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AFOOT AND AFIELD IN HAWAII (from Hilo Tribune Herald, Dec. 17, 1950)

Sometimes the nicest experiences come by surprise and moments one treasures in memory arrive when one least expects them. Thus, while travelling past the large fishponds that skirt Kalaniana'ole Ave., the writer was suddenly aware of a large bird like an overgrown plover with long legs and a long bill curved downwards, searching for food in the short grass by the edge of one of the ponds.

If the bird had kept still or if the grass had not been so green or if the bird had not been outlined against the water now and then as he restlessly foraged for insects and other small creatures, he would have escaped notice; for his mottled light gray, tan brown, and black plumage blended perfectly with the coloring of dead grass, old woods and gravel.

Later observations confirmed that this bird was a curlew, probably the kioka or bristle-thighed curlew once fairly common during the winter months in Hawaii but now rare here.

The Hawaiian name is probably, as is common with native bird names, an attempt to render its cry in human speech. The English name refers to the stiff bristle-like feathers which the bird grows on the upper parts of its legs. The scientific name, Numenius tahitiensis, or Tahitian curlew, has interesting history according to the eminent ornithologist, Dr. Arthur A. Allen ("The Curlew's Secret", National Geographic Magazine, Dec. 1948).

Approximately once in a hundred years the planet Venus makes a tiny eclipse or transit across the face of the sun. The Royal Society, a scientific organization in England, wished to have data of the transit of 1796 recorded from the South Pacific, among other places, so secured the cooperation of the British government to have this and other scientific data obtained from Tahiti while Captain Cook was making his journey of exploration of the Pacific Ocean area for the government.

While the astronomers were busy with the observations, and Captain Cook and his group were establishing friendly trading relations with the natives, Sir Joseph Banks, the naturalist of the party, collected natural history specimens, among them the bristle-thighed curlew.

Dr. John Latham, the ornithologist who checked the bird specimen afterwards in England saw that this was a new species of curlew and named it the Tahitian curlew.

Today the kioea is no longer abundant anywhere in the world, nor has it been numerous for a long time, though on some Pacific islands it is much more abundant than on any of the major islands of the Hawaiian group, with the possible exception of Niihau.

Dr. Henshaw claimed that it was uncommon on most of the Hawaiian islands as long ago as the 1890's. George C. Munro states in his Birds of Hawaii that, "I heard its unmistakable cry only on Molokai and Kauai but found it not uncommon on Niihau in November, 1939."

The scarcity of the species partly explains why the nest, eggs and young of this bird were the last to be made known to science of all the birds known to nest in North America.

In 1948 a special expedition under the leadership of Dr. Allen made an airplane survey of the parts of Alaska considered to be the most likely nesting places for this species. In a thorough search of a finally close limited area the nest and later the young were found, studied and beautifully photographed, for these particular birds had not known man and had no fear of him.

The nest was a shallow depression in the tundra grasses and lichens. The four dirty looking eggs, almost as large as pullet eggs, were so blotched with varying shades of brown as to be almost invisible against the tundra. The same was true of the cute downy chicks after they hatched.

No one knows why the nesting area should be so limited in size when the rest of the tundra looks equally suitable for the kioea to use. Neither does anyone know why the kioea should be so scarce when other species of birds with similar habits are plentiful, especially as the kioea is more omnivorous in its food habits than some of these more abundant species.

Though formerly on the game bird list, it is now protected by law and has for long been so seldom seen here by hunters that it was rarely shot on the Hawaiian islands. Most of its range covers islands so remote that hunters do not go there, so hunting is not the major reason for its disappearance.

Still, the kioea is not nearing extinction. As knowledge of its needs and habits increase, perhaps something can be done to get it to increase or at least to maintain itself in its present numbers.

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OUR MIGRATORY BIRDS

By George C. Munro.

Study of the Pacific Golden Plover in Kapiolani Park continues. In Volume 12, no.3, of "Elepaio", I tell of seeing no plover after April 5, 1951. They had migrated for their breeding season in the Arctic. On their return none were seen till August 10 and very few till the 12th, when among others Moki and Melo, the pair differing in size were seen. The other two pairs that were under observations till they migrated also returned bringing others with them, probably younger birds. The old hands then all disappeared evidently going on farther south while the new birds stayed on. Their different action in flight, distinguished them from the old lot. The new birds took up the old beats but changed

or widened them considerably and had not settled down definitely before they migrated. I saw no evidence of young birds arriving in the park in September, as when Moki and Melo appeared in 1949. That pair appeared again on April 20, shortly before the migration, the difference in size could be seen when they were on the wing but I did not see them again to recognize them.

Early in April they began to collect, especially in the evenings, at the north end of the polo field where water lies after storms; twenty could be counted there. My wife Jessie counted thirty there one day. She was out in the evening of May 3 and saw eight. Few were seen after that, two on the 4th, and one on the 5th, and none since. An observer on the east side of the island did not see any after the end of April. It will be interesting if there is evidence that the same birds return with the August migration.

