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# U-NO-YAMA (CORMORANT HILL)

By Chester Fennell

I must admit, it was sort of an ungodly hour to be starting out after birds, but a quarter after midnight was the hour scheduled for the arrival of the Japanese express from Osaka and Kobe and on that train were my guides and partners in crime, Kobayashi Keisuke and Kobayashi Hirakazu, two of the finest and most enthusiastic birdmen in Japan. Unseemly hours, torrents of rain, the most chilling, icy winds, sleet, blizzards, the most sizzling noon-day heat, swamps, mud, jungle-like growth, etc., etc., could never dull their ardor or begin to stand in their way as long as there was a bird to find at the end of it all, and birds aplenty had been promised us in this particular case.

Our objective this time was a small, pine-covered knoll, called U-no yama, or Cormorant Hill, approximately forty miles south of the city of Nagoya, famous as one of the very few spots in Japan where the Japanese cormorant (Phalacrocorax carbo hanedae) nests. The weekend of 18-19th February had already long been designated as the date for this excursion, for, inspite of the seeming improbability of such an early nesting season, the notes of Kobayashi Keisuke assured us that it would be well under way.

Promptly, as is so typical of all Japanese trains, the express steamed into Kyoto Station at 12:15 A.M. and I joined my friends in the seat they had so zealously guarded for me. Fifteen minutes later we pulled out of Kyoto and the next 4½ hours we killed fitfully talking, dozing, munching sandwiches, tangerines and apples, and dreaming of the treat in store for us at our destination. Around 0500 we arrived at Atsuta, one station beyond Nagoya, where we left the steam train to catch an electric tram for Hinaga, some 40 miles down the Chita Peninsula and the station nearest the cormorant colony.

Cold, gray feelers of light stole over the ice-filmed rice paddies as we trudged out of the little hamlet of Hinaga and only a couple of lone spirals of wood smoke indicated that the little houses sheltered human life beneath their thatched and tiled ridges. Small plum trees, their arms mantled in gauzy bloom, stood like ghosts in the bamboo-fenced dooryards; orange trees hung quietly, heavy with huge golden (but sour) fruit and a few hardy narcissi stood straight and yellow along the black, filth-filled ditches. Inspite of the icy surfaces, the flooded rice paddies were filled with the jelly-like masses of frog eggs, a promise of the life-richness to come.

Dawn blared forth in a single scarlet flush across the eastern sky as we turned our steps in that direction and groups of cormorants, like welcoming heralds, sent forth to greet us, winged their long-necked, straight-forward silhouettes high across the heavily overcast sky. As we approached the colony, great numbers of

them could be seen in flight over the pine trees and their raucous cries, squawks, and cackles could be heard a full half mile away. The turmoil, confusion and racket naturally increased as we neared the grove and, now, a full month later, as I write these words, the sound still rings in my ears.

We estimated some 300 birds in the colony and counted approximately 150 nests. The nests were located in crotches of branches of both dead and living black pines and constructed of dead pine branchlets, bamboo sticks, bamboo roots, rice straw and, in several cases, of even rice straw ropes. The incubation bed was generally lined with fresh rice straw and dry bamboo leaves. The average nest measured 15 x 17 inches across the entire top and $9\frac{3}{4}$ inches in total height; the incubation bed measured 8 inches across and $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches in depth. The entire nest, except for the incubation bed, was generally heavily coated with white excrement as were also the nesting trees, surrounding vegetation and the ground below the nesting trees. Indeed, the excrement is highly prized by the surrounding farmers for fertilizing purposes and is regularly collected. Consequently, the colony enjoys rigid protection from the whole community. Nearby ponds are even stocked with fish to encourage the birds to nest in that area. Numerous signs are posted in the vicinity, also, establishing the area as a sanctuary and prohibiting molestation and shooting.

Out of some 35 nests examined we found only nine with eggs which apparently indicated that it was a bit early in the season. Of the nine with eggs we found the following number in each: six nests with four eggs each, 2 nests with five each, one nest with two eggs. Apparently four eggs are the normal average number in a single clutch. They are a pale blue in color heavily coated with a white, chalky substance. They average $1\frac{1}{2}$ x 2 3/8 inches in size.

