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AT THE NEST OF THE BLACK-TAILED GULL By Chester Fennell

The night of 28 April 1950 again found my good friend Kobayashi Keisuke and me laden down with knapsacks, field glasses, notebooks, cameras and provisions, squeezed into a third class compartment of a Japanese train and merrily clickety-clacking our way toward another rare weekend of bird adventure. Our goal, upon this occasion, was the southernmost breeding ground of that strictly Asiatic frequenter of the Japanese coasts and harbors, the black-tailed gull (*Larus crassirostris* Viellot). The train, which had left Kobe at 2200, was packed to the gills with holiday excursioners for the following day was the Emperor's birthday and the whole nation was out to make the most of it. After having stood in the entranceway of the coach for a couple of hours, cold and fatigue drove us inside where we followed the example of many of the other passengers in spreading newspapers on the floor of the aisle and hunching ourselves in among them as comfortably as the limited amount of space would permit. Of course, each time the train stopped at a station passengers getting off and on flopped and floundered their tortuous paths over and among us banging us in the heads with miscellaneous bundles and pieces of baggage and often tripped and fell heavily on top of us. But everyone was in a jovial holiday frame of mind and spirit, and such accidents only added to the general prevailing good humor of the crowd.

Seven hours later, at the wee chilly hour of 0500, we sleepily chugged into the station at Hiroshima and were gladly welcomed by our Australian friend, Sgt. Gordon Burns, who had come up from Kure in his jeep to meet us and to complete the party. We lost no time in all piling into the vehicle and were soon happily on our way again. However, the road leading westward and to our ultimate destination along the coast of the Japan Sea was not so easily located among the maze of the city's twisting, winding, chuckhole-filled dirt streets and twice we wound up in dead ends on the bank of some canal or river. As we retraced our tracks for a fresh start we passed close to the exact spot where that tragic missile, the first atomic bomb, landed and found that though still plenty of rubble and ruin lay about, in general the area was fairly well rebuilt with small clapboard and tarpaper shacks. A poor, but apparently thriving population seemed to be somehow ekeing an existence out of the place, and little green gardens filled each ruined foundation and space of land that could be cleared enough for tillage and cultivation. A half hour had slipped away before we were finally directed to the right road and were jogging our way along the levee of the Hiroshima River in the desired direction.

Once beyond the city limits the countryside was a joy to behold, and we often stopped to take color pictures, listen for new bird calls or just to get out, stretch our legs a bit and to drink in the glory of it all. Fountains of wild blue wisteria piled their lavish displays over the smaller tree-tops alongside the road, and the wild mountain cherry flaunted its masses of delicate pink and white bloom high up on the mountain slopes above. The azaleas, too, were just coming into their own, and

along the river bottoms acres of magenta renge, a clover-like flower, carpeted the fields in spectacular abundance and beauty. Indeed, it strongly reminded me of the massed effects of owl's clover that I viewed one spring in the San Joaquin Valley south of Bakersfield, California. Clumps of blue and yellow violets nodded along the dusty roadside and here and there around the sharply ridged thatched roofs of the farmhouses finely-leafed maples burst forth into flaming spires of scarlet and gold that rivalled their autumnal displays in breathtaking vividness.

At the top of a cut through the mountains called Akana Pass, we paused to let the overheated, steaming jeep cool off a bit and while waiting heard the wheezy, rather insignificant song of the ashy minivet drift down from the tops of the pines overhead. Only once before had I heard this species and that had been just a year ago near the nesting site of the Japanese stork at Izushi. Even now I was wholly unable to get a single glimpse of the songster. Sgt. Burns observed a long-tailed tit flying across an opening on the wooded mountainside with a feather in its bill, and a pair of yamagara (varied tit) were busily engaged prying about in clusters of pine needles at the ends of branches high above the road every now and then cheerily uttering their rather strident characteristic "dee-dee-dee."