A curious incident was observed on November 4 in the evening. I had been interested in watching a single bird that after their arrival in August had taken up a very small beat enclosed by a recent plantation of flowering trees. When disturbed it consistently alighted on this small area. On this occasion there were two birds and one was trying to herd the other off the locality. They were going constantly, one following closely on the tail of the other. When they reached the pavement where cars were parked on the road beside it, the pursued bird took wing and flew to the other side of the plot. The other followed sometimes darting at it while they flew. There was no attempt at attack or fighting while on the ground. This was repeated without variation for a considerable time while we watched them. We went on as far as the polo field and on our return they were still carrying on. It seemed as if another bird was trying to drive off the occupant which was determined to stay with its claim. We watched them for some time and when we left they were still keeping it up. Next morning there was no bird there but in the evening when I passed again, one bird was standing near the pavement and shortly sat down in the grass which is quite unusual for these birds in the park. Another was off at a little distance, standing still. Both were evidently exhausted. As far as I could see neither took up the beat again and the area was taken as part of a large area used by another pair which sometimes had another with it. It may be that some of the birds changed during the season but there was evidence that some stayed right through till the migration back to the mainland.

In October 1950 while the Munros and Carlsons of Lanai were picnicking on the beach on the east side of the island, between the limestone promontory and seaward end of Maunalei valley, some shore birds were on the beach a short distance away. According to these good observers there were five or six adults and twelve young birds. The young ones were fearless and would come close to get the food thrown to them but the old birds called them back. One little fellow disregarded the warning and kept on its way, whereupon the old birds flew ahead of it and drove it back. It was the opinion of the picnickers that the young birds were scarcely able to fly and could not have migrated from the Arctic where they breed. However, they eventually flew towards the land.

As near as I can make out from the description given, the birds were wandering tattlers (*Heterocelus incanus*). As told in "Elepaio", Volume 12, No. 3,

we knew that large numbers of migratory birds landed at the Lanai airport last September. It may be that those birds had lately landed on Lanai and were still tired from their long flight. Also that in flying towards the land they were heading for the west coast of Lanai where it is rocky and better suited for the wandering tattler than the east side. If they were wandering tattlers it is unlikely that they were bred on Lanai, though that is possible. There is plenty of open country though not so extensive or as well provided with food as the tundras of the Arctic during the summer.

If the migratory shore birds make the lawn of the Lanai airport one of their landing places on Lanai next August and September and the Board of Agriculture and Forestry take up banding there we may obtain much valuable information not available before.

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CAUTION IN INSECTICIDE USE CAN AVERT HEAVY WILDLIFE TOLL.

(From Audubon Newsletter No. 4, May 1952)

Widespread damage to birds and other wildlife can take place unless DDT and other insecticides are used with caution, the National Audubon Society warns.

John H. Baker, president of the Society, pointed out that applications of DDT during the nesting season have resulted in extensive mortality of young birds. He cited an article in the May-June issue of Audubon Magazine which describes the effects on birdlife of spraying 600 acres in Pennsylvania with five pounds of DDT in oil per acre. Before spraying, the population was 3.2 birds per acre or 128 on a 40-acre study plot. On the third day following spraying only two birds could be found in the 40 acres.

Studies on a 30-acre tract in Maryland revealed that after spraying with five pounds of DDT per acre, a heavy application, the population of birds decreased rapidly. Maryland yellow-throats were reduced 63 per cent in the first 24 hours, prairie warblers were decreased by 93 per cent two days after spraying. The three commonest songbirds in the area were down in numbers by 80 per cent.

As a result of numerous surveys, the National Audubon Society recommends that spraying of insecticides should, if possible, be done before and after the major nesting season of birds. The Society said that in cases where this had been done, harmful effects on wildlife have been reduced materially. The Society also cited Fish and Wildlife Service research which indicates that administration of DDT in oil is three times as deadly as when mixed with dry crystalline powder.

Mr. Baker stated that much of the damage which insecticides have inflicted upon wildlife has been the result of carelessness. He added, "Some operators have assumed that, if a low concentration of an insecticide is regarded as sufficient to do the job, a high concentration should do it better. Research so far indicates that most light dosages of insecticides, such as one-fifth pound of DDT per acre, or less, have had little measurable effect upon birds or mammals though great adverse effect on fresh-water and marine life as well as most insect life; therefore, indirectly on birds and mammals, including man."

The article by Dr. J. P. Linduska in Audubon Magazine makes it clear the various kinds of wildlife react differently to insecticides. Fish are the most susceptible to poison, reptiles and amphibians come next, followed by birds, then mammals, which are the most resistant of all. It is also stated that certain birds are more resistant than others. Starlings and mallard ducks are more than three times as resistant to DDT as quail.

The National Audubon Society is particularly concerned about the host of "super bug killers" which are coming on the market. It pointed out, for example, that the organic phosphates includes chemicals which are 75 to 100 times as deadly as DDT. The Society stated, "The increasing deadliness of the chemicals now being developed for control purposes makes it more important than ever that extreme caution be exercised in the use of such poisons in the out-of-doors. Carelessness can cause mistakes which may take a severe toll of our wildlife resources. Conservationists must be alert to the new dangers which face wildlife in a chemical world."

