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OBSERVATIONS ON BIRDS OF MIDWAY (extracts from letters of Robert R. Sheehan, August 15, 1951)

Sooty tern. They appeared at Sand Island in great numbers on April 1st and made circular flights above sooty tern colonies 1 and 2, but did not land. As the days went by they increased in numbers and then divided into two, then three and finally four groups, still increasing in numbers, until April 20th when they began to land. Could it be that these groups came from different fishing grounds, and all this flying around and chattering is a greeting of friend to friend? They were observed mating on May 5th, but it is possible that they were mating three or four days prior to this. On May 10th the first eggs appeared, and on June 14th they began hatching. Mortality does not seem to be very high among the chicks. Frigates caused some loss, but not as great as expected. Rats caused further loss. The chicks (August 15th) are now exercising their wings, but none have fledged. Eighty-five have been banded (under the permit of Miss Grenville Hatch).

Red-tailed tropic bird. Arrived March 17th. (With that date of arrival they should be green-tailed!) First eggs reported April 18th, first hatchings reported May 3rd. The incubation period must be longer than this, however. From May 3rd to June 4th there were a great many hatchings, then they subsided until August 10th when they began hatching again. Do you believe that the tropic birds arrive here in two groups, one in March and the other in July?

Ruddy turnstones and bristle-thighed curlew arrived August 2nd, both having departed June 19th; the Pacific golden plover departed a week earlier. Do you have any idea where the ruddy turnstones and the curlews go for this short period?

Laysan albatross - about twenty young now on Sand Island; 4 adults observed last Sunday. One adult still here today.

Black-footed albatross. The last of the Black-foot young departed July 20th. I believe that the Black-foot abandoned their young chicks to a much greater extent than the Laysan. The mortality of both the Laysan and the Black-foot young ran about 90 per cent this year. A rough estimate on Eastern islet would run about 35 to 40 per cent. The greater mortality on Sand is due to the operation of aircraft and the actions of some --- human beings. Aircraft killed about an average of 12 Laysan albatross a day during the season; aircraft operations so disturbed the Black-foot that they departed Sand earlier than usual, leaving hundreds of their young to starve.

There is a great deal of work here to be done with the albatross... Case histories should be made. I hope this can be accomplished next season.

RRS

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

August 20: Started out on several trails to continue my recheck of the National Park to study the movements of Hawaiian birds. I started out on Byron's Ledge and, crossing it, came to the rim of Kilauea-iki. Birds were fairly common on the crater bottom, at the south end, considerably more so than around camp. They were also common in the rain forest on the eastern slopes, notably the iiwi, which had disappeared from the camp region a mile away. At the twin craters, birds were scarce, except for several pairs of amakihi which were flying about in the tall ohia. Iiwi were heard and, upon looking up, I saw a pair of them together overhead. After lunch, I started down the Keauhou road. Along the whole distance there was an extreme scarcity of birds, except for amakihi, which seem to have invaded the region since most of the apapane have left, probably coming up from the lower forests of Olaa or the Kalapana region. The forest along here is dry, and it starts soon after leaving the twin craters.

Reaching the Cockett Trail, I started up, noting a few apapane at the junction of the trails, but almost no birds in the vast region further along the trail. Upon reaching Kokoolau there was a fairly good forest, and the apapane fairly common here, though not nearly as common as I had found them on June 15th. At Lua Manu, a C.C.C. truck came along and I got a lift to camp.

August 23: Went to Hilo... met a Japanese boy who told me of his experiences taking photos of Hawaiian birds in the forests of Kona. I was surprised to hear him describe one bird as black, with a long beak which measured about two inches. This was enough! I took out Bryan's "Natural History..." and opened it to the page containing the illustrations of the mamo. He pointed direct to the mamo!

August 24: Went to Hilo to search for the mamo photograph. Also dropped in to see Mr. Kahakua at the Fire Station, who had told Mr. Chilson about honey bees stinging the Hawaiian forest birds. I doubted the theory, as a bee tree was found by Craddock in the middle of Bird Park, and I didn't find any dead birds during the time of the apapane invasion a few weeks ago.

I searched through all numbers of the Nature Magazine, the magazine to which Ken, my Japanese friend of yesterday, sent his photos, and found no mamo photo. Nor did I find any of the others "Ken" told me about!

