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NOTES ON THE BIRDS OF FRENCH FRIGATE SHOAL
Part II: General accounts of visits of
December, 1953 and March, 1954
By Frank Richardson

The March issue of the ELEPAIO told something of my October visit to the islands of French Frigate Shoal. In December and again in March I was able to accompany the Coast Guard in their ship Buttonwood on their visits to the shoal and add to the ornithological notes of my earlier visit. In the following accounts I have not included mention of the turnstone, plover, tattler, and curlew, although they were present in small numbers on the several islands. Few details on any species will be given here as I shall attempt, rather, to show the major changes in species present, their approximate abundance, and their breeding activity.

Tern Island. December 18, 10:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. The bird picture rather different than in October; both species of albatrosses now present, with eggs; no shearwaters remaining. The albatrosses are willing to go on nesting on this island in spite of some disturbance by men, an occasional truck or airplane near them, and the island's dogs and cats, indicating a strong tendency to return to their home island, and/or an indifference to such disturbance. Species of birds seen:

Black-footed Albatross	(6 nests with eggs)	10
Laysan Albatross	(28 nests with eggs)	35-40
Red-footed Booby		1
Pintail Duck	(a female, long dead)	1
Bonin Island Petrel	(killed by a cat)	1

March 20, 2 to 4:30 p.m. About the middle of January, very high waves washed almost completely over this island and destroyed all albatross eggs but two. The eggs hatched and there are now two large young birds. Most of the sparse vegetation along the north side of the island was buried by coral and sand, but most of the vegetation along the southeast edge remains, with Portulaca, Boerhaavia, and a Lactuca blossoming. High, circling flocks of Sooty Terns form over the island in the late afternoon and evening, but apparently none are ready to come to the ground and nest. Species of birds seen:

Laysan Albatross	(2 young; 5 adults)	7
Sooty Tern		1000-1500
Wedge-tailed Shearwater	(15 or more killed by cats; 1 alive)	16+

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Trig, Skate, Whale, East, Gin, and Little Gin Islands. December 19, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Estimates are not given below for the numbers of birds on the separate islands, but totals show, for instance, the definitely greater abundance of the Black-footed as compared to the Laysan Albatross at French Frigate Shoal. The islands which are barren--or nearly so--of vegetation, as Gin and Little Gin, have the least variety of birds. This will be even more true when burrowing forms (petrels and shearwaters) arrive, for the sandiest islands do not have the soil or plants and roots to support burrows. Species directly dependent on vegetation for nesting would include the Frigate Bird and Red-footed Booby. Species of birds seen:

Black-footed Albatross	(hundreds of nests with eggs)	1500-1700
Laysan Albatross	" " " " "	600-700
Blue-faced Booby		90-100
Red-footed Booby	(on East Is. only; eggs and young)	10
Brown Booby	(on Skate Is.)	1
Frigate Bird	(on Trig Is. and Whale Is. only)	25-30
Common Noddy Tern	(on East Is. only; eggs and young)	10-15

Skate and Whale Islands. March 20, 1:45 to 10:45 a.m. These islands were apparently only partly washed over by the heavy seas of January and the birds have not suffered, as indicated by the large number of young Albatrosses now present. The vegetation is in fair shape--chiefly a sparse covering of Tribulus (puncture-vine), now green and flowering. The Frigates are using this plant to build small nest mounds (6-10 inches high) of twigs and leaves. Conspicuous changes since December are the many Shearwaters now present on the ground, but not burrowing, the presence of eggs of Blue-faced Boobies and Frigates, and the many large, young Albatrosses. Species of birds seen:

Black-footed Albatross	(adults and young)	500-600
Laysan Albatross	" " "	50-70
Blue-faced Booby	(many with eggs)	80-100
Wedge-tailed Shearwater		150-180
Frigate Bird	(many with eggs)*	130-150
Common Noddy Tern		300-400

*Perhaps I should say "with egg" for Frigates, Red-footed Boobies, and Albatrosses lay only one egg.

Trip Island. March 20, 11 to 12 a.m. The great difference between this island and Skate and Whale islands was the presence of Sooty Terns in great numbers, Grey-backed Terns with eggs, and Christmas Island Shearwaters. The presence of a small amount of Scaevola on this island was verified. The single heliotrope bush, about 2 feet high, on this island, now has four Red-footed Booby nests! Two Hawaiian Monk Seals were seen on the beach, one a young seal about 4 feet long with deep fur, dark grey above and silvery white below. Species of birds seen:

Black-footed Albatross	(adults and young)	200-300
Laysan Albatross	" " "	15-30
Blue-faced Booby	(many with eggs)	60-80
Red-footed Booby	(3 with eggs)	6

Wedge-tailed Shearwater		125-150
Christmas Island Shearwater		8
Common Noddy Tern		20-30
Sooty Tern	(many on ground but no eggs)	1500-2000
Grey-backed Tern	(at least 8 with eggs)	24-30

On the lagoon south of Tern Island and west of Trig, on March 19 and 20, a Glaucous-winged Gull in full adult plumage was repeatedly seen. It joined the ship south of the whole shoal and stayed with us for two days.

