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of Wildlife in Hawaii

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AKUNE, WINTER HOME OF THE CRANES OF JAPAN

By C. M. Fennell
(concluded)

Soon after the three hooded cranes had taken off, four others flew in near the spoonbills, circled low over the field once or twice as though contemplating a landing, but apparently decided otherwise and continued on to the eastward. One or two of them kept up a harsh, wooden, creaking call the whole time. Conditions were ideal for observing color patterns. The dark, almost blackish gray of the entire body made an excellent background for the sharply contrasting white of the head and neck.

Although we returned to Akune and waited till dark that evening, no cranes were observed on their return flight to the area. However, at 5:30 the following evening three were observed feeding in the "night" field. All became rigidly alert as we approached to about 300 yards, ceased feeding and stood at attention, watching our every move. First one, then another, nervously flapped its wings. At the end of ten minutes or so they took flight and disappeared behind a low wooded ridge to the southwest, reappeared a minute or so later, circled the field and joined another group of four flying in from the direction of Arisaki. The latter group did not pause to inspect the rice field before us but continued straight on over the ridge. A single bird of each group of three was, for some reason, flying with one foot held slightly lower than the other, in a sort of dragging manner. At 6:20 all seven returned from over the ridge and silently alighted (for the night?) in the field in which we were standing.

According to Mr. Ogami, the cranes usually arrive in the Akune area between the 16th and 20th of October, the flock increasing gradually until the full winter complement of December and January. Four or five "scouts", he claims, generally precede the first main group by two or three days. In the spring they start to move north during early February, the last stragglers seen between the 7th and 10th of March.

The mana tsuru, or white-naped crane (Grus vipio), readily distinguished from the hooded crane by its more whitish upper parts, also winters in this area but in far less number. According to Mr. Ogami, there are 80 per cent hooded to 20 per cent naped cranes. We saw only one white-naped crane as it was feeding in a small ditch in the "night" field on the morning of February 23rd. It too seemed to be shy and solitary and soon left the field of observation.

The Japanese crane, or tancho (Grus japonensis), is also said to be a rare visitor in the Akune area, but none of the people I talked with there seemed to have seen it - ever. Shimomura is said to have recorded the kuro tsuru, or Eastern common crane (Grus grus lilfordi), near Akune in 1923. Again, none of the residents of the region seem to know it.

On the 23rd, shortly after witnessing the departure of the hooded cranes, we experienced another of those rare treats to a bird lover, the sight of a bird new to our

"life list." As we scanned the flooded stubble field our glasses came to a sudden halt on a pair of black and white birds of nearly crane proportions, and with bright red legs and feet. They were feeding close together in the open field, black in color, one much glossier than the other. This we took to be the male, and concluded that the two must be a pair. Even to one who had never before seen this bird, a single glance was enough to assure him of its identity. Long before Mr. Hashiguchi spoke the word nabeko, we knew we were looking at the black stork (Ciconia nigra). Professor Mori observed this species nesting on the side of a rock cliff in the east central portion of South Korea. Their preference for rocky sites was again demonstrated this morning as they rose from the ground upon our approach and sought refuge on top of some large, granite rocks jutting out of the side of the sparsely wooded ridge, some two or three hundred feet above the field. A gray heron (Ardea cinerea), which was also flushed from the field at about the same time as the storks, attempted to alight on the same rocks but changed its mind at the very moment it stretched out its legs in landing position and veered to another rocky eminence farther along the ridge. After some five minutes the storks took wing and alighted on a stone wall close to the top of the ridge where they remained, motionless silhouettes against the sky, till we finally left the area. Just before we left, another pair of storks flew in from the northeast, circled the field once at a goodly height, and silently departed in the same direction. During flight, the head appears to be held a trifle lower than the rest of the body which gives this species a peculiarly distinctive outline. A pair were again observed at 6:45 the following morning, perched on the self-same rocks above the rice field, motionless and silent. At no time did I hear a single note from these birds. No added information was I able to procure as to the habits of this species.

The bills of both birds observed in the field appeared to be dark in color, not red, as pictured in both Kuroda's and Uchida's books. However, this may have been due to a coating of mud, or perhaps the bill is red only during the breeding season.

On February 24th, we were treated to a boat trip to the small island of Ōshima, in Akune Bay. Heavily wooded and well populated with deer, the island, according to Mr. Ogami, is a very popular swimming and camping resort during the summer. Bird life was rather limited on the island itself (only brown-eared bulbul, the small Japanese green finch, the bull-headed shrike, Chinese tree pipit, E. turtle dove and the dusky thrush), although a flock of approximately one hundred mallards and 21 red-breasted mergansers sported in the rocky waters of its shore.

