### THE ELEPAIO

### Journal of the Hawaii Audubon Society



## For the Better Protection of Wildlife in Hawaii

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# VISIT OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

In trying to gather in as many impressions as possible of the visit of Mr. and Mrs. John H. Baker in March and April, the announcement of their visit to Hawaii slipped over into this issue. This was a great honor for our society on its twelfth anniversary. Those of us who were able to go to the dinner in honor of our guests at Queen's Surf, on March 29th, will long remember that delightful evening, and the chance for acquaintance with the President and his wife.

The dinner was delightfully informal, and in spite of music below stairs, we were able to carry on conversation during the meal, and listen to an outline of the National Audubon Society's aims afterwards, as well as see some interesting pictures of birds in Louisiana bird sanctuaries.

The special object of Mr. Baker's visit was to see the remaining colonies of nene (Hawaiian goose) on Hawaii. Research on birds which are in danger of extinction is one of the purposes of the National Society.

Conservation is the keynote of the Audubon Society's work. Bird sanctuaries are encouraged. Some are maintained by the National Society, some by local societies here and there on the mainland.

Local Audubon Societies are numerous, most of them actually affiliated with the National Society, which believes in a hands-off policy, yet is glad to give helpful advice and other encouragement on request.

One of the most inspiring accomplishments of the National Audubon Society is the establishment of camps "to provide a wealth of rich experiences in the out-of-doors, to demonstrate the best methods of good teaching and group leadership, to reveal the fascinating web of life - the interrelationships between wildlife, plants, soil and water and to show how wiser use of our natural resources contributes to human welfare." There are four of these camps: in Maine, Connecticut, Texas and California. The California camp is at "beautiful Sugar Bowl Valley, in the Sierra Nevada mountains." A leaflet and application form may be obtained from Audubon Camp of California, c/o Mrs. Ethel E. Richardson, 887 Indian Rock Avenue, Berkeley 7, California. The cost is \$95.00 for the two weeks course, several courses being run through the summer, from June 17th to August 25th. How welcome would be the news that a Honolulu Audubon Society member, or indeed any resident of the Hawaiian Islands, has decided to take one of these courses. Or that a generous person has offered to pay the fee for a young person now at a mainland college, who is worthy of this chance! Though the birds would be different from those of Hawaii, perhaps all conditions different from ours, still the affiliation with other bird enthusiasts and students, other conservationists, would be invaluable experience. Any bright boy or girl (over eighteen is the requirement), or an older person interested in Scout work, or recreation work, or bird study, could think how to use the

knowledge gained, and adapt it to Hawaiian conditions. With the heightened interest in conservation in Hawaii, this opportunity is something to think of seriously.

News has come from Helen S. Baldwin, of Hilo, and Douglass H. Hubbard, of the Hawaii National Park, concerning Mr. Baker's visit, also from Donald Smith, Wild Life Biologist of the Board of Agriculture and Forestry, who accompanied them to Hawaii. The party visited Pohakuloa, in the Humuula Saddle, where the nene project is being carried out, thence went on to the Kona Coast, where Mrs. Baldwin joined the party, and they went to Kilauea. Mr. Oberhansley, Mr. Hubbard and Mr. Castro met them there and the entire group were taken to see the high lights of the region, then went off to Hilo.

Mrs. Baldwin says:

We enjoyed the eruption movies, had a short spin through part of the Park,

then hurried down to Hilo, where the Bakers had a dinner engagement.

Like most newcomers to Hawaii Island, the Bakers had no idea that the island was so big or so varied. We all felt sorry that their visit was so short that they could see but a fleeting glimpse of part of it. Their closely packed schedule would not let them even take the extra half hour to go down the Stainback Highway through native forest instead of the usual route through the cane fields.

Mrs. Baker was most impressed with the lack of primitive Hawaiian life and the degree of prosaic "Americanization" of everything instead of distinctive Hawaiian

art and culture.

Mr. Baker was most impressed, I think, with the number and variety of exotics which have taken over the wild as well as the cultivated country and the obvious effect this must have on our wild life. He was most urgent that we make every effort to study thoroughly, in the wild, the remaining species, to learn what we can best do to perpetuate them. He suggested that we take two related species, one fairly common like the <u>apapane</u> and one rarer one, and make comparative studies to learn if possible the real reasons for the disappearance of the native birds. I told him that Paul Baldwin had already done something along this line and he seemed quite interested.

