

# THE ELEPAIO

Journal of the  
Hawaii Audubon Society



For the Better Protection  
of Wildlife in Hawaii

Volume 12, Number 7

January 1952

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

September 14 (continued):

I continued on up the mountain, passing through groves of mamani. The grassy pasture-like ground gave way to barren, then rocky terrain. I had not gone on long before I heard a strange, finch-like "sweet" of a bird. Continuing toward the sound, I heard it once more. Presently I saw a white-breasted, grey-backed bird with a yellow head fly from one mamani into another. The palila! The Loxiodes bealloides. The status of this bird within the recent years has been practically unknown. It was uncertain whether the species still existed. I saw not a few specimens on my hike today on this side and on the other side above Pohakuloa too. There were two pairs about, and I saw three more farther up the mountain. I had beautiful views of these strange, finch-like birds as they often sat in a tree, in plain sight, answering my imitations of their calls.

I climbed on and on, up the long slope, and gradually left the forest behind. The route now led around Puu Kaupakuhale, to the south. At about 10,000 feet elevation I paused to look back over the country travelled and on down the forested slopes to Hilo and the Hamakua coast. Laumaia was far below. Puu Loa looked like an oversized ant hill. The Hilo breakwater, looking like a bent hairpin, jutted out into the water, and the coastline, fading away towards Puna, was just a faint, white line. To the south loomed Mauna Loa. The crater of Mokuawaeowae was plainly outlined on the summit, the maze of lava flows showing clearly below the rim. This was the last view I had of Mauna Loa for a sea of clouds soon rolled in, obscuring everything.

Leaving Puu Kaupakuhale behind, the route led over a rocky terrain, up the slope towards the summit plateau. The going was more and more difficult, calling for frequent stops owing to the rarity of the air. It seemed that I would never reach the plateau. As every skyline was reached, another appeared much farther on. However, I climbed the last summit at last and was greeted by the grand sight of a vast stretch of terrain that reached away to the group of large cones that marked the summit. Two patches of gleaming snow on the north slope of the largest cone made the picture beautifully alpine-like. To the north, the great cone of Puu Makanaka loomed dominantly, and all around was a dotting of smaller cones. Shut off from the lower world by a billowy sea of clouds, the scene was extremely wierd, unearthly. I was in a strange, unreal world. It might have been the moon.

Slowly, I made my way over the boulder-strewn plain. For a time I followed a shallow gully. Some of its rocks were scratched and the very nature of the terrain - smooth, polished rocks and banks of moraine along the sides - suggested the passage of a glacier. I rounded the cone of Lilinoi to the south and dropped into the shallow flat-bottomed valley through which passed the Humuula trail, which I finally reached. The



trail went up the valley and swerved over to a low, fluted cone. The going became exceedingly difficult. I could not go more than 25 yards without resting. And it became worse when I started to climb the cone. It was a great relief to reach the top finally, and behold an amphitheater-shaped crater with a circular, green-colored lake at the bottom - Lake Waiau. Because it was quite late in the day I was unable to climb further, around to and up the highest cone to the actual summit of Mauna Kea. Therefore, I descended into the crater towards the lake, scaring up three wild sheep which clambered up the farther side of the crater. The lake was a fairly large pond, about 40 or 50 yards across. Coated with ice, as it is in the winter, it would make an excellent rink. The inner slopes would be well suited for an amphitheater. With excellent slopes for skiing and sledding on some of the higher cones and approaches, Mauna Kea would doubtless be suitable for winter sports. Quite a lavish amount of snow falls on this mountain during the winter months.

A glance at the map showed that the lake is the source of the Pohakuloa stream. I followed down its course, knowing that it would eventually reach the Pohakuloa C.C.C. Camp, which is about a mile out on the plain from the mouth of the Pohakuloa Gulch. The outlet stream flowed down the southwest slope of the mountain, but became lost in its rocky bed. I followed this for a distance, then climbed from the gully up to the ridge and continued to descend. I came into the cloud belt but the clouds hung over the mountainside, instead of enveloping everything in fog. Finally the green timberline appeared below, and after a long and tedious descent of a narrow ridge thickly strewn with loose rocks, I approached the uppermost limits of vegetation. Amakihi became numerous at once, many were calling about. As I approached the forest, I heard a palila; its song resembling closely the canary-like song of the o-u, but not nearly as long.