As we were slowly progressing through the narrow dusty streets of Akana village, a few miles beyond the pass, numerous house martins (Delichon urbica dasypus) suddenly put in an appearance and in typical house swallow manner gracefully and effortlessly wove low, back and forth along in front of the moving jeep. Their flashing, pure white rumps are unmistakable field marks and we at once drew to a halt in order to examine more closely the rows of mud nests that were plastered up under the eaves of the little shops facing the street. As usual, in small, out-of-the-way towns and districts where occupation force personnel rarely intrude, as soon as the jeep halted, scores of men, women and children closely crowded around to examine us and the vehicle in frank, open-mouthed wonder and curiosity. As soon as they learned the object of our stop they rushed to bring a ladder and were more than eager to help us in all ways possible.

The martins are among the most trusting and gentle of all avians and continued their frequent coming and going to the nests even while we stood on the ladder watching them with our heads not more than a foot away. Those on eggs remained sitting tightly till we gently removed them in order to count the number in each clutch. Three to five eggs proved to be the usual number in a single set, and they ranged from a purely fresh condition without trace of an embryo to those that were already well developed. One nest contained newly hatched young. The shells of the eggs are a pure glossy white and quite translucent so that the degree of embryonic progress can readily be ascertained from the outside appearance of the egg. The nests are thickly padded with wheat straw and chicken feathers in much the same fashion as those of the house swallow and are closely joined one to the other in rows of as many as thirteen to a group. This communal housing habit is contrary to the nesting style of the house swallow, however, for I have always observed that species to build its mud pellet cup singly and apart from others of its species. True, they may be within a few feet of one another but rarely joined together.

One of the shopkeepers in Akana told Mr. Kobayashi that the house martins first made their appearance in that town some ten years ago and literally drove out the house swallows that were then in residence in considerable numbers. It was quite true that the house swallows were conspicuously absent, and we observed only a single individual through the whole length of the town. Here again was another shining example of that displacement of territory which seems to occur so often among closely related forms of bird and animal life. I noted it strongly marked between the Brandt's jay and the Korean magpie around Pusan, Korea, and Dr. Tokuda of Kyoto University has spent considerable time studying a similarly well-defined boundary line that exists between the territories of two closely allied shrews in the higher

mountains of the central Japanese Alps. Apparently the common source of food within the area is a strong factor in the establishment of the line of demarcation. Sufficient quantity, perhaps, is lacking to support both species at the same time. Conflict in methods of procuring the required sustenance may also contribute to the separation. At any rate, whatever the cause, it's a fascinating discovery and can lead to no end of research and interesting discussion.

It was close to five o'clock that afternoon before we arrived at the little town of Matsue and had our first glimpse of the Japan Sea. The water was remarkably placid and almost as blue as the Pacific in the immediate area of Hawaii. A beautiful drive of some ten miles led us along the side of a high pine-studded, rock-bound coast where every so often huge window-like clearings on the sea side of the winding road permitted us to gaze directly down into little bright blue-green coves charmingly fringed with gray weather-beaten rocks and old fantastically gnarled pines. Just as the last blood red banners of the sinking sun were being enfolded in the gray misty shroud of the sea, our road suddenly dipped in front of us and came to an end in the very midst of a group of old temples and tall stately pines. This was Hinomisaki and the end of our day's journey. The waves of the Japan Sea gently lapped the pebbled shore only a few hundred feet distant, and the rocky brow of Okyojima, our island goal, beneficently looked down upon us, separated from the mainland by only a narrow, though deep channel of clear green water. As soon as we turned off the engine of the jeep we could hear the high-pitched cat-like cries of the gulls and in the distance could see their myriads in graceful flight over and around the rock they knew as home. As travel weary as we may have been we needed no other inspiration, and with one accord clambered out of our vehicle and hurried down to the shore as fast as our stiff legs could carry us in order to inspect more closely the scene before the fast fading light wholly waned and darkness took over. The pure white and pearly gray forms of the gulls fairly carpeted the more flat, topmost portion of the rock and along with the guano gave it the appearance of being lightly snowcapped. Hundreds were in constant flight over and around the islet and in the misty shadows of descending night they appeared like so many harassed, distressed spirit forms constantly weeping and bewailing their fate. Long lines of Japanese cormorants were heavily lumbering their way low over the water in single file towards the shore coming in from off the vast open stretches to the west. The melodious whistled calls of Japanese grosbeaks were audible from the pine groves overhead, and a large, red-bellied rock thrush caroled his truly thrush-like vespers across the waters from the base of Okyojima. The velvet folds of darkness soon blurred the seascape and we turned to seek shelter and food in the little Japanese hotel across from the temple buildings.