Mr. Baker also had the very rare good fortune, though he probably does not realize how lucky he was, to hear the omao, or Hawaiian thrush, in the forest reserve in Kau. He was not able to see it - one seldom does in such heavy forest - but he heard it, also the apapane, amakihi, and elepaio, and saw the last three.

The Hilo Tribune, of April 13th, made a report of Mr. Baker's visit. Additional notes from that article are that Mr. Baker saw the nene collection of Herbert Shipman also, and that

He felt, however (after seeing the five young and four adult birds at the Pohakuloa home of the nene), that a thorough reconnaissance should be made as promptly as possible of the number of birds now living in the wild, and a detailed study of the conditions which have caused the reduction in the number of the birds in recent years. Although the decline in the number of the nene probably started soon after the coming of the foreigners to the islands, for a time a few years ago it was believed that the number of wild nene in the islands had been stabilized at several score.

In the last few years, there may have been a further reduction. Two nene were reported seen along the Saddle Road last fall, and a pair and two goslings were reported near the National Park in the winter of 1949-1950....

Preservation of the nene is arousing increasing interest among conservationists throughout the world....

As to the nene, Donald Smith says that the Pohakuloa restoration project is one phase of a two-fold program proposed by the Board of Agriculture and Forestry. Lack of funds has hampered the wider program so far. Such a study as Mr. Baker proposes of the nene in the wild is strongly favored by the Board, as well as the release of birds when the flock is large enough. Following release, the birds would be watched carefully to protect them against natural enemies. Habitats would be carefully chosen and the nene would actually be in a semi-domestic state. Preliminary studies would have to be made, before the most suitable habitats could be chosen.

While in Honolulu, Mr. Baker had the opportunity to talk with Colin G. Lennox, head of the Board of Agriculture and Forestry, who says that their talk centered around the draft of a proposed consolidation of the present miscellaneous laws for conservation of birds in Hawaii. As it is now, there is very little protection for some birds, especially the sea birds. Mr. Baker studied the draft with great interest and made some excellent suggestions which Mr. Lennox incorporated into the draft.

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VISIT OF MR. GUY EMERSON, PAST PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

It is a pity that enthusiastic members of the Hawaii Audubon Society could not have had more of the time of both Mr. Baker and Mr. Emerson. Perhaps they will come again.

Mr. Colin Lennox reports that Mr. Emerson had time to go with him to Rabbit Island to see the flourishing noddy tern and sooty tern colonies. (An annual count is now taken of these birds at Rabbit Island, and the increase in the flocks is astonishing, doubtless due to the greater protection they now have.) Mr. Emerson was so enthusiastic that he said it was the finest trip he had had in fifty years.

In Hawaii, Mr. Emerson stayed in the Hawaii National Park area on May 15th and 16th. Mr. Hubbard writes:

He and I had a very interesting trip out to the Pit Craters, on the Kau Desert, where we observed four <u>koae</u> (white-tailed tropic bird), one of which was seen landing on the wall of one crater and entering a small hole, from which it did not emerge in the five minutes or so that we watched, giving more evidence to back up the belief of other observers that the birds do nest in the Pit Craters. Mr.Emerson remarked that this was the high light of his trip.

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AFOOT AND AFIELD IN HAWAII

By Helen Shiras Baldwin

(reprinted from the Hilo Tribune, February 4, 1951)

A pheasant's day begins at cock-crow-pheasant cock-crow. As soon as the light of early dawn is bright enough for the pheasants to see enough to get about a little, one may hear the "honk, honk" of the cock pheasants, each in his own favorite crowing area that he deems his property. Once cock calling will bring answering or challenging cries from other cocks nearby, after the fashion of barnyard roosters.

Other pheasants of both sexes begin to stir from their perches in thickly foliaged trees or dense brush, or even sheltered spots on the ground if no larger cover can be found. Soon they start foraging for insects still sluggish with the cold, drink the dew or rain drops from leaves and grass, browse among the tender young leaves, or glean seeds and berries from grass, weeds, vines and bushes.

