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JOURNAL OF THE 1938 LINE ISLAND EXPEDITION

By Walter R. Donaghho

July 16: Sailed at 7:00 p.m. on board the USCGC Roger B. Taney, from Pier 5A, Honolulu, bound for Palmyra, Samoa, and the Line Islands. I was aboard as assistant to Mr. George C. Munro, Associate Ornithologist, Bernice P. Bishop Museum, who was to band seabirds for the U.S. Biological Survey.

July 17: Ship 150 miles out at sea by morning. Watched for birds at various times of the day. Saw most of them before breakfast; Hawaiian petrel, and wedge-tailed shearwaters were most commonly seen. Several Newell's shearwaters were spotted, as well as one or two Bulwer's petrels, and red-tailed tropic birds. An inquisitive blue-faced booby flew up to the ship, circled a few times, then flew on its way.

July 18: Watched for birds three times during the day; saw only a red-tailed tropic bird which circled the ship at about one o'clock. Equatorial initiations started today. I was one of the doomed "pollywogs"...

July 19: Birds became numerous. At a ten o'clock observation, three blue-faced boobies appeared, one of which was accompanied by three red-tailed tropic birds and two noddy tern, all busy fishing. Another fishing party of four tropic birds was seen far out to sea. A number of brown boobies were seen just off the bow, while sooty tern, petrel, more boobies and tropic birds were noted.

At one time the "Taney" passed a school of fish that was being pursued by a school of porpoise. Boobies and petrels were flying above, catching fish as they leaped into the air to escape the porpoise.

Passed the halfway mark today. Howland Island should be reached in two days.

July 20: Within 250 miles of Howland. Morning nasty, with frequent squalls; not many birds seen. Afternoon observations resulted in 7 boobies, one noddy tern, two frigate birds, and four shearwaters. Two petrels were seen that had bluish back and white breasts. (Bonin petrel?)

July 21: Sighted Howland Island at five to nine this morning. The Amelia Earhart Memorial Light appeared above the horizon, soon followed by the island itself.

A flock of frigate birds was seen hovering over several fishing boobies, now and then a frigate bird would dive and chase a booby, forcing it to give up its fish.

Gradually we drew nearer to the low, flat island. To the rear of the two buildings that comprised the settlement, Itasca Town, were kou trees in two small clumps. Thousands of birds were in the air above the island.

The Taney dropped anchor, life boats were let down and soon we were off to the shore. Boobies were flying all around us. They came close and paused overhead to get an eyeful. The four colonists, Hawaiian boys employed by the Government to make meteorological observations, and to hold the island for the U. S., were waiting on the beach as we jumped out and waded to shore. After packing Mr. Munro's things and my own up to the house, I joined Mr. Munro and Emory, an assistant, and we set out to band birds.

Going around to the back of the house and starting inland, I was greeted by a breath-taking sight. Birds--hundreds of birds, thousands of birds--were on the ground and in the air. The island was swarming with birds: terns, boobies, frigate birds. The interior was flat and barren, covered with low, creeping plants, and this green and white terrain was fairly dotted with the white forms of boobies, and the black frigate birds. Terns swarmed in the air. I couldn't believe my eyes; for a moment, I stood there utterly speechless. How often I had read of these wonderful bird paradises. How often I had longed, seemingly without hope, to visit them! And now my dream has come true! Near me was a blue-faced booby. I walked over to her and she honked at me and backed off her egg, deposited right on the sand in a slight depression made by her breast, presumably. I picked it up and went over to a small colony of frigate birds. How often had I seen these master fliers of the upper element soaring majestically in the Hawaiian skies! How little did I dream then that I was going to be able to visit them at home! Approaching the nearest male, I chased it off its nest and collected the large white egg. The nest was merely a platform of sticks built on the ground.