Several hundred yards to the north of Ōshima, on a group of small wave-washed rocks, we came upon a group of some thirty pelagic shags (Phalacrocorax pelagicus pelagicus) and Temminck's cormorant (Phalacrocorax capillatus). As the boat slowly approached, the majority of the birds, apparently with little fear, awkwardly flopped down off the rock into the water and slowly retreated. Temminck's cormorant was another "first" observation, and I was particularly happy to see it in the field and be able to make comparisons with the Japanese cormorant (Phalacrocorax carbo hanedae), with which I was already familiar in the Tokyo, Nagoya and Osaka areas. Generally speaking, Temminck's cormorant is considerably larger in size and the young birds are characterized by streaked, whitish underparts. Nesting habits are said to differ, Temminck's cormorant choosing only remote, rocky cliffs, the Japanese cormorant pine groves considerably inland, though still within convenient nearness to the sea.

Several black-throated loons (Gavia arctica viridigularis) were also observed on the surface of the Bay on the return to Akune. All in all, the excursion, although wholly unanticipated, proved most enjoyable and profitable.

On the evening of our return, in a deluge of rain (not wet enough to dampen our spirits), we were escorted to the railroad station and waved fond farewells to our many Akune friends, silently praying that we would be able to return the following winter during the height of the crane season.

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UPUPAU HEAD COLONY
and
STARBUCK ISLAND

Just to let all of us know that boobies, frigate birds and humans have not changed very much since an earlier day, the following is quoted from a pamphlet in Bishop Museum Library (by J. T. Arundel, delivered to a meeting in San Francisco, in 1885):

"It is many years ago...I went ashore through a passage in the reef...(Starbuck Island)(A description of the noisy wide-awake tern follows): Further up the island other birds had their quarters, never trenching upon each other's preserves, but all living in separated districts... The frigate birds and boobies, however, live next door to each other, and for the best of all reasons as far as the man-of-war hawk is concerned, because he and his family are dependent upon their neighbours, the boobies, for their sustenance, the booby going out every day and fishing, the man-of-war spending his time leisurely sailing about in the clouds, at a wonderful height and in the evening intercepting the returning booby and robbing him of his hard-earned food. It is a pretty sight to see the boobies returning in the afternoon, full of fish. Perhaps one and often two man-of-war hawks are lying in wait for one booby. They swoop down upon him with harsh cries; the booby flies to and fro, crying also, sometimes rushing up to avoid his pursuers, sometimes darting down towards the earth, but it is generally in vain; the man-of-war hawk keeps on attacking his victim, and at last, wearied with the struggle, the poor booby disgorges fish it has been catching for its own food and for its young. The man-of-war hawk swoops cleverly down and catches the fish in its descent to the earth, then flies home rejoicing,and the poor booby has to go out to sea to do its fishing all over again.

It is very curious that when you come on a booby sitting on its egg or nest, and it cannot rise and fly away, it utters very harsh cries, pecks vigorously at you with its long, sharp-pointed beak, and then, if you do not go away, it at last disgorges the fish it has recently caught at your feet, as much as to say, 'There, you are no better than the man-of-war hawk, my natural enemy. Now, I have given you all I can give you, and I hope you will go away.' It does not appear to enter its head that you can want anything with it except its fish."

Our Ulupau birds had not been fishing recently enough to disgorge?

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NOTES FROM LETTERS

From Robert R. Sheehan to Grenville Hatch:

(Excerpts) I have been quite busy since my return to Midway. (He reports on some bird banding on Sand Island, of the red-tailed tropic bird.) A young red-tailed tropic, while being banded, became excited and disgorged two fish five inches long, and four pieces of fish two inches long...in an undigested state. Some weeks ago I was fortunate enough to snap a picture just after a young tropic bird had disgorged two fish.

Now about our sooty terns. They began leaving the island 21 September and their numbers are now fairly well depleted. The young tern, while learning the intricacies of flight, flies behind the two parents, chirping all the while. It is quite a show to see the two adults wheeling, diving and circling, with the young flying behind and imitating the older birds to the best of its ability. As you know, the young don't attain the adult plumage until the second year, so it is quite easy to observe the instructors and the fledgling in the air.

There have been no more reports of the white-tailed tropic bird. Mr. Bailey*, of the Denver Museum, observed one young and the parent here in 1949. The report might have been the same bird looking for the nesting site. The nest was in an ironwood tree and located ten feet from the ground, according to Mr. Bailey.