All the birds were in full breeding plumage with shiny, black iridescent bodies, white head and neck and bold white patches on the flanks. Their constant vocal uproar was an accompaniment to equally constant courtship displays of bowing, scraping, trembling of outspread wings and frequent nuzzling of each other's heads and necks. Fights too, were frequently observed. Several were also noted carrying streamers of rice straw to apparent mates on unfinished nests and helping to arrange the material.

Many fish of both fresh and salt water species were observed on the ground below the nesting trees as well as on the branches surrounding the nests themselves. These ranged in size from approximately four to ten inches in length and must have been either regurgitated because of the excitement caused by our presence or brought in for courtship gifts, or to brooding birds. It is my belief that they acted most as courtship gifts since I failed to observe any so-called nervous regurgitation due to excitement and fish were observed not only in the immediate vicinity of nests containing eggs. Since no young of any age, whatsoever, were found, they could not have been brought in for that purpose.

From the combination of fish and excrement the area, at least from an olfactory sense, strongly reminded me of the red-footed booby colony at Ulupau Crater, Oahu, T.H.

Another colony is said to be located some five miles further down the Chita peninsula near a little town called Kosugaya, but lack of time prohibited our visiting it the same weekend. It is sincerely hoped that it, too, is receiving the same vigilant protection from the farmers in its district. If such is the case, surely the future of at least one Japanese species is assured. If only the economic

importance of all the other species could be half so easily brought to the attention of the Japanese people there would be far less cause for worry and concern on the part of the long-seeing conservationists.

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## NATURE IN KAPIOLANI PARK

By George C. Munro

In "The Elepaio" of January 1950, Vol. 10, no. 7, I mention about the arrival of the young plover on September 10, 1949. That they were more tame than the old birds that arrived in the middle of August. They were reluctant to fly and then flew only a short distance. I thought that they were tired from their long flight. But till April 28 of this year these young birds have remained the same as when they arrived. They may at other times have frequented different places, but so far as I saw, they alone ranged over their area near the south end of the park. On the evening of April 28 we saw three at the south end and at least 8 in the north end of the polo field, but on May 2 my wife sighted two together on the racetrack by the polo field. They may have been from the south end, as there were many players over the ground there at the time. We have seen no plover in Kapiolani Park since May 2. I thought that these young birds might migrate early and work their way along the Hawaiian Chain to Midway or Kure Island before launching out on their long flight across the ocean to the Arctic. Of course they may have done this, but they stayed nearly as long as the others did last year. Last year they seemed to leave the Park on May 3 and one was seen on the 6th.

I noted recently, when my observations were confined mostly to the south end, as the days grew longer the plover in the morning kept more to their former time of arrival but the mynahs arrived with the daylight before the plover. It was also noticed that the plover and mynahs in one part of the south end were invariably under certain kiawe trees. Probably the caterpillar of the moth (Polydesma umbricola) is now frequenting these trees. The trees near them which harbored this caterpillar have been taken out and the monkypod trees in the vicinity have shed their leaves so the moths may be laying their eggs on the Kiawe trees. The rough bark of this tree makes it difficult to find this caterpillar, so I have not identified it.

An unimproved corner in the southeast end of the park is now covered with a mass of different kinds of grasses and weeds up to 4 foot high. Most of these are ripening seed, and it makes a fine place to watch and find which plants the birds prefer. At present the ricebirds are busy on the seed of the grass (Setaria verticellata) and the weed (Chenopodium album). Later when the ground is cleared the doves will feed on the seed on the ground, but we will be unable to tell which seed they are taking.

The Girl Scout Troop has asked the Hawaii Audubon Society to advise on what to plant on its recently acquired property at Paumalu to attract birds. While the seed gathering of native plants for the Wildlife Refuge is being continued the Society members can give considerable help in this. Seed of imported grasses and other plants for this purpose can be collected. The Girl Scouts can work up a wonderful bird food garden and collect much interesting information. The two institutions can thus cooperate in scientific research. Lack of funds is at present holding up work in Kapiolani Park, and the Wildlife Refuge is consequently suffering delay.

