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THE LAYSAN ISLAND CYCLORAMA and LATE NEWS FROM LAYSAN

The State University of Iowa has just sent a leaflet concerning its summer courses ("the only institution offering courses in Museum Training for college credit") and has included a brief descriptive reminder of its Laysan Island Cyclorama.

In 1902, the U.S.S. Albatross visited Laysan Island, and Professor C.C. Nutting persuaded the Iowa institution to create this splendid cyclorama because Laysan is one of the few places in the world where "so many different species of birds are found nesting and living naturally in such a small area. Furthermore there were found there four land birds and a duck peculiar to the island." Dr. Nutting interested friends of the Museum at the State University of Iowa, and the former U.S. Biological Survey to undertake an expedition to Laysan and make the cyclorama. H. R. Dill was in charge of the exhibit, Charles Corwin was the background artist.

The cyclorama is 12 feet high and 138 feet long. The pictures of it show it to be a most beautiful reproduction of this island before damage was done to it. There are ten scenes, but they are evidently so placed that the whole is a picture that the eye would take in if standing at one end of the island and turning from left to right - rookeries of tern, gannet, man-o-war birds, the Laysan albatross, the black-footed albatross, as well as many individual birds, seen at close quarters. Doubtless all the birds are included. Although other institutions benefited by this expedition as to sets of bird skins, an agreement was made whereby no institution was to use the bird skins to make a similar exhibit. We have, therefore, the most perfect view of Laysan-as-it-was preserved in the heart of Iowa! "The Laysan Cyclorama still stands unique and as beautiful as the day it was opened to the public... Three land birds of Laysan are now extinct and two other species are likely to follow, being sadly reduced in numbers."

Laysan is a low island of less than 2 square miles in area, 855 miles from Honolulu in the chain of islands stretching off to the northwest. Much of it is no more than 20 feet above sea level, though the highest point is 40 feet high. A salty lagoon is in its center. Many years ago guano deposits were noted there, and exploited in the nineties and up to 1908. In 1909, the whole leeward chain of islands stretching northwest from Kauai was set aside as a bird reservation. But this did not bring peace to the bird colonies. The fashion for feathers on hats induced Japanese poachers to make a killing on Laysan. In 1910, thousands of feathers were found ready for shipment from the island by Capt. Jacobs, of the revenue cutter, Thetis. It was estimated that a previous shipment had been taken off. The bird colonies were decimated.

The poachers chased off, Laysan birds should have been safe again, but a new danger, already established, developed rapidly. Rabbits, introduced in guano days, multiplied

enormously and the food supply, adequate for the birds, was inadequate for both birds and unlimited numbers of rabbits. Both colonies suffered. No one was conscious of the conditions until 1911 when the State University of Iowa/U.S. Biological Survey made its visit. Devastation was appalling. The next year the Survey made a special trip to kill off the rabbits. Did some hide too well? The job was not complete, and in 1923, the Tanager Expedition (U.S. Biological Survey/U.S. Navy/Bishop Museum) stopped at Laysan to make a survey. Alexander Wetmore (National Geographic Magazine, July, 1925) reported that rabbits had stripped the island of vegetation, except for a few trees. Bird colonies had been reduced greatly and the rabbits themselves had starved - few remained to be eliminated. But this time the rabbits were killed off to the last one, as a check the following year proved.

Since then a few visits have been made. William F. Coultas reported to the Curator, Bishop Museum, in 1936, that he had been able to land from the exploring yacht, Zaca. At that time the green cover was fairly well established over all the island, except for the outer, sandy beaches. He noted "5 seals, 15 turtles and no rabbits", and E.H. Bryan, Curator, procured from him a list of birds and plants found then. Aviators have sometimes reported seeing many green patches as they flew over the island.

In 1950, Vernon Brock, of the Board of Agriculture and Forestry, made a trip to the island chain and visited Laysan. And at this very month of June, he has returned to Laysan as a member of the Vanderbilt Expedition, to attempt a bird census. The results of his trip will be awaited with great interest.