Not long after dinner we looked out to find a nearly full moon riding high and bright through a low blanket of silvery mist. The ocean and surrounding landscape were clearly outlined and we decided to pay our initial respects to the gull colony then and there instead of waiting till morning. Permission to land on the island had first to be secured from the high priest of the temple, since it has been designated as a shrine and the birds are all rigidly protected from harm or molestation of any sort. Once the priest fully understood the purpose of our visit he readily granted us authority to visit the islet, and two boys from the village sculled us across the intervening channel of water.

To be continued

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NOTES ON AN ARTICLE
 "BIRDS OF MOKU MANU AND MANANA ISLANDS OFF OAHU, HAWAII"
 By Frank Richardson and Harvey I. Fisher
 The Auk, vol. 67, No.3, July 1950

This exceedingly interesting article covers a great deal of ground but leaves much to be learned about even such of our common sea birds as the noddy and sooty terns. It is hoped that this will be followed up by more of such thorough work. Richardson and Fisher's suggestion of an extensive banding program is good but it would need to be very extensive and carried over the same ground for a number of years. My assistants and myself banded large numbers of these two species at Midway, Wake, the Equatorial islands and some noddies on Manana. But no returns of these bandings of any consequence have come to hand so far. On the other hand, where we banded shearwaters year after year the returning birds to the nesting islands furnished much information. In their case, however, no returns were received from a distance and likely never will as the numbers have long worn off the bands by the bird's burrowing habits. The suggestion of camping on the islands for a few months is an excellent one if time could be spared for the purpose. Much banding could then be done and if repeated would yield good results.

In cooperation with the Biological Survey and the Bishop Museum, the latter furnishing funds for boatman's remuneration, I banded birds on the offshore islands of Oahu from 1937 to 1941. During this time I made 15 trips to Manana, in May, June, August, September and October. Also six trips to Moku Manu and one in 1943. These were in May, June, August and November. I did not visit Moku Manu in 1939, 1941 or 1942. No trip was made when we failed to land. We always landed from the boat to the shore and boarded the boat from the shore when leaving. So I was lucky and never had to resort to swimming ashore which I probably could not have accomplished. However, I had a superb Hawaiian boatman in Solomon Mahoe. Solo could tell from the shore at Kailua whether a landing could be made on Moku Manu or not. There was difficulty at times but he always overcame it. He might row his landing skiff up and down for half an hour watching for the favorable wave to allow him to approach the rock safely to take us off. The landing was invariably made on a rock between the two islands and we generally landed and embarked in the power boat we came in.

As the period when I made my visits was different from that when Richardson and Fisher made their investigations some comparison of the plant and bird life might be of interest. Their Table 1 mentions Atriplex semibraccata, Australian saltbush. The small angular berry of this interesting plant is likely eaten by birds and the seed was no doubt carried to Moku Manu by mynahs. A few mynahs were seen there in November 1937, and a full fledged young one observed in a hole in a rockface on June 18, 1939. There were chipped eggs of the wedge-tailed shearwater on the ground that day, but we saw no adult mynahs that might be blamed for it. The Australian salt bush is probably the only plant on the island that is not native to it. It is hoped no others will be taken there. On June 18, 1937, I found a plant of naio (Myoporum sandwichense). The naio is a small tree on the uplands of the larger islands, here it was a trailer draped over the rocks. I took seed of it to Popoia which likely did not grow but the Bishop Museum has a specimen of the plant. On August 18, 1943, the plant was found to be dead.