La Perouse Pinnacle. December 19, 3 to 4 p.m. I was again able to climb onto this rock and inspect its western cliffs, following the same route as in October. In contrast to October conditions, Brown Booby nests are now absent--apparently washed or blown away--Wedgetailed Shearwaters have all left, and a nesting cycle has started for White and Hawaiian Terns. Species of birds seen:

Frigate bird		40-50
Brown booby	(1 large young)	6-8
White tern	(eggs and young)	40-60
Hawaiian Noddy Tern	(eggs)	50-70
Grey-backed Tern		2-4
Common Noddy Tern		3

AUDUBON SCREEN TOURS

As we go to press we are about to greet Mr. and Mrs. Fran William Hall. Mr. Hall will present the third and last movie in the series for 1954 on April 30th, at 8 p.m., at Mabel Smyth Auditorium. Mr. Hall comes early so as to have considerable time here to take a movie of Hawaii, nature scenes for mainlanders to enjoy. He knows already that he will have to be content without lions, giant alligators, eagles, etc. But he will use up his film fast on what is here, we are sure, and delight mainland audiences with the result.

Be sure to leave April 30th free, buy your ticket ahead, and come to see his "South to Siesta Land." We do not have to be told where that is!

The schools that subscribe will see "Monsters in Miniature," which will be a companion piece to Bishop Museum's "Insects Close Up" exhibit, which opened April first.

PLOVER IN KAPIOLANI PARK By George C. Munro

An eager watch was kept in August 1953 for the return of the plover to Kapiolani Park and the change-over of the different feeding areas to younger birds. This had been the case at two year intervals since 1949, but this year the young birds were not brought in till the end of October and were probably just-arrived chicks of 1953. By the end of January this year, each of eight single birds had a well defined feeding ground to itself and drove off any intruder of the same species. One bird with a rather small area I have seen herded back over the boundary by birds occupying two stations beside it, and often two birds will be seen standing near the boundary of their beats watching each other till one goes off on its own feeding ground. It is hard to realize that they can find sufficient food on the small amount of grass-land some of them occupy, but they may have feeding grounds in other places, as on beaches, for instance. I see them mostly early in the morning. In the evening a group of them collect in a flock at the lowest part of the

park before they fly to their roosting places. It is seldom that less than four are seen in the morning and sometimes all eight are seen, each on its own section, and no others of the species in sight. It is seldom that I see them arrive, and generally only single birds.

LETTER FROM WALTER DONAGHHO TO GRENVILLE HATCH, October, 1953--Excerpts.

Reading the accounts of Baldwin and Richards of their observations of "extinct" species of birds strengthens the theory that I have always had concerning the Hawaiian birds--that nobody really knows what species are extinct since there has been far too little exploration in the past fifty years to establish that conclusion as to any rare birds. I do not include the last fifty years of the last century, as both Henshaw and Perkins never did consider many species extinct, certainly not the species that have been considered extinct today. Even on Oahu, Perkins never considered the Akialoa or the Akepiuie gone, having seen or heard both. So, I wish to make a resume of the birds of Hawaii, island by island, with notes on their status, and my predictions as to their being found--if an exploration is made.

KAUAI: All of Kauai's birds are alive today. I personally have seen twelve, all but the nukuouu, and have no reason to believe that species extinct. It lives high in the Alakai Swamp and in other parts of the mountains, and is thus hard to get to.

OAHU: There are at least seven species of birds alive on Oahu; in addition to the five regularly seen, the Akialoa and the Akepiuie. The latter I saw in 1937 on the Kipapa Trail. It will be seen again. Also do not be surprised if someone comes out of the woods reporting either the O-o or the thrush. I found brown contour and gray down feathers on the Kaala Trail. On comparing the grey feathers with those of thrushes from other islands, I found they matched perfectly. As to the brown feathers, Henshaw records the early description of the Oahu thrush as brown above, not olive. In 1936, I heard loud call notes from a bird on the Kipapa Trail that sounded very much like some of the notes of the Kauai O-o, which I had heard only a little while before.