NOTES ON A BOOK ABOUT NEW ZEALAND By George C. Munro

In the "Elepaio" of March 1951 mention is made of the book "The Invasion of New Zealand by People, Plants and Animals", by Andrew Hill Clark. This earnest worker spent "two years in New Zealand teaching Geography at Christchurch University and doing the field work that resulted in the present volume." The book deals almost exclusively with South Island which differs greatly from North Island where I was born and spent my early years. At the same time, though I visited South Island only once, I know a great deal about it and the systems and accomplishments of its farmers in agriculture and stock raising.

Dr. Clark's painstaking research has resulted in a very complete and I would say very accurate history of the island. Of interest to us in Hawaii is mention of "Sinclair and Hays, two Scots with some capital" who "in 1843 with their families settled at the head of Pigeon Bay" on Banks Peninsular. One of these was Captain Sinclair, the progenitor of the Gay and Robinson families, who later sailed from New Zealand in their own ship with their livestock aboard and settled on Niihau.

The book does not dwell to any great extent on the introduction of deer to New Zealand but mentions it in connection with the establishment of other animals and plants that have proved detrimental under conditions there.

He tells of erosion on South Island natural grass country where overgrazing, burning of the grass and introduced rabbits has resulted in some erosion. North Island has no such problem. There was extremely little natural grass land and mostly heavy forest which took time to clear so that the plow could be used. It grew grass in the meantime and later it was found by experience and research that pasture was the most profitable crop under the prevailing climate. The farmers of New Zealand have worked out systems of handling pasture lands so successfully that deputations have recently gone from the United States to study their methods. By systems of surface fertilizing, known there as "topdressing", pastures are kept indefinitely in splendid condition with a close

cover of vegetation so that there is no erosion. When at intervals I have visited the farm on which I spent my early years I am more and more astonished to see the amount of stock it carries compared with my experience of it. Climatic and other conditions, of course, favor this.

Some of the native birds of New Zealand which almost disappeared under the altered conditions of settlement are now, like the birds in Hawaii, making a good return. A very interesting article by H.R. McKenzie on "Breeding of Kekako" appeared in the April, 1951, number of "Notonis", the quarterly Bulletin of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand. The article is accompanied by a beautiful set of photographs of the bird tending its young by W.P. Mead taken by flashlight in the thickly foliated tree which contained the nest. It was cheering to me to note the interest taken by New Zealanders in this beautiful native singing bird that I knew slightly in my youth. Notes are recorded in the article that were carefully taken by eight persons at different times in the various stages of their growth and on their leaving the nest. It was a joy to read of the trustfulness of the bird in her human visitors of whose presence by the nest and examining her chicks she showed no fear and little resentment.

When visiting New Zealand in 1947, Mr. McKenzie motored me a considerable distance in the early morning to hear the kokako greet the dawn with its beautiful morning song. I had heard it sing only once many years ago. Needless to say, I was much thrilled as I was to hear the tui (Prosthemadera novaeseelandiae) as my people took me over the country and through areas of native "bush". The kokako (Callaeas cinerea wilsoni) is generally known as the blue-wattled crow which is a misnomer as the bird is not a crow and has none of the characteristics of that bird. It acquired the name as scientists placed it between the crows and shrikes and as there was no crow in New Zealand, it became known as a New Zealand crow. The name crow should certainly be disassociated from this lovely bird. After reading McKenzie's article I shall still further prize a nice specimen that I mounted in the 1880s.

REVIEWS:

THERE'S ALWAYS ADVENTURE by Grace E. Barstow Murphy. New York, 1951.

This is a remarkable book, and doubtless is already a popular one. It is the biography of the family of an ornithologist, Dr. Robert Cushman Murphy. All of us know his name and works, and some of us have had a chance for brief visits with Dr. and Mrs. Murphy as they have passed through Hawaii.