Richardson and Fisher did not mention two plants that were conspicuous on Manana when I banded shearwaters there. On the northwest end of the floor of the crater there was a goodsized patch of a sedge (Cyperus punctata). It was about three feet high and would have made an ideal nesting place for the Christmas Island shearwater but no bird there used it. A portion on that end was covered with a mass of Boerhavia tetrandra. It caused difficulty in opening up the entrances of the shearwaters' long burrows which ran under it, to get out the birds for banding. On a

visit during a dry spell, the ground there looked as if it had been plowed. This was caused by rabbits digging for the roots of this plant. These roots provided the rabbits with food during periods of drought. The coconut trees were very small when I last visited Manana.

In all my banding trips to the islands off Oahu neither the Laysan or black-footed albatross was seen ashore or at sea. Bulwer's petrel was very scarce on Popoia. There were always cleanpicked skeletons but live birds were seen on only one or two occasions. There has certainly been an increase of this species. I never saw it on Moku Manu, though I was sure it was there, having seen it on Kapapa to the west, as well as on islands to the south of it. On Moku Manu one Christmas Island shearwater was seen on August 20, 1937. On June 21, 1938, three or four were sighted, one was in the down. On October 3, 1940, there was a chick in the down in a recess in the south rockface, its lower mandible was turned a little to one side. Another was on top among the rocks, either an adult or full fledged young. On August 18, 1943, one nearly full fledged young was in the usual place among the rocks on top. I always searched this place carefully. So from what Richardson and Fisher saw, this species has increased on Moku Manu.

I never saw the white or fairy tern on any of my trips, though Solo Mahoe reported several times seeing a white tern among the noddies at Mokulea rock. Others have also reported a small white bird. One recently seen near the shore at Lanikai was certainly a white tern. On two occasions I saw a greybacked tern on Moku Manu though the first time I did not feel quite sure it was that species. It apparently is now becoming established on the island.

Richardson and Fisher noted the gradual encroachment of the sooty terns on the territory of the noddies on Manana. I have been told that they have now taken up most of it. I never saw sooty terns on Manana - I might have thought I heard them at times but never saw any there. I noted on October 5, 1940, that the sooties had taken over the south slopes of Moku Manu which the noddies held during my visits in 1937 and 1938. The sooties were then massed on top as well, except on the extreme western slope where they were not so thick. On the flat on top, the eggs were only a few inches apart. In 1943 the noddies were back in their old location on the south slope. From my experience and that of others, I concluded that the sooties changed nesting places to avoid ground infected by parasites and thus allow the weather to disinfect it. On Palmyra atoll I banded some full fledged young when most of the brood had taken wing. Many of those on the ground were almost blind with an eye infection but there were no dead or disabled birds to be seen at the time. Mr. Alona who told me of the gradual coming of the noddies and shearwaters to Manana said that the noddies had increased; one year a great number of them died. There were numbers of their bodies floating on the sea. One thing I had noted at the end of the breeding season on November 19, 1937, on Moku Manu and Mokolea when the noddies and sooties were leaving the islands the exceedingly light mortality in the young birds of both species.

I was under the impression that the frigate birds nested on vegetation on ledges of the cliff on the northwest side of the island but had no direct evidence of this. On one occasion I thought I saw an egg of this bird on a nest among the brown boobies on the southern slope but did not have time to examine it.

It is hoped that investigations such as Frank Richardson and Harvey I. Fisher have made will be continued. I appreciate their kind remarks on my former work on these islands. I should like to gather all the data that I have on the sooty and noddy terns. They might throw some light on the questions raised by Richardson and Fisher. However, I cannot do so at the present time. - George C. Munro

LETTERS AND NOTES

Pa Lehua, Oahu: On August 20th members and guests met under the spreading monkey-pod tree on the grounds of the Library of Hawaii. Unoyo in her efficient way assigned us to cars for our trip to Pa Lehua. Our destination was the Ewa end of the Waianae. The description "Ewa end of the Waianae" was challenged by a visitor from Oakland who, having spent four of his six months' tour of duty here, has learned our Hawaiian manner of denoting directions. Frankly, how does one describe the far end of the range? Anyway, we knew where we wanted to go.