The forest, a dry, dusty growth of mamani and naio, was quite dense in many places, though there was no underbrush. I had to detour frequently to find a way through. Birds were numerous, mostly amakihi. One apapane appeared, and I heard a few others, now and then a palila or two. The gulch had become very deep and canyon-like, with steep sides of tuff. It closely resembled the deep ravines on the sides of Koko Crater, on Oahu.

After a long descent, I finally walked out onto the plateau, and another half hour found me in the Camp.

September 15: Went down the west side of the mountain to the Waimea C.C.C. Camp; spent the next two days in waiting for the S.S. Humuula's arrival at the port of Kawaihae.

September 16: Down into the forests above Honokaa to hunt for birds reported there that resembled the mamo. I came into the fog belt, but did not see any birds there, I don't believe I would see any, no matter how long I stayed. The forest was in a sad, ruined state. Once an excellent ohia forest, it now was infested with foreign plants, and depleted of the native plants. No other native birds were seen.

September 17: Driven down to the Kawaihae dock, where I boarded the "Humuula", bound for home. But in the morning I had gone for a short walk over the fine Hamakua Ditch Trail, where there seems to be some of the finest mountain scenery in the islands. The trail passed round the heads of the precipitous canyons of Waipio valley. Grandeur scenery I have never laid my eyes upon - I was awestruck at the breathtaking beauty of canyons with gigantic cliffs, over 3,000 feet high, with a sheer drop. They were clothed in vivid, tropical greenery. The vegetation was peculiar - a stunted, dense jungle, not much higher than my head, composed of ohia, olapa, ahakea, pelea, and many other peculiar trees and plants. I saw no native birds; in fact very few birds of any kind were seen. Silence prevailed, broken only by the wind rushing up the chasms and over the slopes.

On returning to the camp, I turned off the ditch trail and followed a footpath over a low pass to the west of the large cone, Kaala. At the summit of the pass my attention



was caught by a strange bird whistle from a wooded valley to my left. I went over and attempted to locate the strange bird, but was unsuccessful. Its call was a series of long, ascending, plaintive whistles - a long one followed by two shorter ones. The whistling was highly ventroloquistic. At times the bird seemed to be right in front of me, and I expected it to come into view any moment. But the direction soon changed and the bird seemed to be far up the opposite slope. A waterpipe running up the bottom of the little valley formed an excellent "sounding board". The whistle often seemed to come from the pipe.

It seems quite probable that this whistling came from the throat of a rare drepanine bird. I know of no introduced bird now on this island that would have this strange, unfamiliar whistle in its repertoire. Also, it is possible that these whistlings came from the throat of the ulaaihawane, an exceedingly rare bird which has not been positively seen since 1900, though it is possible that Mr. George C. Munro saw it in these mountains in 1935. The whistle resembles somewhat that of the koa finch. But it is unlikely that this bird was a koa finch as that bird is found only in Kona, on the south side of Hualalai, and south of Kilauea, in Kau. However, this bird remains unidentified; the mystery will have to stand unsolved until perhaps some lucky bird enthusiast will see it and be able to erase from the much too long list of extinct species one more of our rare, indigenous birds.

(The end)

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NOTE: We are grateful to Mr. Donaghho for letting "The Elepaio" print his 1937 diary. It has been a pleasure to go over it with him. The latest news of Mr. Donaghho is that he is making use of his remarkable gift of imitating birds' whistlings. A movie production of birds in Africa is now his job. We hope to hear more news of his work.

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#### ANNOUNCEMENT:

Mr. C. M. Fennell, in Japan, has sent in an interesting paper, "The Birds of Mt. Fuji", by the Japanese ornithologist, Keisuke Kobayashi. This should be of special interest to bird lovers who have been, are, or hope to be in Japan and have a chance to visit the famous mountain. The paper will appear in installments in "The Elepaio", in 1952.