Mr. Munro caught a frigate bird and was banding it. I went after a blue-faced booby for him. Two white, or fairy terns, flew overhead while we were banding the frigate birds--the only ones I saw on the island. A daintier bird I have never seen. These beautiful, delicate, frail, snowy white birds are the last word in loveliness.

I went to a nesting brown booby to collect her egg while Mr. Munro and his assistant, Emory, walked over to the kou trees. A harsh, raucous cry came suddenly from their direction. They were banding a bosun (tropic) bird, a beautiful bird, gleaming white tinted with delicate rose, with a brilliant red bill and two long red shafts as tail feathers. This finished, we set out across the island. I saw several grey noddies. They seemed to prefer pebbly ground, as I saw them nowhere else. We passed through an extensive colony of blue-faced boobies and spent some time banding them. Here also was a large colony of bridled (grey-backed) terns sitting on their speckled eggs. While Mr. Munro set out for the south end of the island, I wandered over to the beach nearby. Here was a belt of tuft grass which was the home of thousands of sooty terns. They rose in a cloud and swarmed about my head, crying loudly, so much so that I could hear nothing else. The young were running about among the tufts of grass, looking much like quail; many were hiding or trying to hide under the grass. They had their back ends sticking out--but no doubt they thought they were well hidden!

I came to a log on the beach, rolled it over to see if there was anything underneath, and found several hermit crabs, large and red.

Mr. Munro came back and we set off towards the settlement. Arriving, I walked over to a patch of ground strewn with coral slabs. Underneath several were tropic

birds nesting. Approaching one, I teased her off her nest and procured the brown spotted egg. She raised a noisy objection.

After lunch, on the way to the south end of the island, I passed through a colony of grey-backed tern, and headed for a number of frigate birds. As far as I could see, clear to the end of the island, were nesting boobies and frigate birds--the frigate birds more often along the outer edge, the boobies inland. Showing white against the greensward was a large flock of boobies, at least 200 birds. As I passed near a colony of frigate birds some of them snapped their bills and reached for me. Every stage of the young was there, from eggs to birds ready to fly. Approaching the kou, I noted that one dead, scraggly tree was covered with red-footed boobies. Several white-capped noddies were here also, the only ones noted on the island.

Returning to camp, I joined Mr. Munro, off again to band more birds. Our destination was the sooty tern colonies on the south shore. At the south end of the island I noticed a noddy tern fly up, and searching, found its egg in a rough nest of twigs placed loosely on the ground.

Frigate birds were streaming out to sea in a long column, as far out as I could see. We banded during the rest of the afternoon, one young tern after another, then a few boobies. Then back to camp.

This evening a colonist, James Kinney, wanted to accompany us on our banding expedition and we set out soon after supper, starting north. Sixty boobies were caught and banded. The area seemed to be the home of hundreds of them, and also many frigate birds. The air was filled with the screams of sooty terns, and the honks of the boobies. Bridled terns screamed overhead in several places, but I failed to find any of their nests. Noddy terns flew up now and then and I caught a couple for specimens. At one time we came across a dead carcass that was "bubbling over" with hermit crabs, feeding on the flesh. Another large flock of blue-faced boobies was encountered, and one flock of red-footed boobies. After exhausting the supply of frigate bird bands, we returned to camp.

It was now time for Emory's shift, and he and Mr. Munro set out. I walked across the island until I came to the bridled tern colony. Half of them rose when my light fell upon them. Some flew into it, others remained on the ground. Going on, I came to the sooty tern colony on the beach. As soon as the light fell upon them they set up a din. I could hear nothing else--just that clamor of tern calls, as they flew close over my head, screaming "wide-awake" in my ear. I picked up one for a specimen. I noticed several native rats running away from my light.

Returning to camp, I passed the kou, and the red-footed boobies were still there, also a white-capped noddy, which I collected for a specimen...