In conjunction with others I am spending a few hours each week on the lower slopes of the ridges of Diamond Head. In the 3½ mile circuit of the base of the hill there are about 50 of these ridges. They fan out at the bottom in a more or less degree making considerable ground to be worked over for native dryland plants. This exceedingly interesting work will take some time, perhaps years, to fully accomplish. An army trail about a mile long on the west side, a topographical map and photographs from the air are giving great help. As time goes on I shall have some interesting reports on this.

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## LETTERS AND NOTES

Kipapa trail: Bird walk, June 11, 1950. According to the City Librarian, Kipapa means pavement. The trail is six miles long and eventually connects to the south end of the summit trail.

A beautiful day for hiking! From 2 A.M. I was constantly awakened by the inner excitement of the possibility of being on a tropical trail - a trail untouched by poison ivy, or infested with chiggers. At last, at 6 A.M. when I heard the white-eyes so busily chirping and flitting around in the Christmas berry tree growing near my bedroom window, I arose and prepared myself for the walk.

Mr. Norton was the lone hiker waiting at the Library when I arrived there. We were happy to have Mr. Brewster and Mr. and Mrs. Horn from New York City join us. When Miss Campbell and Mr. and Mrs. Porter came in from Kailua, and with Miss Hatch and myself, we had nine enthusiastic birders, so we started for Kipapa. Waianae Range was hazy, but Mt. Kaala was clear of clouds. The car seemed to travel so slowly and yet so fast when I saw an African Tulip or heard a pheasant. Finally, we turned right on route 113 and went on through cane and into the pineapple fields with deep gulches all around us. Miss Campbell and Mr. Norton dared the eroded hill and drove us to the beginning of the trail.

As we walked along the trail, the tropical green of the uluhe and the silvery green of the distant kukui nut tree as a background for the graceful swaying of the koa branches, took our attention away from the innumerable miniature gulches into which we were falling. The lehua was almost over its splendor, but we found a tree still covered with the scarlet blossoms. While we were watching the power of nature's survival of the fittest, we heard, "ho-ho-hokekyo," the ever-present but ever-invisible bush warbler. We looked at each other and laughed; a humble, irritated, challenged, or amused laughter?

Before we had time to focus our attention to another wonder of nature, we were sadly made aware of man's folly. The evidences of waste from last year's fire were all around, and still the young campers left an open fire partially smothered with dirt. Fortunately we found water so we made sure that every bit of the fire was out, and on our way back Mr. Porter had an opportunity to talk to the boys. Last year's fire burned away such a large area that as we walked into the trail the gulch on the right looked like a ghost town. The charred branches depicted a desolate, hopeless picture, but the desperate struggle to survive made by the tender shoots of the strawberry guava somehow seemed so personal. The effects of the fire were so evident; we heard the birds, but few of us saw any until we walked beyond the burned area.

At this time last year, Amakihi were plentiful at Kipapa and it was a delight to be on the trail and watch the yellow bird flitting through the lehua and koa,

and hear its melodious song. But this year we only heard the birds. Maybe they have taken over other grounds for their homes.

Liothrix is so difficult to remember. Mr. Brewster seemed so undisturbed to call a Hill robin a Liothrix. He knows Liothrix lutea (Scopoli) as liothrix, but until 6/11/50 this babbler was always called a Hill robin, so when I saw one of these handsome birds on wing, I quickly had to remember that it was Liothrix in flight. We heard its "chack, chack, chack," the alarm notes, and its pleasing song, and we often wondered whether we were hearing a Chinese thrush, but when the thrush sings, there is no mistake. Chinese thrush is so much more melodious, and on three different occasions we heard it.

The most surprising moment of the walk was when we heard an unusual musical song. I wondered whether I heard the unidentified babbler of Poamoho. Then when I heard the loud call note Munro describes as "creaking of a wheelbarrow but a little more musical," I realized that the Iiwi was around and healthy enough to sing very loudly. The most exciting and happy experience was at the end of the walk when an immature Elepaio came and bid us farewell. He preened his feathers, fearlessly looked at us, then ignored us and continued flitting from branch to branch in pursuit of insects.

