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AUDUBON TOURS INVESTIGATED

At a meeting at the home of the President of the Hawaii Audubon Society, Miss Margaret Titcomb, on February 11, a group representing organizations of the community interested in conservation, nature study and related subjects, investigated the possibility of bringing to Hawaii some of the Audubon Tours prepared and sent out from the National Audubon Society. These Tours consist of moving pictures, with lecturers, on birds, plants, insects, conservation and a wide variety of nature subjects.

Many groups were invited to send representatives to this meeting and expressed a definite interest in the possibility of bringing the Tours here. While the representation at the meeting was disappointing, the interest of those present was considerable and it was decided that further investigation be made. Contact is to be made with still other groups and a report will be made in the near future.

BIRD STUDY MEETINGS INAUGURATED

At the January general meeting it was voted to start a series of bird study meetings. The first of these meetings took place on 7 February at the Library of the Bishop Museum.

Dr. Edwin H. Bryan, Curator of the Bishop Museum spoke at this study meeting on migratory birds. He had brought with him mounted specimens of migratory birds, including plover, turnstone, curlew, etc.

It was a spirited meeting because of the interested comment and general discussion following Dr. Bryan's speech.

The second Bird Study meeting was held at the Library of the Bishop Museum at 7:30 on the evening of February 26. Mr. Paul Porter lead the group choosing the seabirds for study. Dr. Bryan brought specimens of the birds. Interest in this study program continues to run high.

INCIDENTAL INFORMATION

A Zoologist at Northwestern University avers: "Birds migrate southward not because they get chilly, but because the diminishing sunshine alters the activity of their pituitary glands." ("Debunking expedition." Colliers, Mar. 12, 1949.)

TWO DISCOVERIES noted by Mr. George C. Munro follow: "Miss Bonsey's notes about the seabird nesting in cliffs (in the Elepaio) evidently refers to an important discovery: i.e. the nesting place of the Hawaiian Storm Petrel.

I wrote her begging her to make further investigations but she answers me from the mainland."

"Another important discovery is by Judge Carlson of Lanai. Last September at the air landing on Lanai he saw large numbers of plover landing near the airport. They were flying low evidently looking for a place to land among the pineapples. It will be fine if they make that place a regular landing."

An excerpt from the letter giving the information about the plover landing place says, "An article in the local paper several years ago described the comings and goings of the golden plovers here in Hawaii. It is known they come from the Aleutian Islands about 1,500 miles in the early fall, dressed in white vests and dark brown to black spotted coats and when they leave in the spring, around April, their feathers have changed to a speckled golden brown much like our island soil. Arthur happened to be waiting for me at the airport one day in September when large numbers of these long legged birds were arriving. In their flight they seemed to be utterly exhausted as they were coming in only a few feet above the ground. It looked as if they would drop and not be able to continue. However, they alighted on a large grassy area near the parking place. What an interesting spectacle - for he said the little things fairly drooped and staggered as they put down their landing gear. No wonder, after such a long arduous flight. One of the airport attendants said he had been watching this same event for several days as additional flocks returned her to spend the winter."

BLACK-FOOTED ALBATROSS, Diomedea nigripes Audubon. Incubation data on the Black-footed Albatross has been received as follows from Robert Sheehan on Midway Islands: "From the laying and hatching dates of 10 eggs the following information was obtained. Mean average incubation period 65.2 days. Minimum period 63 days 9 hours. Maximum period 67 days."

QUERY FROM A MEMBER: Is there any feed I can put in my bird feeding trays which will be attractive to birds and repugnant to rats, or is there any poison I could put out near or in the trays which would do away with the rats and not harm the birds? A cat would take care of the rat situation but probably not do the bird population much good. (Any helpful hints will be cheerfully forwarded by the editor.)

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THE BIRDS OF MT. FUJI.

(As related by Keisuke Kobayashi to C. M. Fennell)

The world famous Mt. Fuji is not only one of the scenic wonders of Japan but is, also, one of the finest birding areas in the whole country. It was here on the slopes of this ancient volcano that I was first instilled with my love for and interest in birdlife in general, when, as a boy, I accompanied my father on numerous visits to this region. My earliest recollections are filled with the songs of the Bush Warbler, the Brown Thrush, the Narcissus Flycatcher and the Blue Flycatcher as I heard them against a background of flaming wild azalea and lush green verdure. Ever since those early childhood days, I have made it a rule to visit Mt. Fuji every year during the summer season except when the economic conditions of Japan interfered during World War II and the period immediately following.