By mid-morning the birds feel sufficiently fed to stop their foraging and rest in the shade, preen their feathers, or fluff in dust or sand as chickens do. Usually they keep so well hidden and so quiet at this time of day that one may wander through country abounding in pheasant and not see or hear a single one.

But by late afternoon the birds are about again, gathering at watering places, foraging for food, crowing and calling to one another. Hen pheasants with chicks must forage more or less continuously, with brief rest periods from time to time, throughout the day to get food enough for their brood.

Dusk finds the birds returning to their roosting and sleeping places, though they often do not go back to the same place to sleep every night. Mother pheasants with run-about youngsters habitually brood their young in different spots on successive nights, probably in an instinctive effort to elude predators. When the young pheasants are old enough to care for themselves, they go about or roost in small flocks until ready to breed.

During the breeding season, roughly between February and July, the cocks especially will take time out of their daily activities to make love to the demure brown hen

pheasants whom they chance to meet. Though some species of pheasants habitually are monogamous, the species most common in our wilds practice monogamy only when necessity demands. Like some tribes of men, they prefer polygamy, usually in the ratio of one cock for three to six hens. This is the usual condition where the pheasant population is the healthiest and most prosperous.

Because of this, hunters may safely take from a half to three fourths of the adult male bird population each year in areas where pheasant are numerous without depleting the flocks. In this connection, Dr. William Beebe, writing in his beautifully illustrated and delightfully written monograph, "Pheasants, Their Lives and Homes" (copy in the Hawaii County Library; also the Library of Hawaii in Honolulu) tells us:

Owing to the omnipresent cultivation in many parts of eastern China, the vegetarianism of the coolies, and the excellent shelter and abundant feed, (ring-necked) pheasants occasionally become so abundant that the normal safeguards are destroyed. Cocks may become so numerous in a locality as to interfere seriously with the breeding. They disturb the hens while sitting on the eggs, and often acquire the egg-eating habit, if they do not indeed actually kill young birds. Two cocks have been observed to fight so fiercely and continuously that they have driven a hen from the nest and smashed all the eggs.

Like the crows of our cornfields, Chinese pheasants soon learn to distinguish between harmless coolies and hunters. They will feed and walk about in full view of a gang of working coolies and be off like a shot at the approach of a man with a gun....

Foreign so-called sportsmen go out from the cities and bring back large bags of hens. Their lack of sportsmanship prevents them from trying to distinguish between the sexes when the birds rise, and their lack of skill makes the slower rising and flying hen their prey while the wary swift cock more often escapes.

All this goes to show how much we need not only observers to tell us the habits of birds andgame laws based on their findings, but also education in true sportsmanship and appreciation of the wild life in our midst.

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### LETTERS:

Mrs. Baldwin tells us of visits of late to both Molokai and Maui. She says:

This past month I was for a time on Molokai and for parts of two days on Maui. On Maui I was the luncheon guest of Mrs. Carroll Lindley of Kihei, a bird enthusiast. About her home I heard the mocking bird calling and recognized then that this was the strange bird voice I had heard before on Molokai. The mocking bird is not present on Hawaii Island, so far as I know. Mejiro were also common on Maui as I had found them so on Molokai.

I wish I had had time to linger by the waterfowl sanctuary, but had only time to ride slowly past it. About a couple of hundred birds of various species of ducks and other waterfowl were disporting themselves about the ponds there, but too far from the road for me to distinguish species, except to note that several were represented. If some of your membership are on Maui during the winter migrant season, tell them to be sure to visit the waterfowl sanctuary and to take binoculars along.

On Molokai I had the good fortune to see a kioea flying at dusk along the shore, also flocks of plover and turnstones which settled on the exposed rocks a little way off shore at low tide. At high tide I believe most of these are covered with water. This was at Kaunakakai. The little ground doves, the Chinese dove, and the mejiro were plentiful among the kiawe trees. Now and then a Kentucky cardinal flashed across the road or a skylark mounted the air to sing. I was surprised how near the sea the skylarks came. On Hawaii the skylark is an upland bird. There were mynahs and ricebirds, of course, but few if any Liothrix in the

parts I was in, but then I was not in the forested areas, which may be the reason I missed them.

I had a nice ride about half of our coast highway with the <u>Bakers</u> and a most enjoyable day with them. I hope they come again.