July 23: After breakfast, Kinney and I went down to the beach for a swim. The pool was a hole blasted in the coral... Later, I walked up the reef to see what it had to offer. The reef at Howland is a flat bench that extends out for a hundred yards or so then drops abruptly into deep water. It had a peculiar orange color, unlike any Hawaiian reef. In fact, the sand was orange colored. The reef did not seem to be overflowing with live creatures. Sea cucumbers were abundant, and very noticeable were the giant Tridacna clams, about ten inches long, embedded here and there in the coral. Their mantles were of various brilliant colors: reds, blues, browns, purples, and greens, covered with "polka dots" of various colors. Eels were abundant, especially a white variety, covered with black dots. I encountered one octopus.

Back at headquarters, Mr. Munro was skinning my birds and I set to blowing my eggs.

A black rain cloud approached the island this afternoon and it rained quite hard for awhile. Just prior to the rain, I noticed a commotion in the frigate bird colonies. One by one, birds were taking off from their nests and wheeling skyward. Higher and higher they soared. Two clouds of them to the north and south of our island, they drifted out over the ocean and up into the air. The frigate bird detests rain. It has caused the death of many a frigate bird, as it weights down the wings, causing them to become waterlogged. Then they are unable to take off.

The "Taney" appeared on the horizon at three this afternoon. We prepared to leave and about an hour later were off to Canton Island. While cruising along the coast of Howland, we were accompanied by a school of porpoises.

This evening "Davy Jones" visited the ship...

July 25: Canton Island came into sight right after breakfast, a long, low, flat island, extending for miles, just ahead.

(to be continued)

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BUNTINGS, THE LATEST BIRD INTRODUCTION BY THE HUI MANU.

A dozen or more bright-colored buntings have been seen in upper Manoa Valley recently. These are probably the birds properly known as Leclancher's non-pareil, of which several lots were brought from California by the Hui Manu and released here.

In September of 1941, twenty pairs were brought in and released at the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association substation in Manoa. In the spring of 1947, seventy five pairs were brought in and released: twenty-four pairs in Kaneohe, twelve pairs in the James R. Judd garden on Makiki Round Top, and the remaining thirty-nine pairs elsewhere in Makiki Round Top and on Ferdinand Avenue, in Manoa. In the fall of 1949, still another twelve pairs were imported. These were kept at the Zoo until space there was needed for other birds. In February, 1950, they were released on Maunalani Heights. Some have been released at Olinda, on Maui, also.

These are birds of brilliant coloring. The back and wings are cobalt blue, slightly tinged with green; the throat and breast are a rich orange, becoming pale yellow on the abdomen; the crown of the head is olive yellow, tinged with green. The female is duller than the male, with much more olive-green than bright blue in her coloring. The male bird is about five inches long, the female just a little shorter.

The song is a bright, pleasing warble; the note is a sharp chip.

These buntings are native to southwestern Mexico, but those that reached Hawaii came via California.

Our society would be happy to receive records of sighting or hearing this new citizen. Tell us where and when you see them. CH

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FURTHER OBSERVATIONS ON CARDINALS, LINNETS AND AN OWL

Brazilian cardinal: With the hatching of the second crop, the season of appearing in couples exclusively seems to be at an end, for suddenly a swarm of brown-hooded young makes its appearance in our backyard. The young are now entirely on their own. A small group of the older, red-headed birds have joined them. We expect additional red-headed, red-breasted birds as their last clutch of young becomes fully grown.

The brown hoods and bibs of the first set of young are beginning to look pretty faded; the feathers seem just about ready to fall out. Some birds have lost all tail feathers, which gives them the appearance of tiny boats moving on spindle legs. They manipulate amazingly well, in spite of having lost their rudders.

I noticed that the grey of the young is much darker than that of the older birds. It will be interesting to watch the first crop of feathers disappear and the new, softer grey, snow-white and orange-red take their place.

Another startling discovery--one of the mature birds appeared one morning without his red bib. It must have fallen out gradually. This gave him the appearance of the first Brazilian cardinal I mentioned in my original inquiry as to whether there were two types of grey cardinals in our islands. The beautiful throaty call and the melodious warble they emit when male and female alight on a branch together is certainly identical.