Birds that nest on Sand Island: Laysan albatross (Diomedea immutabilis); Black-footed albatross (Diomedea nigripes); Red-tailed tropic bird (Phaethon rubricanda rothschildi); Sooty tern (Sterna fuscata oahuensis); White tern (Cygis alba rothschildi); Hawaiian noddy tern (Amous minutus melangonys); Bonin Island petrel (Pterodroma leucoptera hypoleuca); Bulwer's petrel (Bulweria bulweri); Wedge-tailed shearwater (Puffinus pacificus cuneatus).

Migrants to Sand and Eastern Islands: Pacific golden plover (Pluvialis dominca fulva); Bristle-thighed curlew (Numenius tahitiensis); Ruddy turnstone (Arenaria interpres morinella).

Birds that nest on Eastern Island: All the birds that nest on Sand Island also nest on Eastern, and in addition the following: Great frigate bird (Fregata minor palmerstoni); Red-footed booby (Sula sula rubripes); Blue-faced booby (Sula dactylatra personata); Commond noddy (Anous stolidus).

As of this writing, the following birds may be observed on Sand Island: Red-tailed tropic bird, Sooty tern, White tern, Hawaiian noddy tern, Bonin Island petrel, Bulwer's petrel, Wedge-tailed shearwater, Pacific golden plover, Ruddy turnstone and the Bristle-thighed curlew.

*See Reviews, page 42 of this issue.

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From Myrna Campbell to Margaret Porter:

...I have wandered about to see what birds were on Kauai. Chinese thrush are exceedingly numerous. They sing a great deal but are almost impossible to see, because they are always back in the brush. Saw a pair very well once. Meadow larks can be heard in several pasture areas. White tailed tropic birds fly over all the deeper valleys where there are cliffs. Wandering tattlers wander by, along the rocky beach, frequently.

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(The Editor appreciates this sharing of letters, as well as the letters. May many members be expressive in this way. MT)

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REVIEWS:

Hutchinson, George E. The Biogeochemistry of Vertebrate Excretion...(Bulletin, American Museum of Natural History, 96, 1950) reviewed by R. C. Murphy in Ecology, 32(3):567-569, 1951.

At a quick glance this title might fail to catch the interest of Hawaiian bird lovers! However, Dr. Murphy's review shows the fallacy of that reaction.

Dr. Hutchinson's work (or 554 pages) is an "unprecedented effort to determine the distribution and concentration of nitrogen, phosphorus, and other elements and compounds laid down as a result of the excretory activities of sea birds and certain mammals," says Dr. Murphy, and the author has "succeeded memorably."

Pages 160 to 263 concern "Phosphate guano on the atolls of the Pacific Ocean" and present a geography and natural history of the guano islands, together with a discussion of the chemistry of guano and the relationship of these deposits to the climate of the islands. Pages 198 to 207 concern the leeward Hawaiian Islands. Pages 200 to 207 give a review of the ornithological literature of these Hawaiian Islands and a summary of the conditions on each island.

The study of depositions of guano bears on various phases of oceanography. As to ancient climates, for instance, "There are indications in the existing deposits (of the central and western Pacific) that the rain belt has undergone a shift from south to north within the past few thousand years." The food of birds is a closely related topic. "There are abundant indications that large insular bird colonies, far from reducing a commercial take of fish by competition, may actually increase the catch by a process of biogeochemical concentration, in other words, by increasing the fertility of the waters close to their nesting grounds." That brings in fisheries, too. Dr. Murphy briefs the following thought: "In times of great avian mortality...it is not necessary to assume that the normal food of the guano birds is dead or absent. It may merely be confined beneath the thermocline that then develops. At such times the anchovies may approach the surface only at night when the birds are not able to feed upon them."

Thinking of our own waters, perhaps we should be extremely thankful for such spots as Moku Manu, that the birds still own.

MT

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Bailey, Alfred M. Notes on the Birds of the Midway and Wake Islands. (Wilson Bulletin, 63(1):35-37, 1951)

Interesting records are made by Mr. Bailey of stops on Midway and Wake. On March 14, 1913, Midway, observed birds, liberated "a few Laysan Rails ...and Laysan Finches...The two species thrived there for many years..." Another visit, May 4-11, 1949. "We looked in vain for these rails and finches...apparently...exterminated by rats...during the last war. ...no unusual birds...except a few flying White-tailed Tropic-birds..." Nov. 21, 1949, notes of albatross, turnstones, plovers, curlews, wandering tattlers, terns, red-tailed tropic-bird, a loon, short-eared owls. The Wake Island visit was May 11-15, 1949: "nearly devoid of bird-life," plover, no rails. Notes from a Japanese officer's diary, found on the island are interesting. One officer evidently tried to protect the gooney birds, but largely in vain, "although a great colony of Sooty Terns was guarded so that the eggs could be gathered regularly." The desolation is reflected in "A few Man-o'-war-birds...were sitting about on the rusted skeletons of bombed naval buildings."