Helen Shiras Baldwin

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Robert R. Sheehan writes to Miss Hatch from Midway. Excerpts are taken from his letter that Miss Hatch kindly shares with us.

Having been informed of your great interest in bird life, I have been intending to write you for sometime. My job is demanding, time off is usually spent in bird watching.

The feeding habits of the Laysan albatross are very interesting. I am working on a paper on that subject and it should be ready in August.

One of my favorite birds here is the white tern (Cygis alba). When I arrived in September, they were here in great numbers, also the tropic bird. Most of them left Midway in early November, and started returning March 1st. Some young were hatched as early as March 18th.

Today I saw my first bristle-thighed curlew (Nemenius tahitiensis) of the season. The bird is very shy and I was unable to approach it closely. It has an extremely long, curved beak - perhaps 4 or 5 inches long. The upper parts are speckled brown, the under parts dull buff; the legs rather long, gray in color. A number of these were observed on the beaches last year, feeding on sand crabs.

Here is a problem you may be able to solve, a bird I have been unable to identify. It is rather common to Midway. It has long legs, like the Hawaiian stilt, but there similarity ends. The body is similar to the bristle-thighed curlew; uppers brown, speckled, with gray-white underneath, legs and feet black; bill long but not curved; bill length about three and one half inches. Very shy. (Editor's interpolation: Mr. Munro and Miss Hatch think the bird must be the Pacific godwit.)

On April 1st, thousands of the grey-backed tern (Sterna fuscata) arrived at Midway. They have been making circular flights in groups of hundreds ever since their arrival and have not yet begun to nest. I managed to get some very accurate measurements of them. This is a medium tern with a swallow tail - 14 inch wing, length 13 and 1/3; bill 2 and  $\frac{1}{4}$ . Bill and feet black; uppers black, lowers white. In flight, observed from below, leading edges of wings white, trailing edges black. They are as curious as the white tern, but more shy. There must be 3,500 of them on the islands.

We also have with us the white-capped noddy (<u>Megalopterus minutus</u>). It is quite similar to the Hawaiian tern. They nest in trees, usually quite high and are nesting at present. Some of the young have probably been hatched, but because of the great height of their nests I have been unable to observe them.

We have another small bird here which appears to be some sort of a phalarope. Somewhat similar to the curlew but with a much shorter bill, and short yellow legs and feet. Uppers brown, lowers white. (Without question the red phalarope. Grenville Hatch.)

In September there were many red-tailed tropic birds (Phaethon rubricandus) here. At that time the young were hatched, but not yet fledged. They left the island the latter part of October, and are now back, having arrived here March 17. They are now mating and nesting. One egg was reported to me April 18, and I imagine that there are now more. Before nesting these birds were white, with shafts of primaries and tail feathers black. I have noticed that those on the nest now have a beautiful rose hue to their white parts. I am taking notes and will let you know their hatching and fledging dates.

I will be glad to answer any questions your members may have on the birds of Midway, providing, of course, the information is at may command.

Robert R. Sheehan

This is an excellent opportunity to ask questions about mid-Pacific birds. Please address Mr. Sheehan in care of Miss Grenville Hatch, 1548 Wilhelmina Rise, who will be glad to forward letters.

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JOURNAL OF ORNITHOLOGICAL WORK during the summer of 1937 By Walter R. Donaghho (continued)

July 21: We started out on our "wild goose chase". I was bent upon descending the mountain to the tool cache and then crossing country and exploring the region about the 1881 flow. Harold said, "Let me show you a cave where I found several goat skulls." We walked a short distance down the road and out upon the flow to the right, to a small, grassy kipuka, barren except for three ohia. (We christened this "Three Trees Kipuka".) Nene hopes were beginning to fade, but on reaching the kipuka Harold said, "There's your nene!" Astonished, I glanced up, and there, right in front of me were eight of them. I was speechless, but they didn't fade; they perched there and cackled, not 50 feet away, a beautiful sight, perched on a pile of boulders underneath one of the trees. Their actions reminded me of those of the barnyard fowl; their voices were very high, something like the tones of the stilt. Harold stayed to take pictures while I returned to camp to phone Mr. Lamb. When I returned they were still there, Harold creeping nearer to them. One flew up, followed by three others, then the remainder. The leader in front, the seven others strung out in a line, they flew off cackling loudly, down the slopes of the mountain to settle somewhere on the other side of the 1881 flow.