The most favorable place for bird observation on Mt. Fuji is located on the lower slopes of the mountain in the general vicinity of Subashiri, a small village lying at approximately the 2600 foot level. At this elevation the long lower slopes rise evenly and gradually and before the war they were covered with a fine stand of deciduous forest up to approximately 4300 feet, roughly covering the lowest third of the 12,395 foot peak. Scattered remnants of that forest still stand today and consist principally of two species of oak - konara (Quercus serrata) and kunugi (Quercus acutissima). However, during the war a great portion of this zone was unfortunately destroyed in order to provide lumber and fuel. As a direct result, the more deep-forest loving birds, such as the Brown Thrush, White's Ground Thrush, Siberian Bluechat, and Hondo Great Spotted Woodpecker decreased in numbers along with the disappearance of the trees. In turn, the open plain and shrub-zone forms, such as the Bush Warbler, the Japanese Bunting, the Grey-headed Bunting and the Japanese Stonechat, along with their parasitic followers, the Little Cuckoo and Japanese Cuckoo, moved in to fill the faunal gap.

Two other characteristic species found in this particular life zone are Latham's Snipe and the national bird of Japan, the kiji or Green Pheasant. To observe the dramatic aerial courtship performance of the former is one of the great thrills of any bird lover's life, while the sudden burst of a cock pheasant flushed from the vegetation directly in front of one, and its long graceful glide down the mountainside, makes one fairly stop short in his tracks for sheer surprise and joy.

As one ascends the mountain along the gently graded cinder trail, coniferous growth gradually begins to replace the broad-leafed vegetation, until finally, at the First Station, approximately four miles above Subashiri and at the 4300 foot elevation, large magnificent specimens of momi (Abies firma) and toga (Tsuga sieboldii) completely dominate the area. The undergrowth at this point is comprised mainly of large ferns or oshida(Dryopteris crassirhizoma), maizuruso (Majanthemum bifolium), gozentachibana, (Cornus canadensis), and tsubamemoto (Clintonia udensis).

Naturally, the avifauna of this zone is quite different from that of the deciduous belt. The song of the meboso or Winhoe's Willow Warbler is most commonly heard, although the bird itself is not easily observed among the tangle of dead fallen trees, branches and undergrowth. Actually it is the most common species in this lower portion of the sub-alpine zone. Other species commonly frequenting this coniferous belt, which lies between the First and Second Stations between 4300 and 6500 feet elevation, are the Japanese Wren, the Siberian Blue-tail and the Siberian Flycatcher.

In the vicinity of the Second Station at 6500 feet elevation, the momi(fir) and toga(hemlock) noticeably decrease in height and are well mixed in with the shrub-like miyamahannoki (Alnus maximowiczii), nanakamado (Sorbus commixta), okamenoki (Vibrunum furcatum) and shakunage (Rhododendron metternichii). This shrub zone, which extends for approximately one thousand feet above the Second Station, is still heavily covered with snow till the middle or end of June. However, during July and August, well after the birds on the lower slopes of the mountain have completed their domestic duties, the Hedge-Sparrow, Goldcrest, and Bullfinch arrive to nest and rear their young in this highest portion of the sub-alpine zone. The hoshigarasu or Japanese Nutcracker is also believed to nest in this scrub belt, since young birds have been observed here. However, to date, not a single nest with eggs or young has been found in all Japan.

From the 7200 foot level to the summit of the cone lies the true alpine zone characterized by a low, creeping growth of fujihatazao (Arabis serrate), murasakimomenzuru (Astragalus adsurgens), and ontade (Polygonum weyrichii). During July and August, only the Alpine Accentor, House Martin and amatsubame or Large White-rumped Swift are to be found in this high open landscape. The first species nests on the ground among piles of loose rock while the other two prefer the sides of rocky cliffs facing the deep canyons which gouge the steep upper slopes of the peak.

Briefly, this is a general idea of the distribution of the avifauna of Mt. Fuji during the nesting season.

This year(1951) I returned again to Mt. Fuji to the vicinity of Subashiri for the purpose of once again studying and observing bird life of the district. The following is an account of that visit and observations made between the 25th and the 28th of May.

Early in the morning of the 25th I arrived at the Hotel Yoneyama in the village of Subashiri and was ushered into the very same room in which my father and I stayed some thirty years ago when I accompanied him to Mt. Fuji for the very first time. My father then was just about my present age and I was approximately the same size as my eldest daughter is today. Generations change but the timeless form of Mt. Fuji, viewed from the window of the hotel, stood ageless and everlasting in the morning sun and the snows mantled its symmetrical cone in seemingly the same pattern as they did thirty years ago.

On the tip-top branch of a large cryptomeria tree standing in the back yard of the hotel a single male Blue Flycatcher or oruri perched and proclaimed his domain in characteristic song, the brilliant azure blue of his upper parts scintillating in the bright sunlight. In the front yard of the hotel a shijukara or Great Tit was busily carrying moss for the lining of a nest it had constructed in a bird box conveniently placed in a nearby fir tree. Overhead an Ashy Minivet flew in undulatory flight calling his bouncing "Heer'it, heer'it, heer'it-heer'it, heer'it-heer'it! " The call of a Greenfinch was heard from

the cryptomeria forest surrounding the Sengen Shrine nearby while a Grey Thrush and a Davison's Ground Thrush were offering a most fitting antiphonal duet.

