

# THE ELEPAIO

Journal of the  
Hawaii Audubon Society



For the Better Protection  
of Wildlife in Hawaii

Volume 13, Number 10

April 1953

## JOURNAL OF THE 1938 LINE ISLAND EXPEDITION

By Walter Donaggho  
(concluded)

August 1, continued: I noticed large black skinks about the trunks of several coconut palms, and started trying to catch them, the boys also setting in when they found what I was after. There was also a larger lizard that resembled a monitor, brown on the back, yellow on the belly; it ran up the trunk of a palm. I tried to catch it but it escaped among the stems and trash of the crown, where there was a second lizard. One of the boys went up after it, hoping to scare it out, but had no luck. I procured a skink, however, and went on up the valley, through open pastures. Several sunken pools marked the course of the valley's stream, and in them I collected dragonflies. I scared up a pair of Samoan teal from one of them. (Samoan teal closely related to the Hawaiian duck)

The boys did not seem to be finding any trail for me, and it was getting late, so I turned back, as I had spent some time in the valley and had to be ready to catch the Leone bus to the Station.

August 2: This day I decided I would go over the Pago Pago pass and visit the village of Fagasa on the other side. The morning was a fine one and the road bustled with activity. Samoans were going to and from the Station, groups of boys were swimming just offshore. One Samoan carrying two calabashes suspended from the ends of a shoulder yoke demanded twenty-five cents for posing for a picture!

After leaving Pago Pago, I passed the ruins of the old church that had been destroyed by a severe hurricane a few years ago. A new church had replaced it, nearby.

The road led on up the valley, soon becoming a trail that wound in and out through coconut and banana plantations and finally plunged into the forest. The vine-covered trees of the open glades teemed with insects. I spent some time there, improving my collection. Very large and beautiful tree ferns were common, many as high as the coconut palms below--twenty feet and over. Many Samoans were on the trail, all going to Pago Pago. All gave pleasant greetings. On the ridge, the son of the chief of Fagasa came along.

The trail descended rapidly through thick jungle, and then through coconut plantations into the village below. Here was an unspoiled Samoan village, Alas, it was marred by a much too large white church. Many children played about in the clearing before the church. (Samoans are fond of children and have many of them) The only other frame structure was, presumably, the minister's house. The chief had a large house, next to a larger community house in the clearing opposite the church. Other homes were scattered about under the breadfruit trees. The large bay was edged with a beautiful sand beach.



A Samoan boy met me and offered to show me around. We went down the bay to another small cluster of houses. Having found out what I wanted, he recruited several other boys for a lizard hunt. In a coconut grove, we caught several skinks. He led me further, through taro patches and breadfruit groves to a clearing where other boys were roasting breadfruit in some coals. Taking one out and breaking it open with a hand-carved wooden adze, he gave me a half. I dipped it into some coconut sauce in a coconut shell and enjoyed the feast.

Soon I returned to Pago Pago and to the Station, where the Fita Fita Guard were marching in a review. They looked very smart, with much snap to their maneuvers.

All day long, Samoans came out to the "Taney" in their canoes, to sell mats, tapa, hula skirts, and hand carved models of canoes and war clubs... We sailed from Tutuila that evening:

August 3: Dawn found us approaching the small islands of Ofu and Olosega, in the Manu'a group, American Samoa. Ofu is about 1500 feet in height, Olosega is a very steep, high peak rising over 2000 feet out of the sea. The north and south sides of the peak are very precipitous, terminating in a knife-like ridge. The east side is less steep and is covered with a good forest. It levels out near the shore, giving room for a coconut grove. Passing Olosega Island, the larger, higher island of Tau came into view. This is a single mountain, over 3000 feet high, with steep sides; it is more or less level on top. The sides are covered with a luxuriant jungle.

We approached the island and anchored off a small bay, around which nestled a small village. The bay was framed with high tuff cliffs, which shut it off. A trail ran along the cliffs from the east, however. Several Samoans came out to meet us in canoes before we reached our anchorage. Soon after anchoring, a large longboat, with a Samoan crew at the oars, their rhythm beaten by the coxswain on a tin gasoline can, pulled alongside, whereupon the officers and guests of the "Taney" piled in and were rowed away. They were invited to a mammoth feast given in their honor by the High Chief Tofele, who resided in a large village on the other side of the bluffs behind the bay.

I went in on one of the boats, and at the shore found a Samoan village unspoiled even by a church. Many Samoans here did not speak English... I came across one old man hewing out a canoe with an adze which was a flat piece of flint fastened to a handcarved wooden handle. Another group of Samoans were thatching a roof of coconut palm fronds...