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

September 12 (continued):

I approached an old lava flow, where the koa forest ended. From there on the birds were never numerous. Occasionally I saw apapane, amakihi, elepaio and iiwi, but in no large numbers. On I went, all morning and into the afternoon, crossing now a lava flow, now a stretch of forest or scrub growing on an old lava flow. Weather was nasty all day, cloudy, with an almost continuous drizzle.

Sighting a red and white striped pole with a white flag I knew that I was in the Humuula saddle, as this was a survey marker on the course of the proposed Hilo-Kona road. Soon after, I came to the 1935 flow. The lava was black and fresh, and the vegetation at the sides still charred, as if lava had been flowing only yesterday. I picked up a sample and went on into the open pasture lands of the Puu O-o Ranch. As I rested a moment an amakihi winged its way low over the ground and alighted on a rocky mound, then ran about over the rocks in search of edibles, finally flying off.

I lost track of the trail, in the confusion of the cattle trails maze. Picking a course to the east, I started out cross country, and followed a fence that ran in the direction I had chosen. Many plover were feeding in the pastures on both sides; now and then I heard one give the warble that is their warning signal.

Soon I approached a crossing fence, then came to a gate, then a trail ran across my path, following the new fence. "This may connect me with the road encircling Mauna Kea, above me," I thought. Then the fence soon crossed a fairly good trail, which I followed. I didn't know where I was, except that I was in the Puu O-o ranchlands, on the south side of Mauna Kea. Where was the Puu O-o Ranch - above me, below me? If behind me, I had a walk of nine miles before I came to the next camp - Nauhi Gulch. Wondering whether to go on or to stop and prepare for the night, I decided to go on, and had the good fortune to come to a road soon. Following this I found myself at the Puu O-o Ranch before long. I had evidently been following the Puu O-o trail.

At the ranch house Mr. Shipman gave me directions for finding the Laumaia C.C.C. tent camp, and I proceed on up the hill, passing my first apple tree (!) and finally reached the Mauna Kea road... I walked down the road, but Mr. Shipman's "two miles" turned out to be four. When turn after turn failed to disclose any sign of the camp I began to be anxious. Had I missed it? Perhaps a side road led to the camp? About seven thirty the clouds cleared and I got a beautiful view of Mauna Kea silhouetted black against a brilliant, starry sky. A fleecy white cloud encroached on its northern slope. After "hours" of walking, I rounded one more bend in the road and finally had the satisfaction of seeing several lights flashing from a high point far ahead. With returned vigor, I set forth. However, as always happens, I miscalculated the distance. After what seemed an hour they seemed as far away as before. But eventually I climbed the last grade and was confronted by the two rows of tents comprising the Laumaia camp.

September 13: I awoke at sunrise this morning and went out to view the scenery, which was superb. The Laumaia camp was situated on a high promentory, and I gazed out over the Waiakea country to the volcano and towards Puna. The form of Kane-Nui-o-Hamo could be distinguished, barely rising above the plain. Far below could be seen Hilo and the breakwater jutting out into the bay. Behind me was Mauna Kea with a green belt of mamani forest through its middle. Above, the mountain was bare, colored several shades of red. To the south was the gradual rise of Mauna Loa, a patchwork of lava flows covering its northern slopes. The air was clear as a bell and bitterly cold. Beads of dew covered the grass.

The camp was in the midst of a rolling, grassy country, between the rain forest, not far below, and the belt of mamani that circled Mauna Kea. The beautiful forest of koa that once covered the grassy country is now, as in many other areas of this unfortunate island, a thing of the past.

To see more of the country I went later, after breakfast, with the supply truck to the main camp at Pohakuloa. The road wound in and out of the hills, down into one gully, up a hill, and down into another. It was fine grazing country. We passed a large flock of sheep that were being driven by cowboys on horses, a picturesque sight. The flock seemed to flow over the ground. Golden plover and skylarks were very common, scared up by the car all along the way.

The road passed above the Puu O-o Ranch and gained altitude a bit, going past three cones, in between which was an ancient lava flow, reminiscent of Mauna Kea's fury at some day in the past. There were patches of mamani scattered here and there, some in bloom, with yellow, pea-like blossoms. The country became drier as the road dropped down into the saddle between Mauna Loa and Mauna Kea. We approached the Humuula Sheep Station, which was like a little oasis in the desert (with its high pine trees). The road then started west, down the slope, and passed several cones. It plunged into a dry and dusty forest of naio and mamani, and, after a bit, the Pohakuloa C.C.C. Camp came into view.