If you have ever wondered what it would be like to spend your whole life at the study of birds, instead of time left after the main job, this book will give you a glimpse of such a life, though Dr. Murphy's own biographical "Logbook for Grace" answers that query more directly.

What Mrs. Murphy tells, with frank directness, is that in the contest for a naturalist's attention (a husband naturalist), science wins, and the wife takes second place. To some this may sound very grim, but Mrs. Murphy reveals the joy of deep companionship, of setting aside the vain longing for first place, and proudly working for success of the husband's work, even though it requires sacrifice.

After reading this book, I am impressed with what an amazing lot of fun the two parents and their three children got out of life. For they frequently traveled en masse, making every penny count when necessary - and it often was - but also enjoying the largesse of munificent friends of Science and of the Murphys.

They had wonderful voyages and travels in Peru and Chile, and other parts of South America, in Denmark, and England, and Ireland, France, the Mediterranean, in New Zealand,

and in the wild Snares Islands off New Zealand, where the Pacific is at her least pacific.

But the delight of the book is in the manner of the telling and the revelation of the sweetness and gaiety and verve of this lucky family.

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A CLASSIFICATION OF RECENT BIRDS by Ernst Mayr and Dean Amadon. (American Museum Novitates, No. 1496, 1951) This is a description of the various families with both scientific and common names.

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THE RETURN OF THE NENE. Not signed. (The Hawaii Weekly, June 24, 1951 - supplement of the Honolulu Advertiser - newspaper) A report is made of the seven nene seen in Hawaii National Park, Island of Hawaii, in June, 1951, and a statement of the objective of the Board of Agriculture and Forestry - to develop their small flock of nene at Pohakuloa on Hawaii to a production of 50 birds a year. But, as Donald Smith, game Biologist of the BAF, observes, "the only lasting solution (of the reestablishment of the nene) will come from a study of the birds left in the wild, in an attempt to discover the factors responsible for the decline and attempt to modify them in a protected area."

BIRD-BANDING FIELD TRIP:

On Sunday, May 27th, at 5:00 a.m., Mr. M.H. Norton and I headed for the booby colony at Ulupau Head. Somehow the familiar Pali Road at this time of the morning seemed unusually enchanting and refreshing. As we passed the look-out place and headed down the road, the occasional farm lights and the barely visible outline of the surf delightfully depicted the quiet slumber of a beautiful rustic town.

When we reached Kailua, we realized that though we were bubbling with excitement, we unconsciously tip-toed down the road, for whenever we saw anything unusually beautiful, we caught ourselves whispering to each other, as if afraid that even our presence might disturb the peaceful slumber.

As we drove toward Ulupau and listened to the melodious Brazilian and Kentucky cardinals, and linnets, I thanked God for the opportunity to be a part of this perfect early morning harmony.

The usually busy ponds on both sides of the road to Ulupau Head were birdless. Even the birds were unaware of the intruders, who were out to band the red-footed boobies. Evidently the migratory birds are busy rearing the young in Alaska, for there was no trace of turnstone or tattler, not even a plover.

The sound of the surf, the whiff of the salt air and the marsh, the splash of red around the drifting clouds kept us so busily absorbing the wonderful natural treasures around us, that I frequently questioned whether or not we were on the right road, then suddenly! our first bird, a handsome pheasant. We backed the car for another look, but the bird disappeared too quickly and the long stretch of paved road looked as usual, deserted.

As we neared the booby colony, we saw hundreds of birds either nesting or roosting on the side of the hill. We estimated about 400 birds and 150 nests. Some early birds were already flying around and some were even out fishing. Everything happened so quickly that I wished I had ten of myself. While I was watching the sunrise I heard five sooty terns flying over us. As I looked up toward the birds, I saw an intricate color display of the blue water and sky against the green pali with white clouds dipped

in soft red of the morning sun hastily drifting by as though to remind me to accept the inadequacy of men when exposed to fleeting beautiful moments. As soon as gratitude took over the frustration, I completely soaked myself with the undescrivable landscape. My only regret was that more people could not have shared this heartfelt experience with us.