August 26: Started out on a hike through the Brown ranch below the wet koa forest today. Rode up to Kipuka Kii and left the car at the ohia grove one enters after coming off the lava flow on the east. Apapane, a few iiwi and amakihi here. Walked along the road to the Mauna Loa trail and here turned mountainwards. After going through the Sapindus grove, I came into what was once koa and ohia. Iiwi were heard in a stand of ohia to the left and two large flocks - 25 and 10, respectively - of apapane flew overhead. Just before reaching the giant koa, I crossed a bit of aa lava on which grew a stand of large ohia trees. Here I saw many iiwi flying from tree to tree; many others called from the depths of the grove. In a neighboring koa an Oreomystis was hunting insects along the tree limbs.

Passing the giant koa, I went through a bit of pasture and then a stretch of aa. In the forest growing on it were more iiwi. Coming to the corral, I followed a stone wall that led east across the lava flow. Then, turning up, I made my way across the lava to a small ohia kipuka where I was surprised to find olapa and one other tree that I was accustomed to find growing only in the rain forest. (relation of stopping at a large koa tree on Kipuka Kekake, finding a spider like the black widow under some rotten bark of a large koa; found longhorn beetles on a half dead koa, also green looper caterpillars "responsible for a great deal of damage to koa on Hawaii and Maui.")

An unusual number of elepaio called from the depths of a stand of mixed koa, a-alii, mamani and ohia. On entering the area I found, as I had expected, that there were birds all around me: amakihi - forty at least - and iiwi, and six pairs of elepaio. Hill robins were all about.

Following the trail that lead away across the aa, I came into grassy country thickly strewn with trees, lost the trail, and started toward Brown's ranch house. Birds were scarce excepting amakihi - not rare at all. They have increased greatly since I last visited this region (July). Iiwi were met with in the ohia stands, seemingly showing preference for that tree.

Toward the Puu Oo trail, the forest became thicker. In some koa forest there were many amakihi and creepers. Soon the forest changed to a dry koa forest, the trees gigantic. Underneath the big trees grew ohia, mamani and second growth ohia, making a dense brush. This seemed to indicate that the underbrush had once been destroyed by cattle, and was now coming back. In one spot I heard a lot of hill robins. Birds were plentiful. Elepaio whistled in the ohia underbrush, high overhead were a large number of amakihi, creepers and akepiuie.

Near the Puu Oo trail the forest became wetter. I soon came out of the forest into the pastures of the ranch. In the thick forests about the high bluff north of the ranch house I had noted quite a number of apapane on two previous trips, but now there seemed to be none. Perhaps they have gone down into the lower Olaa and Waiakea forests, probably because of the oncoming winter months, or because of a scarcity of blossoms.

From the ranch house I started down the Olaa Forest Reserve road to search for an owl's nest reported to me, but failed to find it. Along the back road to the Volcano House I noticed only a few apapane, but iiwi, not noticed on the first trips, were now numerous.

August 27: Participated in a bird lecture at the Volcano House, given by Mr. Williams.

August 28: Went to the Museum to see Mr. Lamb concerning proposed trips to the Mauna Kea region, and to see his kodachromes taken at Three Trees Kipuka...at the twin craters I was surprised to hear an omau sing from somewhere within the forest - the first time I had ever noticed one near the crater of Kilauea. Formerly it was numerous.

August 29: Hiked along the Kilauea-iki trail and observed the pair of hawks that reside in the crater. They were high in the air, wheeling slowly and circling higher and higher. While going through the patch of dense rain forest near the east end a whirring sound caught my ear, such as that of an apapane flying overhead. But it was in the depths of the forest and turned out to be an omau.

September 4: Worked on reports...

September 6: To Hilo for provisions for a proposed trip to Mauna Kea.

September 9: To Hilo and on to Hakalau...Hakalau came much too soon, and I decided to stay on the train until Laupahoehoe was reached...Several times the train, really just a cab with a Ford engine on rails, plus another car, crossed the road - which would suddenly appear from behind steep banks. Here the conductor jumped off the train and ran ahead to see if any cars were coming, and if not, to give the "all clear" signal so that the train could pass!

Getting off at Laupahoehoe, I walked down the road to the town that is sprawled all over the "leaf" of land that juts out from the line of cliffs. A large flock of hill robins sang in the guava and other tropical growth on the cliff above the road. Several pairs of koa'e played with the air currents out over the water...Crossing to the brink of the cliff I could look straight down through the trees to the surf about 150 feet below...

