 8:00 A.M. bringing lunch (and car if possible). The group has not gone over this trail recently, so it will be interesting to check the bird life there again.

MEETING: July 17th, Staff Work Room of the Library of Hawaii (first floor on the left corridor opposite the courtyard) at 7:30 P.M. The study group will continue with special emphasis on classification.

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