We wanted to just sit and watch this panorama, but we reluctantly put our gloves on to prepare for the purpose of our trip, to band the boobies! Most of the roosting birds took off as soon as they heard us coming, but fortunately for us there was an immature (brown phase) bird fast asleep with his head tucked in his feathers. We hesitated waking him up, but before the bird was able to realize what was happening to him, we humbly begged forgiveness and quickly put the band No. 40-721760 on its leg.

As we approached the nestlings, the parent birds were very reluctant about leaving the nest. Some of the young were so recently hatched that they had no feathers, and the parent birds were protecting them from the sun. After we had counted only seven nestlings, we decided not to disturb any of them, but to return within two or three weeks when they will be almost ready to fly. We did not band the birds sitting on eggs either, because we were afraid of damaging the eggs.

We sat undecided for a while, but as we watched the birds gathering nesting materials and returning with fish for the young and solicitously hovering around the nest, we finally decided to leave the colony.

We did not go very far from the colony, for Moku Manu was covered with terns. The sooty terns were constantly, noisily flying toward Ulupau from Moku Manu, while the noddy terns were shyly flying around the Ulupau cliffs. The aggressive sooty terns added unusually interesting pattern to the sky above the colony. Ulupau is an excellent place to watch bird life. Birds were above as well as below us, so we were able to see both the upper and the lower parts of the birds.

The frigate birds were at their usual stealing business. On one occasion, the booby had already swallowed the fish and was frantically calling, but the frigate birds chased after this bird until they were satisfied. Once the frigate spots a booby with a fish, the booby has no chance, for all the frigates within sight will begin the chase. Once we counted five of these huge black birds chasing after a lone booby. I am very happy to report that I saw my first distended red gular pouch on a frigate bird. Mr. Norton's telescope is so powerful that a speck on Moku Manu quickly becomes meaningful. We not only saw two frigate birds with the red pouches but also the nesting sooty and noddy terns. The island was predominantly "sooty". We saw three birds behaving like plovers but looking like tattlers. We located the birds when they came out on the sandy beach to forage for food. Maybe these were the last of the plovers headed for Alaska.

Fortunately for its birds, Moku Manu is difficult to land upon. Once a fishing boat was too near the islands and scared the frigate birds. There were hundreds of these birds soaring in the air. I wondered how so many of them could find space enough to stretch their wings when they simultaneously take to the air. While we were anxiously watching and hoping that the frigates would quietly settle down instead of disturbing the entire tern colony, we saw, to our most gratifying satisfaction, a completely white bird, except for the black around the eyes and the bill. Unmistakably, a white tern or as it is called on Midway, a love bird. No word can describe the sight of this gentle tern fluttering against the blue water, so you can well imagine I could scarcely believe that before me were three of these lovable birds circling around the Ulupau cliffs. They stayed only long enough for me to realize that they were real and for Mr. Norton to confirm that he saw the three white terns.

We could have stayed there forever, but the sun was getting uncomfortably hot, so we decided to scout the Manoa Cliff Trail. Many individuals have reported hearing unusual bird songs on this trail, but we heard and saw nothing unusual. Liothrix, elepaio, amakihi, apapane, white-eye, and ricebird were plentiful, but the trail is too overgrown for the Audubon Society to schedule a trip.

As we were walking back to our car, I realized, compared to Ulupau, the marked lack of birds, but I felt wonderfully happy as I heard an elepaio's call. We had banded only one booby, but our day was full of interesting new experiences.