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#### REVIEWS:

Schwartz, Charles W. and Elizabeth Reedeer Schwartz. Food Habits of the Barred Dove in Hawaii. (Wilson Bulletin, 63(3):149-156, 1951)

The authors state that, "Of the nearly one hundred avian species introduced into the Hawaiian Islands since their discovery by the English explorer Cook in 1778, few have become established. Even fewer have increased as prolifically as has the Barred Dove (Geopelia s. striata), a native of Malaya. The successful establishment...doubtless related to its ability to breed the year around...and to feed upon a wide variety of plant foods." The bird was probably introduced from Australia in 1922, to all the main islands except Niihau and Hawaii, where it has now penetrated, perhaps by its own flight. Its habitat is below 4000 feet, most usually sea-level to 2000 feet. Nearly all types of land are used, except heavily forested areas of heavy rainfall; density up to 800 birds per square mile, or more.



These doves usually go about in pairs or family groups, not in flocks. Sometimes the feeding area is a few miles distant from nesting area, causing long flights to and fro. There is no competition for food between the Barred Dove and the also-introduced Lace-necked Dove. In general, the Barred Dove picks the smaller seeds, the dryness of which necessitates water drinking from pools, watering troughs, etc.

A detailed table of foods of the Barred Dove concludes the article, data gathered from crops and gizzards of 165 specimens, with a description of each plant from its food value aspect. Examination proves the bird's food to be almost wholly vegetable. Afternoon is the most active feeding time.

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Keast, J. A. Mutton-birds. (The Australian Museum Magazine, vol. 10(7): 211-214, 1951)

The author defines mutton-birds as "petrels which have been or are used for food." The history of the mutton-birds of Norfolk Island is given, "completely exterminated", after saving the hungry settlers in 1790 - a relief ship having failed to reach the place - and providing bird flesh in the next ten years in lesser amount. The Norfolk Island species was the Pterodroma melanopus. Other petrels and shearwaters are described, among them the wedge-tailed shearwater, with which we are familiar in Hawaii. "Along the coast of New South Wales the wedge-tailed shearwaters nest on a number of islands..."

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Allen, Elsa Guerdrum. The History of American Ornithology before Audubon (Trans. Am. Philosophical Soc., ns vol 41(3), 1951)

No mention of Hawaii.

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#### CONSERVATION DATA:

A clipping comes from New Zealand, "Annual War on Deer and Goats Starts Soon". It tells of "annual slaughter campaign...small parties of men at strategic points in the New Zealand-wide area of the Noxious Wild Animals Control Operational Districts... usually they work in pairs...exterminating animal pests which, left unchecked, do grave damage to native flora and fauna, to say nothing of high country and downland pastures... a campaign that must be waged unceasingly, for if the "war" was suspended, natural increases would soon see the country over-run again...In 1945-46, 8539 deer were shot during the season by Wild Life Branch personnel, but last year the total reached 31,794... In six years more than 151,000 deer were shot..."

Here is one loss in vegetation that Hawaii Island has not had to endure - yet; one expense the whole territory has not had to bear.

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Another clipping (Lee Hayden's "Press Agent Helps Billions - All Birds" in the Christian Science Monitor, Ag. 22, 1951) sent in by a friend tells of the excellent work of Ken Morrison, Director of Public Information for the National Audubon Society. The good results of his publicity in saving several species are told, and the article ends with a statement by Mr. Morrison, "What we're slowly and painfully learning is that nature's world is an interwoven patchwork and that pieces can't be snatched out hit-or-miss without weakening the whole fabric." (Hm! Do we have to think less vindictively of those robber frigate birds?) "The attitude the real conservationist



develops is one of cherishing each form of life for the job it is adapted by nature to do, even though parts of that function may be revolting to us - as when the hawk dives on a cardinal or the fox captures a pheasant." He says that conservation has come a long way since the National Audubon Society started its job 46 years ago. Youngsters collected birds' eggs with the same fervor that they now put into identifying and learning the habits of the common species. (quoted)

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NOTES FROM MIDWAY  
By Robert T. Sheehan

(Mr. Sheehan is generous in sharing his diary notes about birds, for which we are most grateful.)