The drive to Pa Lehua is our most scenic one in that one plays hide-and-seek with both sides of the range on the circuitous trip to the timber line. A beautiful view of Pearl Harbor with its channel and the various forks proved a delight to the visitors in the group, and we who have seen it often, still marvel at the numerous arms branching in fingerlike gestures to afford so much shore line for military activities. As we climbed steadily upward cattle were to be seen and accounted for by the snarly rumble evoked by cattle guards. The beautiful Hawaiian poppy was truly strutting its stuff, many of them nodding and bowing to us as we passed, and the graceful branches of the keawe with its feathery foliage truly belong in that particular setting.

The gate with its chain of many locks is also a source of interest to the first-timers. It is difficult to believe so many residents make their home in among the trees at the crest. Utilities and military also have valuable installations in this area which need to be protected. The woods were cool and foliage luscious as we continued to climb upward. Soon, however, we arrived at the parking area and off down the trail scampered the eager ones who were most anxious to see, oh, and ah at the panorama as it unfolded. Pineapple fields in their contoured designs and sugar cane with its varied greens were high-lighted with reservoirs dotting the landscape as we descended to the entrance of Forest Trail No. 18.

On Sunday, August 13, a trip had been made to Pa Lehua with Dr. Scotland, a tourist from Albany, New York, who is a member of the Schenectady Bird Club and of the Hawaii Audubon Society. With diligent work and close listening 17 species were identified at that time. However, the big interest was that a new bird call had been heard. Mr. McGuire had stated that he had heard the Dyal thrush in this area, and incidentally had both heard and seen it in the Manoa area. This Sunday we heard the call, but were unable to see the bird. Perhaps we heard the Dyal bird, but we could not be sure. Our bird was a mocker, but not, we thought, Mimus polyglottus.

The Dyal bird, also written Dayal, is called the Magpie Robin, according to Edward L. Caum, in his "Exotic Birds of Hawaii." The male is about 8 inches long, with head, neck, breast, and upper plumage glossy black, abdomen white to gray; a white line along the upper edge of the wing; outer pair of tail feathers white, the others glossy black; bill black; legs and feet dark gray. The female differs in this manner: the blue-black of the back is replaced by brownish gray; the chin, breast and throat by ashy gray. It is of the Turdidae or Thrush family.

The Elepaio was most sociable on this particular trip, eager to be seen and to see. The gulch was full of the song of the liotrix and the nasal-like call of the Amakihi as well as the cheery notes of the Whiteye, but not once did I hear the bush-warbler - such illusiveness is most vexing.

A previous reconnaissance made of the Waipio Peninsula had failed to reveal the many ducks that had been reported to us, but we had seen Stilt by the hundreds. Naturally, we wanted the group to share this surprise. It is unbelievable, but a conservative count revealed around 500. I do consider it very bad taste on the part

of the Stilt to remain in hiding while anxious Audubonites reported but one or two on recent counts. However, the group was impressed, and they also located numerous coot in nearby waters while a black-crowned night heron flew along the water's edge.

Altogether, the day was chock-a-bloc full of surprises for bird lovers. --
Ruth R. Rockafellow.

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Honolulu, T.H.: My old friends the plover are back. I think the same lot I observed from September last year. First plover seen on September 13th, both by Miss Willard and myself. They acted quite differently to those that are in the park now.
-- G. C. Munro.

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OCTOBER ACTIVITIES:

FIELD TRIP: October 8th, to Kahuku. Meet at the Library of Hawaii at 8:00 A.M. bringing lunch (and car if possible). Inasmuch as the migratory shore birds are now returning in considerable numbers from the far North, the group plans to survey the various pond areas of Windward Oahu, starting with Kaelepulu and working north to Kahuku to observe these birds.

MEETING: October 16th, Staff Meeting Room, first floor, Library of Hawaii, at 7:30 P.M. The group will continue the study of classification and identification of birds, especially those found in the Hawaiian Islands.

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