Unoyo Kojima

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

July 29 (continued):

After the 12,000 foot elevation, my legs also became heavy, sluggish, and the urge to rest almost uncontrollable. After a seemingly extra long slope, during the ascent of which the summit came into view and retreated several times, disconcertingly, I came upon a small flat of cinders and the roof of the summit resthouse came into view. The crater, Mokuaweoweo, was hidden by cloud, but as I waited, stretched out on my blankets, for Craddock to come, the clouds slowly lifted and unveiled the great crater of Mokuaweoweo before me. In the foreground was a slight drop into a small crater filled with rolling pahoe-hoe. The opposite rim of this crater was cut by a wide gap through which I looked into the main crater. Patches of snow were here and there on both sides of the smaller crater.

When Craddock came along we broke into the hut. Later we went out to restring a break in the telephone line, so that we could call up Mr. Williams who was coming up with a party tomorrow. The view of Mauna Kea was very grand; lapping its eastern side was the milky sea of clouds. We worked fast for our hands and ears got numb.

July 30: The first frost I had ever seen covered the ground. My head ached, the pain coming from just within the forehead, over the eyes. Craddock felt the same. The rain barrel was coated with ice and hill robins had drowned in its water - a queer place, indeed, to find any kind of songbird, as the barren lava of these high regions seemed too bleak and uninviting for any member of the Passeriformes.

After a breakfast of stewed apricots and coffee, we started down into the crater. The floor - dating back to 1916 - was glistening iridescent black pahoe-hoe. The lava was crumbly on the descent, sometimes a seemingly solid surface giving way for two feet beneath us. The floor was solid pahoe-hoe and our steps were accompanied by a loud crunch, crunch as we walked over it. Some stretches of lava had a molasses colored sheen beside the black. A glitter at the other end of the floor turned out to be not snow but a brown coated lava boulder with an unusually brilliant sheen.

Scrambling up the opposite rim, we went on up towards the summit passing several cracks where lay small banks of snow. I descended into a fairly large one which had an ice covered pool as well as several small snow banks. Later we came to a fairly large snow bank and both of us soon knew how it felt to be hit by a snowball! After our "fight" we slid down the bank on snow made hard and slippery by the seats of our pants.

Back at the cabin, Ranger Fowler had arrived. After a bite to eat we all started down the trail. Fowler's horse was tethered a mile away, down the trail, and we piled

our bags and blankets upon it. On the way down I picked up extremely beautiful pieces of iridescent lava and pumice that glittered with all the colors of the rainbow; other pieces were like burnished gold, some of a beautiful blue metallic color.

At the cabin at 10,000 feet we fixed up a mess for dinner, then mounted the cone to exclaim at the marvelous sunset. About ten thirty that evening, I awoke with a terrible feeling in my eyes; I could not open them comfortably. Later I found out that this was snow blindness from spending the morning looking at the glaring snow.

July 31: Eyes better. Fowler and I got breakfast, packed and started down. Craddock had left us yesterday for the truck road. It was a nasty, cold day and rained all the way down. I was on Fowler's horse when we arrived at the road and he asked me to take it on down the mountain. The trail followed the road for a good part of the way, or was never far from it, and then left it to cut across country. I took an interest in this section, new to me. It was pasture land until a corral was reached and then the trail passed over rough lava covered with a-alii, pukeawe, and mixed groves of koa, ohia, mamani and naio. Birds were very numerous. Blinded by tears still, I could not see them but I heard apapane, elepaio and amakihi, and numerous iiwi. The trail came off the flow and passed through Kipuka Kii. The Giant Koa with a 30 foot trunk, but dead, alas, was passed. This was familiar territory again and I soon struck the road, running through a cool, shady grove of soapberry trees. The horse needed no encouragement when we had come within sight of the home pasture, for he broke into a gallop, turned off, and tore down the pasture to the stable. I held my breath as I greatly feared he would slip on the wet, steep slope, but he was sure-footed...

August 1: To Hilo. It had rained hard during the night, the road was a river... a visit to Rainbow Falls... spray thick more than halfway to the top of the falls, the air full of it. The chocolate brown waters churned and foamed at the foot of the falls, reminiscent of a volcanic eruption.