October 18: The Bonin Island petrels began nesting October 16th, 59 days after their arrival at Midway. If my calculations are correct they should begin laying 26 October. Incidentally, it isn't sure that the wedge-tailed shearwater departs Midway before the Bonins nest. The wedge-tails are still very much with us; their chicks will take at least another month to fledge. The "goonies" are back. The black-foot scouts first appeared (one) 14 October; now there are four. This is earlier than last year.

October 20: Fourteen ducks flew over Sand Island at 100 feet elevation - in formation - headed southeast.

November 1: Black-foot returned in numbers 28 October. Laysan scout reported 28 October. Blackfoot already building nests and mating. Believe females are still in pro-oestrus stage.

November 6: While banding petrels one night two weeks ago, I heard a sound similar to, but not as loud as a woodpecker. It was a white tern in the ironwoods busily pecking away at a branch. The thought came to me that perhaps, just before laying the white tern might peck a depression in which to deposit its egg. The only trouble being that this isn't the season for eggs. I returned the next day and there was the tern incubating an egg. The egg appeared to be in the same spot that the tern was pecking the previous evening.

While watching the black-footed albatross yesterday afternoon, I came across the nest of a common noddy, Anous stolidus pileatus or unicolor. The nest was under a clump of Scaevola, with one egg. There were no common noddies nesting in the vicinity. Although I have observed a number of common noddies nesting on Eastern Island this is the first one I have seen on Sand Island.

November 7: Laysan albatross began arriving an hour before sunset.

November 26: Have had many interesting experiences watching the nests this year. Observed two black-foot actually laying eggs. One laid two eggs. Now have 40 nests under observation; observed two change-overs on incubating the eggs, one was seven days, the other eight days. In most instances the male is present when the egg is laid and acts the much worried husband. Adult tropic birds have departed; two of the young are now fledging.

December 7: My change-overs are running from six to twelve days. Have one male on the egg for 20 days.

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## FIELD TRIP:

On Sunday, December 9th, it was my great pleasure to go on a field trip of the Hawaii Audubon Society with Miss Grenville Hatch and seven others, one of whom was a visitor from Florida. Taking the road to Schofield Barracks, we passed the luxurious sugar cane fields, went through the town of Wahiawa, and then turned off onto a red dirt road through the precision-planted pineapple fields. Here we saw a number of Pacific golden plover, and a great many ricebirds, both new to me. It had rained early in the morning, but the weather was perfect as we parked the cars and started up the Poamoho trail. Birds here are less numerous and in variety and more elusive than those on the mainland, so there were some that were heard, such as the Liothrix, but not seen, much to my regret. However, to see the beautiful red apapane on the bare branch of a dead tree was an experience that I will never forget, and we saw not one but several.

I was delighted too with the friendly, chipper little elepaio which came in answer to a call and seemed so interested in watching us. There was a glimpse of an amakihi and the greenish white-eyes were here and there along the trail.

Not only was the sight of the birds rewarding but I also enjoyed the view of the distant mountains and the ocean and the peaceful beauty of the valleys and surrounding hills, the ferns and purple ground orchids, and many other interesting plants and trees, and last but not least the friendly companionship of those with me.

Varieties seen and heard (in open country): Golden plover, 9; Chinese dove, 9; Barred dove, 2; Ricebird, 113; Kentucky cardinal, 3.

Varieties seen and heard (on the trail): Amakihi, 12; Liothrix, 7; Apapane, 48; Elepaio, 5; Japanese tit, 2; White-eye, numerous.

(signed) Ethel M. Matheson  
Golden Gate Audubon Society

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## JANUARY ACTIVITIES:

FIELD TRIP: Sunday, January 13, 1952, to Kahuku. Meet at the Library of Hawaii at 8:00 a.m. Bring lunch, water, and car (if possible). This is a wonderful opportunity to study the migratory birds. If we are fortunate, we may see a bristle-thighed curlew.

MEETING: Monday, January 21, 1952, meet at the staff workroom of the Library of Hawaii, at 7:30 p.m. This will be a business meeting to discuss plans for the year. All interested members come with suggestions.

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## HAWAII AUDUBON SOCIETY OFFICERS:

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