We dropped into a cave to eat lunch, goat skulls and bones all about. Rain in the afternoon induced us to return to camp.

- July 22: Returned to the kipuka of the nene but none greeted our eyes. Harold and I explored some of the caves. Observed a creeper while it was singing (not having been aware before this that the bird has been known to sing). A linnet flew out of a tree, from one of the lower branches that overhung a large cave. Thinking there was something peculiar about the way it flew, I grew suspicious and, sure enough, upon climbing up I found its nest in the fork of a horizontal limb. There were two bluegreen eggs within.... Returning to the tent, we considered joining a party going to the summit. Harold's shoes however, decided against it.... Later, we went again to the Three Trees Kipuka to wait for the nene, thinking they might come to rest there for the night, but they did not return.
- July 23: Returned to Three Trees Kipuka to see if the nene were there and to collect linnets' eggs. No nene. I went over to the last tree and climbed out on a branch parallel to and above the nest. It was in a very difficult position.... Grabbing the two eggs, I stuck them in my mouth safest place!
- July 24: Went in to Hilo to check a report of nene seen along the line surveyed for the Hilo-Kona road. I learned that they were over near the east slope of Hualalai.
  - July 26: Again visited the Three Trees Kipuka. No nene.
- July 28: Started on our hike up to the crater of Maunaloa today. One of the C.C.C. boys drove us to the end of the road. We started up the trail with the prospects of a beautiful day. The trail led through the scrub ohia region previously described, in which were the usual amakihi and apapane. The slope was very gradual. Slowly the trees disappeared until only scattered pukeawe, leponene and a fern alone remained. Near the 8500 elevation, I once glanced up to see an omau sitting upon a pile of rocks, a queer place to find one. It seems that the omau can live under any conditions. I heard its mate farther on.

The plants soon disappeared, and we passed through a bleak region of ropy pahoehoe, with an occasional crossing on aa. Puu Ulaula, where the resthouse was located, loomed

up ahead. The clouds to the left of us seemed to spring up at us over the long slope. The summit of Mauna Loa stood out in bold relief, all the lava flows plainly showing. I left Craddock, interested in something far behind, and after crossing a span of aa, came up to the foot of the cone. It was covered with fiery red gravel, the trail circled the side and soon terminated at the resthouse in the crater. I entered a well supplied and comfortable room, a register on the table. Craddock and I wrote in it. I hiked it in 3 hours and 8 minutes, Craddock, who stopped for snapshots, in 4 hours and 10 minutes.

I then climbed to the cone's summit where I stood with awe, gazing at the splendid view before me. Mauna Kea stood in bold relief to the right, and a beautiful fleecy cloud was resting on its upper slope. Below, one could see the pines of the Humuula Sheep Station in the saddle between this mountain and Mauna Kea, the Puu Oo ranch to the right, and a vast, dark forest beyond, which dissolved into a beautiful sea of clouds that lapped the east slopes and came creeping up onto the Humuula Plateau. They extended over Mauna Loa's lower slopes to Kilauea, which was tinted pink in the setting sun. A higher sea of clouds extended around the south end of the mountain, which loomed 3000 feet above me. Haleakala reared its summit above a lei of clouds. A little way down the slope before me were four red cones, one of which was beautifully perfect in shape.

Leaving Craddock to prepare dinner, I made off across a rough pahoehoe lava flow to a large fissure from which black, ropy pahoehoe had poured out. The sides were covered with lava clinkers and punice. Turning down the mountain, past some fissures and blowholes from which lava had spouted in furies long past, I reached one of the four cones, not so perfect at near view. It was a good scramble to get to the top, one step forward and two back was often the case as I made my way through loose pumice and lava clinkers. Making a descent about ten times the speed of the ascent, I walked out on the vast expanse of pahoehoe which stretched as far as I could see. It now glittered like millions of diamonds in the light of the setting sun, so brightly that it was hard on the eyes to look into it.