There was still time before lunch to take a walk over to the lower slopes of the mountain. The country was very dry and dusty, having a parched look. California valley quail were very numerous and were calling all about me. Now and then I flushed a plover. One or two amakihi were the only native birds seen. After lunch the truck returned to Laumaia.

September 14: The day broke - a beautiful day for my Mauna Kea ascent. After breakfast I started. Rounding the cone of Aahuwela, at the rear of the camp, I crossed a rocky streambed, found a cattle trail, and proceeded, but swerved over towards Puu Loa, to my left, making for some forest covered hills behind that cone. The route led through pasture land. Golden plover were everywhere, accompanied with flocks of turnstones. Crossing the forest reserve fence behind Puu Loa, I plunged into the mamani forests on the other side.

The forest grew in scattered patches here and there and consisted of lichen-covered mamani trees. In a rocky streambed farther up the slope there were several other species of trees but mamani alone grew in most areas here. Birdlife immediately became evident, in the presence of several amakihi. I whistled for an elepaio and got an answer. A pair of iiwi flew, grunting, overhead, as did several apapane. Once I heard an akiapolaau sing. Surprised, I stalked the bird, giving a crude imitation of its call, which it answered. Then it flew across my vision into a grove of mamani. I entered the grove and started to imitate the bird. It answered and immediately came down to where I was. I continued to imitate it, and it flitted about - all curious - and thoroughly scrutinized me.

(To be continued)

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FIELD TRIP:

On Sunday, November 11th, a trowel brigade, five members of the Audubon Society and one guest, Mary Stacey, had the honor of assisting in a small degree the interesting project of Mr. George Munro in planting the slopes of Diamond Head with seeds of indigenous Hawaiian flora. We met at the zoo entrance and Grenville Hatch doled out the carefully labeled packets of seeds prepared by Mr. Munro. We proceeded to an area not yet planted, the windward, makai side of the hill, overlooking Black Point and the sea. (From the heights the view was splendid!) In three sets of couples, we searched out spots where grasses and other plants had held little pockets of soil on the slopes, stony and bare over a good deal of the area. Boy Scouts have offered to help seed the upper slopes, so we took the middle heights, and even there had to battle with the strong wind and steep, rough terrain.

Kiawe already flourishes at the base of the hill, and ilima is doing well on the upper slopes. Several other species are represented. What was that gray leaved shrub we saw in one gully, almost losing out by being smothered with wild lilikoi? Could it have been sandalwood? (Identified as sandalwood by Mr. Munro) Our seeds were of wiliwili,

lama, kou, hau, plumbago, koki'o, naio,nanu (Gardenia brighami), uhiuhi, maiapilo, perhaps others now forgotten.

It was even more fun than camera shooting at the birds of Ulupau Head, and we felt sorry for those who missed the experience.

After planting our seeds, two or three to a "pocket," we were curious to see how Mr. Munro's own plantings were succeeding and walked along his trail on the mauka side of the hill. It was a delight to see how sturdily the wiliwili, ferns and other plants were doing in that more verdant section.

We rejoice in the rains of the past week, hoping for a good start for our own plantings.

Stacey and Titcomb

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CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT: The Christmas bird count will be held Sunday, December 30, 1951, over the following areas:

Bellows Field
Kaneohe Naval Air Station and Ulupau Head
Kaelepulu and Kuapa Ponds
Poamoho Trail
Residential Districts
Tantalus Trail

If you have participated before, you know what a treat this is! - If not, now is the time to find out. Please call before December 27th, either 76085 - Grenville Hatch, or 709024 - Unoyo Kojima after 7:30 p.m. for particulars and assignment.

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DECEMBER ACTIVITIES:

FIELD TRIP: Sunday, December 9, 1951, to Kawailoa. Meet at the Library of Hawaii at 8:00 a.m. Bring lunch, water, and car (if possible). This is a comparatively dry trail in the Koolau Range, back of Haleiwa. We may be fortunate enough to see the Japanese tit again.

MEETING: Monday, December 17, 1951, Auditorium, Library of Hawaii, at 7:30 p.m. This will be our annual meeting;at which time the officers for 1952 will be elected. Plans will be completed for the Christmas bird count. Miss Helen Peterson will show her bird slides and motion picture of birds, and the Audubon Society will show its collection of bird slides. Let's make this a record turnout!

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HAWAII AUDUBON SOCIETY OFFICERS:

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