After breakfast I started out, with Mr. Takeo Takada as my guide, for the top of a small ridge jutting off the main lower slopes of the mountain and known as Dainichido. Mr. Takada's father was at one time a very famous bird collector and guide in Japan and was once employed by Rothschild's well-known businessman-collector, Alan Owston. He, later, also collected considerably for my own late father. Takeo Takada has followed well in his father's footsteps and is also an excellent guide. Generations pass and today the sons climb the same ancient slopes of the sacred mountain in the same pursuit that lured their fathers many years ago.

As we entered the trail, the songs of the uguisu or Bush Warbler were on every hand coming from the wide expanses of thick, shrubby undergrowth that stretched all around us.

The Little Cuckoo, which chiefly employs the uguisu as its foster parent, is also, as one would normally expect, a common species in this area. Indeed, the cuckoo family is well represented in the vicinity of Mt. Fuji and all four species (Japanese, Little, Hawk and Himalayan) found in Japan, are also found on the slopes of Fuji-san. The Little Cuckoo is the most famed species of the family in Japan, having been heralded throughout the ages by the most gifted and inspired of the country's poets and even in the present day holds a revered place among the avian choristers. Although the Little Cuckoo primarily parasitizes the uguisu, after the end of June, when the Bush Warbler has finished nesting, the Little Cuckoo also lays its eggs in the nest of the Japanese Wren above the 4300 foot elevation. It is generally believed that the Little Cuckoo employs the uguisu as a foster parent, since the eggs of both species are of the same darkish red color. However, the eggs of the Japanese Wren are white in contrast. This leads me to believe that the size factor rather than the similarity of the color of the eggs may determine the choice of the foster parent. The fact that the size of the egg of the Little Cuckoo is quite small in comparison to the body size of the bird may tend to confirm this opinion.

The most common species of the cuckoo family in this area, as well as the most common species in all Japan, is the kakko or Japanese Cuckoo. This is the bird which is so well known the world over for its characteristic two-syllable call and which has given the entire family its name. On Mt. Fuji it parasitizes the Meadow Bunting, the Grey-headed Bunting and the Bull-headed Shrike.

The juichi or Hawk Cuckoo and Himalayan Cuckoo are, also, fairly common on Mt. Fuji. The former imposes its eggs upon the Siberian Bluechat and the Blue Flycatcher, while the latter thrusts its domestic cares upon the sendai mushikui or Temminck's Crowned Willow Warbler.

To be continued

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REPORT ON FIELD TRIP OF FEBRUARY 10th

It was a pleasure to welcome to our group on Sunday morning, February 10th, Mr. and Mrs. Wallenberg of Fort Worth, Texas, as well as Mrs. Mattison and Mrs. Rhodes.

We were nine Bird Walkers eager for a trip over the Pomoaho trail. However, the nearer we came to the entrance to the trail the more certain we were that our plans needed to be changed because of the rain. After a consultation huddle we turned the cars about and headed for Kahuku, which seemed a logical destination inasmuch as our seminar on the previous Thursday had been on shore birds.

We alerted numerous Pacific Golden Plover as we approached the abandoned landing strip. A few turnstones took to wing also, but the Bristle Thighed Curlew was too elusive. Our final count, according to this recorder, was 107 Golden Plover, 5 Turnstones, 6 Chinese Doves, 10 Barred Doves, 4 Kentucky Cardinals, and 1 Amakihi was heard at a road-side stop.

It might be added that a return trip to this area on Sunday, February 17th, indicated the cessation of the "hot-rod" operations, by order of the Campbell Estate to whom this area belongs. We trust the birds have been notified and will again frequent the area. Also, we saw one Curlew in addition to numerous Plovers, Tattlers and Turnstone(this was not a Bird Walk, hence no count was kept). On our return to Honolulu we saw one Skylark at Wheeler Field.

Ruth R. Rockafellow

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MARCH ACTIVITIES

FIELD TRIP: Sunday March 9th, 1952, to the Kaneohe-Ulupau Head area, probably. Meet at Libary of Hawaii, at 8:00 A.M. We shall be after shore birds somewhere.

MEETING: Monday, St. Patrick's Day! Auditorium, Library of Hawaii, at 7:30 P.M. Mr. Paul Porter will show the slides--most of them of Midway birds--donated to the slide treasury by the generous Dr. Alfred M. Bailey, Director of the Denver Natural History Museum, who promises to renew his acquaintance with us in August when he is to pass through Honolulu.

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