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BIRD SONGS ON NBC NETWORK. Since Sunday, July 13, National Audubon Society has presented a weekly radio program titled "SONGS OF THE WILD", over the NBC network. It can be heard every Sunday from 11:45 am to 12 noon EDT through Sept. 28. The series is based on the famous Cornell recordings and the commentaries are furnished by Rea King, radio and television consultant for the Society. Members whose radios can pick up mainland stations will enjoy the broadcast and can probably also pick up the program, recorded, at other times.

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"WATER BIRDS", A Walt Disney true-life adventure in print by Technicolor, has been released. Alive with excitement, beauty and rare glimpses into the behavior of seaside and marshland feathered creatures, Walt Disney's most spectacular True-Life Adventure, "Water Birds," is the fifth presentation in the amazing series of wildlife studies that have won acclaim the world over. As with the preceding films in the group - the Academy Award Winners, "Seal Island", "Beaver Valley," and "Nature's Half Acre," and the recently released "The Olympic Elk," - this latest behind-the-scenes revelation of nature's wonders is completely authentic and no human life is shown. Representing three years of patient effort by sixteen noted American naturalist-photographers, and the cooperation of the American Audubon Society and the Denver Museum of Natural History, the awe-inspiring story is beautifully dramatized and the action highlighted by a striking musical score climaxing in a thrilling bird ballet of the air.

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THE 9,000,000th member has been enrolled in the Audubon Junior clubs. Nancy Lee Bliss of Bedford Hills, N. Y. hit the 9,000,000 mark when she joined an Audubon Club in the sixth grade at her local school. These clubs, of which there are now about 10,000 in North America, have been enrolling boys and girls since 1910 when they were founded by the National Audubon Society. They are formed in all grades from kindergarten through high-school, and in scout troops, summer camps, Sunday schools and neighborhood groups. Audubon Junior Clubs

includes in their scope all branches of nature and conservation. They study plants, insects, mammals, aquatic life, etc., as well as birds, and learn about soil erosion and forest conservation, because we cannot conserve wildlife without making sure that its habits is in good condition. We have no Audubon Junior Clubs (that the editor knows of - it would be delightful to be proved wrong in this matter!) but we could certainly make a start by enrolling more junior members in the Hawaii Audubon Society.

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JULY FIELD TRIP: The morning of Sunday, July 13th, was not the most ideal one for a hike along a mountain trail, but seven of us braved the unpromising weather and took off enthusiastically for Tantalus. Except for a few sprinkles as we left the cars and an overcast sky during most of the morning, the day turned out to be a fine one. Preferring to do our climbing at the beginning of the trail while we were still fresh, we went up the "hogback" and returned along the Pauoa end of the trail.

Birding on the Tantalus trails has often proved to be disappointing and this trip was no exception. However, the trail is always a beautiful one and had we not heard a single bird, we would have felt the day a good one. Our malihini guests were quite intrigued by the two bamboo thickets through which we had to pass.

The friendly and curious elepaio were frequently seen and heard along the trail but the Liiothrix, which we had hoped so much to see, was very very shy. We heard them all about us throughout the day, but it was not until we were on the lower trail that Mr. Norton spotted the only one seen during the entire trip. It was also along the lower trail that one of the guests spotted a small compact nest in the fork of a branch overhanging the trail. By carefully lowering the branch, we were able to see three beautiful blue eggs with brownish-red spots inside the nest. None of us was able to identify it and as it seemed to be temporarily deserted by the parents, we were unable to decide what kind of nest it could be. Later, after doing a little "research" at home, we decided it must be the nest of a Liiothrix - a very bold Liiothrix, indeed, to have built her nest so near the trail! It was also along the lower trail that we saw the yellowish-green flash of an amakihi as it flew along the trail below us.

We heard an occasional cardinal calling to its mate as we progressed along the trail and frequently heard the "tee-tee-tee" of a white-eye in a nearby tree. We saw approximately fifteen elepaio, four white-eye, one Liiothrix and one amakihi.

Blanche A. Pedley.

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SEPTEMBER FIELD TRIP: Departing from custom, we shall meet at Kaneohe end of Kailua Park, on Saturday, September 6th, at 3:00 p.m., then take off for the island of Popoia. This is a delight not to be missed. Bring supper.

SEPTEMBER MEETING: At Bishop Museum Library at 7:30 p.m. on Monday, the 15th. Mr. E. H. Bryan, Jr. will summarize the study evenings of the last few months. If you have missed some evenings, here is your chance to catch up.

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HAWAII AUDUBON SOCIETY OFFICERS: President, Miss Margaret Titecomb; Vice-President, Mr. Ray H. Greenfield; Secretary, Miss Ruby Munro; Treasurer, Mrs. Blanche A. Pedley. ADDRESS ALL MAIL TO P.O. BOX 5032, PAWAA STATION, HONOLULU 14, HAWAII.