September 11: Last day in the National Park...Packed for my long trip inland to Mauna Kea...gave my reports to Lamb, bid goodbye to Mr. Wingate, and then Mr. Lamb elected to drive me over to the Brown ranch house, which was the start of my route - the Volcano-Puu Oo trail. With the key to Keawewai cabin, nine miles away, loaned me by Mr. Brown, I was at last on my way. With a last glance at Kilauea, I pursued my way north into the forest toward my destination, Mauna Kea. The trail was wide and good, skirted the koa rain forest at the beginning, passing through koa and ohia. Birds not too common - a few apapane were heard, and a number of iiwi and amakihi.

Further on, the trail came into a pasture belt. Kulani and Lalaau could be seen, jutting above the koa to the east. The rest of the way was through a succession of pastures and scattered koa forests. Birds became very common: omau, akepiuie, amakihi, iiwi and elepaio, both seen and heard. The akiapolaau was heard now and then, one appeared high in a large, half-dead koa. I could just see its lines as it worked over the dead limbs. Now and then it stopped, tilted its head and beak straight into the air and poured forth its rippling, bubbling warble.

After three hours of walking, I finally came upon a clearing in which were several corrals. At the far end, just at the forest's edge, was the cabin. I entered, threw down my pack and bags, prepared and ate a meal. It was dark soon after I finished and after writing up my journal I made use of a pack of cards for playing solitaire, but soon went to bed.

September 12: Woke up to a nasty, grey day. I soon packed and started out on the trail, Mauna Kea bound. The air was full of bird notes: amakihi, creepers, akepiuie, iiwi, elepaio, and many omau. On passing through an open stretch, I was surprised by the clatter of a flock of nene. Investigation disclosed six at the far end, distant about 100 yards. I started towards them, but they flew into the air, considerably more wary than the flock of eight seen at Three Trees Kipuka. They circled the pasture twice, flying right over my head, where their forms with their long necks outstretched made a beautiful sight. Then they disappeared in the direction of the cabin.

I walked on through the open pastures. Many plover flew up as I passed. The koa forests bordering the pastures were alive with birds. Two more nene flew cackling up further on. After about half an hour of walking I stopped to rest under a small koa tree. Suddenly I was aware that the tree was full of birds, and, looking up, I saw that they were creepers. What a flock! There were easily 100 birds there, and they came down, seemingly one by one, to look me over, then fly out of the tree and across the trail. It took a long time to "drain" that tree of that flock.

There was a little diffused sunlight now. Occasionally I glanced about to see omau perched high, singing back and forth to each other. Occasionally, I saw a male akepiuie feeding in the koa branches, among amakihi.

(To be continued)

REVIEWS:

ECOLOGICAL RECONNAISSANCE OF THE PHEASANTS IN HAWAII, by Charles W. and Elizabeth Reeder Schwartz. (The Auk, 68(3):281-314, 1951)

In the same clear, careful and complete manner in which they have discussed other game birds found in Hawaii, the authors describe the distribution, populations, foods, cover, parasites, predators and breeding of the two species of pheasants introduced into Hawaii and their hybrids, and the relationship of these to the ten major life zones of these islands. Numerous references are cited.

The Ring-necked Pheasant was first brought to Hawaii about 1865 and the Green or Versicolor Pheasant some time prior to 1900. These have hybridized extensively. None of the other pheasants liberated in these islands have survived.

The geography of the Hawaiian Islands is briefly described and the range of the pheasants discussed. The best range for the Green Pheasants occurs between 4,000 and 7,000 feet elevation on the Island of Hawaii, in open Acacia koa forest interspersed with grassy meadows. The Green Pheasant is decreasing in Hawaii through hybridization. During 1946-47 the pheasant population on 3,700 square miles of range on all major Hawaiian Islands was an estimated 70,000.

Analysis of the foods of 191 pheasants showed 97 plant and 55 animal foods, of wide variety, adults and chicks eating the same. These are tabulated by vegetation zones. Where surface water is unavailable, pheasants subsist on occasional dew or mist, infrequent rains, succulent vegetation, fleshy fruits and soft-bodied insects.

Pheasants roost both on the ground and in trees, but trees are preferred.