We did not see very many birds, but we surely heard plenty of them. At the beginning of the trail, where the cashew nut trees are planted, we saw many linnets flying about among the charred lehua and koa. I hope, eventually, the other birds will return to this area. - Unoyo Kojima.

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Honolulu: Notes on Letters in The Elepaio - Letters from H. Paul Porter in the Elepaio of March this year and Edith Kemble in the May issue are interesting. I have had the same experience with frigate birds here at Hibiscus Drive on the southwest corner of Diamond Head as they had at Koko Head.

During the wet southerly weather these birds seem to come down the northwest coast of Oahu and come in over the land at Diamond Head. They evidently find favoring upcurrents of air over the craters of Diamond Head and Koko Head and may also do so along the northern coasts. They probably can stay indefinitely on the wing if there are upcurrents of warm air on which they can float without exertion. At night they no doubt have to come to their roosting island to rest. They are probably on their way there when seen over the two craters, where they tarry to rest their wings after their long flight from Kaena Point against the wind.

My notes taken on December 10, 1949, are: "It was cloudy and had been raining when I saw about 30 Frigate birds soaring round and round near Diamond Head. They moved seaward but returned over the hill. While watching and trying to count them, others came flying in from the sea at a lower level. They flapped their wings till they joined the soaring birds, then circled like the others with unmoving, outstretched wings. Several lots came in two or three at a time. After circling round the crater for awhile they moved off towards the east."

The frigates from Moku Manu evidently change their route to the north side of Oahu during southerly weather. Another observer at the southeast end of Oahu noted their absence on their usual route at that time. It will be interesting to know if they fly from Moku Manu, their home island, right around the northwest coast of Oahu or cross the island at some place northwest of Honolulu. I think the former is probably the case.

Edith Kemble's notes about the white birds on the cliff at the Makapuu end of Waimanalo and the whales off the east coast of Oahu are also of interest. Twice when passing the cliff at the place mentioned by Edith Kemble my attention has been called to these white birds on the cliff, but I have never caught sight of them myself before we had passed. I concluded they were tame pigeons in a semi-wild condition. Wild rock pigeons are common on other of these islands, but why the large proportion of white birds if they are rock pigeons? I don't think they are tropic birds, but it is possible they may be.

Though I have been at sea a good deal I have seen whales only in the channels around Lanai and never accompanied by birds. It is possible, however, that the disturbance in the water caused by the whales may be favorable to the food supply of some of our sea birds. A small school of whales has also been reported by Mrs. C. E. Meyer off the coast of Oahu recently, probably the same family. Further notes on the three subjects mentioned by Edith Kemble will be welcomed. A wonderful sight sometimes to be seen in March, the whales' mating season, off Koko Head is the humpbacked whale in its mating frolic. It dashes madly around slapping itself with its 18 foot fin. Sometimes this is mistaken for an attack on it by the thresher shark or swordfish, or both combined. However, Dr. David Starr Jordan, an emminent sea life authority, found long ago that it is really a mating frolic. My brother, James G. Munro, once saw this off the coast of Molokai. The most spectacular scene I have seen made by whales was two large ones, not humpbacks, "breaching" i.e., jumping clear of the water, "but that is another story."

Would that we had other correspondents over the islands who would take the trouble to write their experiences to the Editor of "The Elepaio." It would add so much more to the value of our publication. -- G. C. Munro.

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AUGUST ACTIVITIES:

FIELD TRIP: August 13th, to Pa Lehua (Ewa end of the Waianae's). Meet at the Library of Hawaii at 8:00 A.M. bringing lunch (and car if possible). The group will take the lower trail, having followed the ridge route a few months ago, and should find more birds, if less spectacular scenery.

MEETING: August 21st, Staff Work Room of the Library of Hawaii at 7:30 P.M. The study group will pursue further the subject of classification.

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