August 2: Rained heavily again today... Mr. Payne said nene had been seen near the Puu Oo ranch above Hilo...

August 3: Cleared enough so that the birds, silent for three days, began to sing with vigor.

August 4: Cleared splendidly. Went down into the Kau forest around the old halfway house and Mauna-iki. Mauna Kea's summit cones showed up pure white in their caps of snow. I got aboard a truck going my way as far as the halfway house where I got out and followed an old trail into the forest across the road that went, supposedly, to Mauna-iki. The forest was very open and scattered, on an old Pahoehoe flow. Here and there were banks of brown cinders. Birds were scarce, except for the linnet, and even that was not common. Two apapane were noted. Running at first towards the sea, the trail now turned toward Kilauea and mounted an old aa flow. Soon reaching a kipuka of ohia, growing on dunes of brown, windblown sand, I saw several apapane, and an immature iiwi. Strange to say, it was flying about in the company of the apapane, all immature.

I left nearly all growth behind when I crossed the pahoehoe to a couple of kipuka on the flanks of Mauna-iki. Here too were ohia growing on dunes of light brown sand. I also noticed the nasty burrgrass, so common in many places on Oahu. Apapane were here also, all immatures and so tame that I approached easily within eight feet of one sipping from an ohia blossom.

The slopes of the crater, gradual, like those of Mauna Loa, were covered with fresh, glistening pahoehoe flows. Two aa flows were also visible, running down the short slope. Not a plant grew anywhere, and I was surprised to note a skylark fly up from the barren waste and disappear in the distance. Soon I met the main trail and followed it to the crater which resembled a large cave filled with talus - a disappointment.

(To be continued)

FIELD TRIP, Sunday, June 10th, 1951:

Four enthusiasts went to Poamoho together in Miss Hatch's car, enjoying the trees and flowers (especially a white monkeypod, pointed out by Ruth Rockafellow) on the way to Wahiawa. No water birds were seen along the way, but through the Halemano pineapple fields small flocks of ricebirds fluttered close to the road.

We paused a moment to enjoy the view of Schofield against the background of the Waianae Mountains, after parking the car, then started up our road afoot. Red lehua was in bloom along the road and down into the gulches, so we saw and heard apapane; a sandalwood was in bloom near the road. The breeze that cooled us also kept the birds in the trees below the level of the road - so it seemed. Frequent stops were made to listen to bird calls: linnets and Liothrix, chiefly. On our return some others appeared. The total count was: 52 ricebirds, 5 Chinese doves, 16 apapane, 10 Liothrix, 17 linnets, 1 Kentucky cardinal, 6 amakihi, 4 elepaio, 2 iiwi.

At one spot a misty blue haze down in the valley on the right was brought closer through field glasses and identified as an extensive planting of the lovely jacaranda. In more ways than one the trip was most rewarding.

Anonymous

NOTE: Popoia is planned for the late afternoon and evening of July 14th, Saturday. Bring supper, flashlight, jacket or raincoat, and \$1.00 for the boatman. Meet at the Library of Hawaii at 4:00 p.m. or at Kailua Park Extension (toward Kaneohe) at 5:00 p.m. The boatman will call for us at 10:00 p.m. after an evening of shearwater music. This is one of our most enjoyable trips. For your boat reservations call Miss Grenville Hatch at 76085, preferably in the evening.

JULY ACTIVITIES:

FIELD TRIP: Sunday, July 8, 1951, to Poamoho. Meet at the Library of Hawaii at 8:00 a.m. Bring lunch, water, and car (if possible). Poamoho needs no introduction to bird watchers. If the weather permits, we should have an excellent bird count.

MEETING: Monday, July 16, 1951, Auditorium, Library of Hawaii, at 7:30 p.m. Miss Hazel Peppin has kindly offered to show us her colored moving pictures of the Hawaiian perching and sea birds. Following this program a short business meeting will be held.

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