External parasites consist of three species of mites, seven species of lice and one hippoboscid fly. Eye, cecal and gizzard worms are enumerated, and their relation noted to intermediate hosts taken as food. The mongoose is probably the most important predator. Other enemies are rats, feral cats and pigs, and fire ants. Illegal killing of hens during the open season for cocks accounts for some reduction.

Males begin crowing in late January or early February; laying starts in March; hatching in May through June. The sex ratio is even, except where managed hunting occurs. From 6 to 11 eggs are laid, but broods average three young to a pair. Each vegetation zone with its land uses is evaluated as pheasant range.

E. H. Bryan, Jr.

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE LAYSAN DUCK, Anas wyvilliana laysanensis.

By Vernon E. Brock. (The Auk, 68(3):371-372, 1951)

While carrying out his main task of tagging green turtles and observing reef fishes, during a brief stop at Laysan, on June 23, 1950 (on board the MV Hugh M. Smith, fisheries research vessel of the Pacific Oceanic Fishery Investigations, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), Mr. Brock counted 33 Laysan ducks, 26 of them adults. Four of the birds were in the thick patches of beach morning glory, and it may be that a good many others were there but did not emerge. Previous counts have been: 100 in 1902 (Fisher), 6 in 1911 (Dill), 20 in 1923 (Wetmore), 11 in 1936 (Coultas). This would indicate that, following the abrupt drop between 1902 and 1911, the ducks had held their own, with the improvement in the vegetation (destroyed by rabbits), and that now they are on the increase.

The Laysan finch was reported to be abundant in 1950, but no examples were seen of the Laysan rail.

E. H. Bryan, Jr.

NOTES:

Members of the Hawaii Audubon Society have been happy to meet Robert R. Sheehan, Navy Aerologist on Midway (and a contributor to the Elepaio), on his vacation visit to Honolulu in early September. His color photos of birds and tape recordings of some of the bird sounds gave us a feeling of familiarity with the birds of Midway not much less vivid than that of an actual visit. Especially interesting were birds in the juvenile stages, from just-emerging-from-the-shell up. Many of the pictures were of exquisite beauty. The tape recordings were of the tropic bird resenting intrusion with a sound like that of some power-driven tool (!), the varied sounds accompanying the dance of the albatross, the outcries of sooty terns, and the moaning of the shearwaters. Mr. Sheehan returns to Midway soon and will continue his bird studies. A note received in August from Mr. Sheehan reported the return of about 500 Bonin Island petrels at Sand Island (Midway) on August 17th.

Mr. G. C. Munro reports the return of plover to Kapiolani Park on August 10th, and his plover friends Moki and Mele on August 12th - Moki plump, but Mele thin and worn.

Gordon Pearsall reports seeing two skylark nests at Hickam Field, between the air strips. Furthermore, he has watched the young birds being fed in the nests.

Our Windward Oahu observer reports a flock of 8 Point Barrow gulls on a little pond near Kailua, "sun bathing on the sandy shore, about 15 inches above the water line" and also 7 tattlers; "unusual to find so many in one flock."

FIELD TRIP, August 12th: (Omitted from September issue)

Eight members and guests made a trip to Poamoho - the last of the summer. Despite perfect weather the birding was unusually poor for Poamoho. Those who observed from the jeep road counted:

14 amakihi	1 Chinese dove	1 house finch	37 ricebird
5 apapane	7 elepaio	19 liiothrix	25 white-eye

Colonel and Mrs. Melton went along the trail a short distance and reported seeing "two or three dozen apapane", perhaps half as many elepaio.

(Anonymous)

OCTOBER ACTIVITIES:

FIELD TRIP: Sunday, October 14, 1951. Permission has been secured to go to the ponds inside Kaneohe Naval Air Station and to the booby colony. A list of names must be submitted; therefore, those who are interested in going, please call either 90-4421 or 70-9024. Meet at the Library of Hawaii at 8:00 a.m. Bring lunch, water, and car (if possible).

MEETING: Monday, October 15, 1951, Auditorium, Library of Hawaii, at 7:30 p.m. Mr. Vernon E. Brock, Director of the Division of Fish and Game of the Territorial Board of Agriculture and Forestry, will talk on his recent George Vanderbilt Pacific Equatorial Expedition to Laysan and other leeward islands. Come and bring your friends.

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