The trail that led out of this landlocked bay passed along the foot of the tuff cliffs, through forests of hala and other plants, skirted a smaller bay with a beautiful beach, then climbed up along the cliff. A Samoan boy carrying a bunch of bananas offered me a couple. Farther on I met an old man who asked me if I wanted a drink of coconut milk. Before I had a chance to answer, he started down the trail, beckoning me to follow. Turning off into a side trail, we entered a small grove. Here he climbed a tree and broke off a coconut. After descending, he cracked it open on a sharp point and handed it to me. I proceeded to drain it of its sweet contents. I don't believe there are many other people as hospitable as the Samoans. They do everything they can to make the visitor's stay as pleasant as possible, without the slightest urging...

Returning to the main trail, I followed it on, coming down the bluffs and passing through cool coconut groves which rang with the notes of the iao bird. Fruit doves boomed from forest recesses not far distant, and I heard strange bird notes, high and sweet. The beautiful bright red, green and blue shapes flying about among the palms turned out to be parakeets. Other birds seen were swiftlets, and one kingfisher, seen in the forest about the little bay, I also noted a fuia.



As evening approached, the longboat from the main village returned, and the "Taney" prepared to leave. A fruit bat flew about above the bluffs as the "Taney" sailed out of the little bay. Night found us cruising along the north coast of Tau, bound for Rose Island.

August 4: We stood off Rose Island at dawn this morning. The island is a small atoll, with two small sand islets. Seemingly out of place on one of the otherwise barren and desolate islets, was a grove of large buka trees.

The "Taney's" launch passed through the narrow channel and crossed the lagoon, dodging numerous coral heads, to the larger of the islets. Many frigate birds flew above, though I did not find any nesting on the island. We were surprised, upon landing, to find a large cement monument erected near the grove of trees with an inscription, NO TRESPASSING! It emphasized the unpardonable offense of trespassing on a desert island, and disclosed the names of the owners of the island.

Birds were not uncommon on the island. I found several brown boobies nesting, and several red-footed boobies frequented the buka trees. Among the trees was a colony of sooty terns; white terns also frequented the trees. Mr. Bryan noted a blue reef heron.

We stayed only an hour. Passing through the channel, we let out a fishing line and trolled, catching several fish. The fishing stopped as soon as we had cleared the channel.

August 5: Sighted and came to off Puka Puka, or Danger Island, this afternoon. Here was another beautiful coral atoll, with a lagoon of the most delicate coloring. We anchored off the main island, Puka Puka. The two other islands, Motu Kotava, and Motu Kou, are at the other points of the triangle that makes up the atoll.

No sooner had the "Taney" anchored than boats of the islanders put out for us with articles of trade. The islanders themselves were not as picturesque as those of Atafu, for here they wore ordinary clothes. Among the many articles they had to sell were hat bands of cowry shells. Worth about eight dollars in Honolulu, they traded them here for a few bars of soap!

August 6: Arrived off our last island this morning--Jarvis--the largest of the equatorial islands that we visited. It is about two by two and a half miles, and is quite barren, save for a very scanty growth of portulaca. The interior is a large, dry lagoon, surrounded by a ridge that encircles the island. There was a large flat seep near the center, which was quite boggy in places.

Upon landing, Mr. Munro set out to the north along the wide coastal ridge, which was covered with flat coral slabs. This was an excellent nesting area for bosun birds and we spent much time banding them here. Continuing on, we approached the north end of the island where the coastal ridge was covered with tufty grass. Here there were large colonies of sooty terns which were in the egg-laying and chick-bearing period. What a great number of chicks! They literally covered the ground in places. Frigate birds hovered over the colonies, waiting a chance to swoop down and grab an unsuspecting chick to make a meal of it. The terns on their eggs were unusually courageous, it being easy to approach right up to them. They hovered over their eggs, glaring at us, scolding us, beating their wings violently. Others swooped right down to our heads, and we caught some of these, banding several. We crossed the salt flats to the other side of the island and found a small colony of red-footed boobies nesting on the ground at one spot. No trees were available, so they had to be content with the ground. Many grey noddies frequented



the edges of the flats. All of them flocked over to get a glimpse of us as we passed through. There were more here than I had seen anywhere else.

Blue-faced boobies nested here and there over the plains, and there were small, scattered colonies of frigate birds. But the birds were not nearly as numerous as on Howland and Enderbury.

Coming to the east point of the island, I noticed several burrows in a sandy stretch of ground. Reaching down into one of them, my hand came in contact with some tail feathers. Grabbing them and pulling, I dragged out a wedge-tailed shearwater.

I walked alone down the east beach of the island, Mr. Munro having returned to camp. Many brown boobies sat on the rocks here and there. I came to the wreck of an old sailing vessel on the beach near the south end of the island--which was the wreck of the "Amaranth". The two halves of the broken vessel lay end to end, with much wreckage scattered about.