Kentucky cardinal: The brilliant red male has successfully taught each young bird to feed itself. He is a most concerned father, never letting "baby" out of sight, always calling it as they move about. While the father bird is teaching the first family, the mother bird is hatching the next. At no time did I see the mother bird feed the young. We have a whole crop of young ones in our backyard now, the baby males with their soft grey spotted here and there and becoming ever more red as the grey disappears; the females are a soft, even grey.

The full-grown Kentucky cardinal never permits another male to feed in the same immediate surroundings with himself. He lowers his head, hisses madly and chases away the intruder. Sometimes the Brazilian and Kentucky cardinals get into the feeding cage simultaneously, then hiss at each other. But they do not chase each other. At no time have I seen the Kentucky object to having a sparrow feed close by. He even permits the sparrow to snatch bread out of his bill without getting angry. However, the Brazilian does not seem to like the sparrow and does chase it. Indeed, I have seen a Brazilian show defiance to a mynah.

Linnets: Ever since childhood I have wanted to observe the songsters that nested in our huge mango tree outside my bedroom window and sang in the early morning hours--but never put in an appearance. I was finally able to observe a linnet high up in a Cassia grandis tree in bloom, singing its little song over and over again.

Imagine my amazement when visiting friends in Manoa Valley and a flock of eight to ten of these elusive little birds were sitting in a feeding cage, eating birdseed! From time to time they would fly up and alight on the electric wiring and emit strange little sounds. Finally one broke into song, and it was the identical song I remembered so well from childhood days on Kauai.

In size they seem as large as the white-eye, but are more slender and have a longer tail. The head and breast are of a muted yellow, with a hint of chartreuse.

Owl: While visiting at the Sam Mahelona Hospital (Kauai) two years ago, I watched a beautiful owl flying over the hillside and over the fields, alighting on guava bushes from time to time, then circling above the fields and plummeting to earth--for a kill, I presume.

Driving home one night on the Kealia side of the island, an owl suddenly flew across the street, almost hitting our windshield. We were told that this is a frequent occurrence. As children we used to see many of them flying over cane-fields that had been harvested. I understand that Kauai is the only island where a great many owls still exist.

Mary Roberts

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SUNDAY MORNING AT THE JAVA CLUB

On the morning of July 27th, Mace Norton spoke on Hawaiian birds before the Java Club, at the Honolulu YMCA, the invitation having come to the Audubon Society from Mr. Don Klopff.

Mr. Norton reports that he was received graciously, listened to, and asked many questions. He himself enjoyed the experience, and that indicates that the men did too. In fact, Mr. Norton was so interested in the group and his reception that he will go back to hear Spencer Tinker speak on fishes--time permitting.

We appreciate being appealed to for this interesting service. MI

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AUGUST BIRD WALK

On August 10th, a hike was taken along the Tantalus Trail and many birds were seen. We started along the trail from the Hogback at 9:00 a.m. Helen Petersen, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Eastman, and Bonnie were the company! It was too bad more did not come. The day seemed overcast in town but was beautiful on Tantalus.

We saw many birds: Kentucky cardinals, apapapne, Japanese hill robins, white eyes, and elepaio. On various occasions, Helen Petersen was able to photograph elepaio. We could call them very close--a wonderful show for us. The trail was so slippery that a couple of us took falls, but the walk was enjoyed nevertheless.

Catherine Eastman

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REVIEWS:

The Hawaiian goose (nene) restoration program. By J. Donald Smith (Jour. Wildlife Management, 16(1):1-9, 1952)

All of us should know these details of the history of the nene in the last few years. Incredible loss occurred, and all we can do at present is hope earnestly that the efforts of the Board of Agriculture and Forestry will be successful. All we know of on Hawaii, Molokai and at the wildfowl preserve in England, at Slimbridge, number just under 60! If the nene survive this dangerous low it will seem a miracle. Great credit is due to our Board of Agriculture and Forestry, especially its officer J. Donald Smith.