July 29: After a hasty breakfast of soup, started out for the summit. Glistening pahoehoe at first, then a succession of pahoehoe and aa, the latter the most jagged, cruel and vicious imaginable. Beautiful specimens of lava were picked up, some with the luster of a thousand gems. Two miles further the trail skirted spatter cones, and we stopped to collect the little black, glistening tear drops of lava that covered the sides of the cones. There were several deep blowholes, scenes of grand displays of the past. Their sides were orange and fire colored, splashed with white crystals here and there. Several more cones were passed, covered with lava and pumice clinkers, one of them steaming. Another, the source of the famous 1935 flow that had been bombed by Army airmen when it had approached within fourteen miles of Hilo, had a crown of sulphur. At 12,000, I came to a water hole sign and found it to be an ice cave; the outside air seeming actually warm after I had stayed in that cave awhile. Once in awhile I had to rest, but there was little fatigue from the high elevation. But Craddock was way behind; his legs had tired and it was hard for him to move ahead.

To be continued

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May field trip: Reported by four gay, enthusiastic, mysterious members!

We missed <u>you</u> under the big Monkey Pod tree on Sunday, May 13th, 1951. <u>F O U R</u> enthusiastic birders appeared, won't tell you who we were, will mention, however, we were sans transportation. Anyway, we went into a huddle and came out with the bright idea to remove that old jinx on the Woodlawn trail that begins where the bus stops - as you all know. The bus ride was through Manoa Valley's delightful streets, lined with shower trees, thick, fluffy and beautiful with blossoms. It filled us with desire to see more so we decided - upon arriving at the entrance of the trail - to have a look-see at the gardens, trees and scenery in general along the street. Off we went on a sight seeing walk along Woodlawn, Seaview Rise and Paty Drive. A kitten made friends with us; soon a Boxer decided he spotted whatever it is dogs like about people,

and in turn he was joined by a pup. As the procession walked leisurely along we were accompanied by the song of the Kentucky cardinal. Do believe the cardinal was jealous that he too could not follow on foot.

Can you imagine our surprise when there, right before our eyes on Paty Drive, was the Pedley home - rock steps, hibiscus, ferns, baby koa trees, dog and all? Yes, we stopped. Gosh! the coffee was good. Thanks Blanche and Harold. However, we did have unfinished business so back we tracked to the entrance of Forest Trail No. 21. Gracious! how we had dallied - 11 o'clock!

While the entrance to the trail is clearly marked by a painted sign on the telephone pole, and the usual F.T. marker, we were rudely made aware of the slogan "Honolulu
is Growing." Excavation activities were in process and it is safe to say that before
long the present entrance will be closed, and a new one will need to be established
if the trail is to remain in existence.

There were other disturbing surprises in store for us such as the evidence of much abuse to shrubbery, debris of fallen trees and the like, the results of our recent big storms which had not been cleared, paths were overgrown with either false staghorn fern, or guava. The latter will truly be offensive during the falling-fruit season. In many places it was difficult to find the old trail and now innumerable side trails lead into both sides of the valley.

The encroachment of building operations both at the beginning of the Woodlawn trail, the opening of St. Louis Heights property, and the blocking-out for housing in the stand of Norfolk Island Pine really made us sad and we felt that it will be but a short time before the birds will find their way into the water reservation. A Bird Walk for the Society is not recommended. Seen and heard were the following birds: apapane, elepaio, liothrix, amakihi, Kentucky cardinals, Brazilian cardinals, ricebirds, mejiros along with the usual mynah, sparrow and doves in numbers. But ONE of the four completed the combined Woodlawn-St. Louis trail. Can you guess just who that was?

ANONYMOUS

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### JUNE ACTIVITIES:

FIELD TRIP: Sunday, June 10, 1951, to Poamoho. Meet at the Library of Hawaii at 8:00 am. Bring lunch, water, and car (if possible). Last month the weather was favorable, but we lacked transportation; consequently, we spent the day at Woodlawn. Let's hope that this month both the weather and transportation facilities will be favorable, so that we'll be able to go to Poamoho as scheduled.

MEETING: Monday, June 18, 1951, Auditorium, Library of Hawaii, at 7:30 pm.
A short business meeting will be held after the showing of a colored motion picture of ducks, "Wings Over the Prairie", which was made available through the courtesy of the Standard Oil Company of California.

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#### HAWAII AUDUBON SOCIETY OFFICERS:

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