The rim along the southeastern side of the island was covered with a jumble of coral slabs... (unfinished)

The End

#### ARRIVAL AND DEATH OF A PHALAROPE

One evening in February I had the thrilling experience of adding to my limited knowledge of ornithology when I was called to identify a bird which had been found in my neighborhood, Waikiki. I learned it had been found about 11 o'clock in the morning squatting under and near the front tire of a parked car on Kalia Road. It missed being cat-bait by a narrow margin when it was discovered. At first glance it resembled a sanderling. However, I could not be sure for I had never held a live sanderling in my hand for close observation. The feet were lobed like those of a Coot; its bill was long and broad for the size of the bird; its coloring was predominantly white with mottled brown spots; the breast feathers were dense rather than thick, similar to those of a duck; the neck was not very long and the entire bird not over 6 or 7 inches long (I did not measure it). The bird had wounds, not fresh, on the back of its head and neck; however, it did not seem to be incapacitated. It was very weak, no doubt from lack of food. Because it was not a cage bird I decided that to keep it was too great a problem, so I called Mr. Breese of the Zoo, he accepted the task of caring for it, and the bird was quickly delivered into his keeping. Unfortunately it did not survive the night, but inasmuch as it was in good condition, its skin will be mounted for future use at the zoo.

Mr. Breese and Munro later identified the bird as a red phalarope (Phalaropus fulicarius Linnaeus), an adult in changing plumage.

(see page 141 of BIRDS OF HAWAII by George C. Munro)

It is generally surmised that prevailing sea winds brought the bird to our shore and, as mentioned by Mr. Munro, "This bird has been reported on several islands. One was given me at Makaweli, Kauai, in November 1896. During 1941 a number were seen to have migrated here. Four at least were picked up dead on the windward coast of Oahu. All were preserved as specimens and were found to be very thin though in good feather. It would seem that they cannot find the sustenance they require in our waters and die of starvation!

Ruth R. Rockafellow



## BIRD WALK, February 22, 1953

Despite the early hour of 7o'clock, a group of 20 gathered under the Monkey Pod tree at the Library of Hawaii, six of the number being children.

The weather seemed very dubious so we decided to cancel the Poamoho trail walk and make a study of shore birds instead.

We were granted entre to the Kaneohe Marine Base and found the boobies (Sula sula rupides) had built nests and were hesitant to leave them. However, we were unable to see any eggs. The numbers nesting seemed about equally distributed between Ulupau Head and Moku Manu.

We covered the usual bird haunts at this military base and were rewarded with the following count for the trip:

Brazillian Cardinals	6	White Eye	4
Kentucky	11	Chinese Doves	15
Pacific Golden Plover	21	Boobies (red footed)	1,000 more or less
Hawaiian Stilt	24	" Brown	1
Pintail ducks	16	Frigate birds	15
Black Crowned Night Heron	6	Hawaiian terns	4
Tattlers	4	Coots	21
Turnstone	13	Rice Birds	7

Ruth R. Rockafellow, Leader

## BIRD WALK, March 7, 1953

At 8:30, a group of sixteen members and friends left the Library of Hawaii meeting place bound for Kamehameha School grounds where we parked and then journeyed along the ridge trail mauka of the school. The skies were clear and the air delightfully cool.

Mr. Thomas McGuire pointed out plants and trees along the trail, and told of their uses, as well as informing us as to whether they were native or introduced.

Numerous birds were in the vicinity, as our ears could note. We had good chances to observe the elepaio and its markings. Mace Norton had an Audubon bird call instrument, and the elepaio's curiosity brought it very close in order to see from where the sounds came.

The bird count was as follows:

Elepaio	14	Rice bird	4
Chinese thrush	1	Kentucky cardinal	1
Amakihi	8	Apapane	10
Liothrix	17	Brazilian cardinal	1
White Eye	21	Golden plover	1

Catherine Eastman, Leader



## APRIL ACTIVITIES

## FIELD TRIPS:

April 12th. To Wiliwilinui trail, which is the town side of Wailupe. We have never been on this trail, and look forward to new territory and new sights. Meet at the Library of Hawaii at 8:30 a.m. Mr. Thomas McGuire, leader.

April 26th. To Aiea trail. This is a short, easy trail, which we will cover in a leisurely fashion, refreshing our memories on the plants which Mr. McGuire pointed out in December. Meet at the Library of Hawaii, at 7:00 a.m.

## MEETING:

April 20th. Our last meeting, was so enjoyable that it was decided to repeat the pattern, with each bringing picnic supper. We shall meet this time at the home of Miss Irma Botsford, 2108 Oahu Avenue, at 6:00 p.m. Take the Punahou-University bus, get off at Maile Way, and walk one block to Oahu. After supper the regular meeting will be held, the amakihi being the subject of study. Mr. E. H. Bryan brings study skins, and all participate in the discussion. If you can't come for supper, come at 7:30 for the meeting!

HAWAII AUDUBON SOCIETY OFFICERS: President, Miss Grenville Hatch; Vice-Presidents, Mr. Mace Norton, Miss Margaret Titcomb; Secretary, Mrs. Ruth R. Rockafellow; Treasurer, Mrs. Blanche A. Pedley.

EDITOR, THE ELEPAIO: Miss Margaret Titcomb.

ADDRESS ALL MAIL TO P.O.BOX 5032, PAWAA STATION, HONOLULU 14, HAWAII.