Offshore observations of tropical sea birds in the western Pacific. By Keith L. Dixon and William C. Starrett. (The Auk, 69:266-272, 1952)

Observations were made in 1945 and 1946 during several voyages among the Okinawa, Ryukyu, Marianas, Ponape and Bonin Islands, on to Tokyo, and eventually to Hawaii and California.

The records are presented in a table. "Some types of oceanic birds range offshore more widely than do others. The tube-nosed swimmers are truly pelagic; flocks of shearwaters and petrels at considerable distances offshore are not an uncommon sight in tropical waters. While the tropic birds approach the pelagic mode of existence, they do not appear to range as far...Boobies and tropical terns for the most part do not occur in numbers more than 50 miles from land...Sooty and gray-backed terns may range more extensively but probably do not do so during the nesting season..." The authors comment on the scarcity of bird life in "deep waters of the tropics", the non-availability of food evidently being one cause. "During our travels in the western North Pacific, 50 days were spent at distance greater than 50 miles from nearest land. On 14 of these days...no birds were seen..."

MT

Fall of the sparrow. By Jay Williams. New York. 1951

To quote a reviewer, Margery Milne, in Science, No. 2980, p. 154, 1952, "Every conservation-minded person will applaud this book, and every sportsman will want to join forces in avoiding needless destruction of wildlife...a book that should be read by everyone...It not only tells in a very engaging way why species have vanished, but makes the reader aware of how many more are being threatened, including his own..." The Library of Hawaii has this book. MT

The pre-egg stage in the albatross family. By L. E. Richdale. Dunedin, 1950

The result of a thirteen year study in New Zealand of the behavior of both breeding and "unemployed" albatrosses.

Stalking birds with a color camera. By Arthur A. Allen. National Geographic Society.

This seems worth looking at, even though no Hawaiian bird may be within, for Dr. R. C. Murphy (in his review in *Natural History*, February, 1952, p. 54) says "For sheer money's worth there is no bargain in bird books like this...the most remarkable collection of color photographs of birds ever brought between two covers... The chapters discuss bird stalking, photographing by means of the electric flash, birds as allies of man, the calendar of a bird's year, the travels of birds, duck hunting (but not with a gun), the sense organs and minds of birds..."

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THE SEPTEMBER JAUNT:

On the afternoon of September the 6th, 18 of us arrived at the small but promising island of Popoia. The weather was good except for a few gusts of wind which caused annoyance at several times.

Right away everyone started to look for baby shearwater, and within ten or fifteen minutes at least a dozen were found. Later several chicks were taken out and photographed. Unfortunately we also found several adult birds dead.

During supper we saw a number of plover and also some petrels. Then, walking around again a newly hatched shearwater was found. On the other side of the island one still perfect egg was discovered. A few frigate birds were thought to have been seen soaring overhead towards evening. Later we watched the shearwater fly over, settle, and start their characteristic moans and groans. To find a place for the group to sit was rather a hard task, for there was no "vacancy".

By 8:30 we had said good-bye to the last bird and headed for shore.

Marian Gotshalk

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OCTOBER FIELD TRIP: To Poamoho, on October 12th. This is our favorite trail, which should be dry and pleasant at this time of year. Meet at the Library of Hawaii, at 8:00 a.m.

OCTOBER MEETING: In the auditorium of the Library of Hawaii, Monday, October 20th, at 7:30 p.m. Mr. Robert Phillips, formerly of Midway, now stationed in Hilo, has kindly consented to lend us his excellent movies of the birds of Midway.

HAWAII AUDUBON SOCIETY OFFICERS: President, Miss Margaret Titcomb; Vice-President, Mr. Ray H. Greenfield; Secretary, Miss Grenville Hatch; Treasurer, Mrs. Blanche A. Pedley.

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