MOLOKAI: This island's bird life seems to be at a hopelessly low ebb. Nearly all of its birds are rare. Only the Amakihi and Apapane are present in any number. Do not be surprised, however, if the Mamo, Crested Honeyeater, or Thrush are reported from there. The O-o and Creeper are other possibilities. But if things do not improve there, and soon, Molokai's birds will certainly become extinct, and may be so already.

MAUI: Baldwin reports the Crested Honeyeater, the Maui Parrot-bill and the Akepiuie. Only the O-u and the Akiapolaau have not been seen. I have little reason to believe they are extinct. Of Maui's eight species of birds, I will say that eight species are still alive.

HAWAII: The birds that are not rare are the Apapane, Amakihi, Elepaio, Iiwi, Olive-green Creeper, Omau, Akiapolaau, Akepiuie, O-u, and Palila. The last four are common locally, and all can be seen within a week's stay in favorable spots. Most can be seen in one day. In the case of the Akepiuie, it will be very common in one area only to disappear the next week or so. I found it common, for example, in the mamani belt on the south slope of Hualalai in 1935. On a later trip up there I failed to see one.

Of the others, the only one I can report is the Orange Koa finch, a female, that I called overhead in the koa forest near the Volcano in 1937.

Do not be surprised if someone reports either the O-o or Mamo or both. I have received many reports of both from unqualified observers who as much as said what the birds were. Such reports can be clues. Munro received such a report of the Maui Parrot-Bill at the eastern end of Haleakala. Baldwin later saw them outside the crater. I have had a report of a bird on Olokui, the description very close to the Black Mamo, a bird very difficult to confuse with anything else.

It will take more search than has been done to rediscover the Chloridops kona. I don't believe Baldwin went into the area where they were found--he does not say so. Kipuka Alala is getting near there, but is still far away. The bird was never common, even in Perkins' day, and it was very specialized, living on the rough lava flows in a small section of South Kona, somewhere in the vicinity of Puu Keo. It was mostly silent, thus easy to escape observation. A day's trip there would probably fail to reveal it.

The Ulaaihawane still exists in small numbers, way back in the woods, I believe. It, too, is very specialized, feeding on the Hawane palm. To my knowledge, no one has returned to the spot where it was found, not even in the Kohala Mountains locality. To check its presence, one must hike along the upper Hamakua Ditch Trail, then proceed through jungle at the end, down to the lower Kohala Trail, passing through a large patch of virtually unexplored forest. If this is done a number of times and the birds not seen, there will be more definite grounds for declaring it, together with the O-o and Mamo, extinct. For it was in this country that one person reported to me his seeing the O-o.

The story is the same for the Akialoa, which lives, I believe. It will take much exploring, but I believe it may be found along the trail from the Puu Oo ranch to Keanakolu, especially in the latter region and in the Nauhi Gulch area. It is rare, assuredly, and may take many days of close observation to find it.

This then is my belief, that few species are extinct. Until ornithologists go into the deep forests and stay there for days on end, as Henshaw and Perkins did, no one can call any species extinct. Baldwin did find some on Maui, in as remote an area as there is on that island.

One more prediction: someone will report the Short-tailed Albatross, perhaps a small colony in some remote habitat. Most likely the one I saw on Midway in 1941, an immature bird, is still flying around, waiting for some ornithologist to see it. My bandings on Midway show that the Black-footed species live at least eleven years.

(Mr. Donaghoe ends with the thought that, though his belief may be ridiculous to some, he is firm in his expectation that more "extinct" birds may be found. He is sure of his own observations, and expects results from future explorations to bear out his theory.)

THE NENE AND THE LAYSAN TEAL

The Eighth Pacific Science Congress recommended conservation measures be applied to a number of threatened and vanishing species, including the Nene (Hawaiian goose) and the Laysan Teal.

CONSERVATION COUNCIL

In a report for the Annual Meeting of the Conservation Council of Hawaii (February 1954), Mr. Edwin H. Bryan, Jr., Chairman of the Fauna Committee, said: "... protection is badly needed by various species of birds, particularly the Laysan

teal, the Hawaiian duck, the Nene (Hawaiian goose), the reed warblers of Laysan and Nihoa Islands, and the Hawaiian crow. The danger of extinction is believed to be greater in lowland areas, especially on the low, outlying islands, than in the forests of the main islands. Although the small, outlying islands are not visited often by the public, fishing vessels and yachtsmen do visit them, and at such times the birds, lacking natural protection, are particularly vulnerable... It is believed that existing laws are adequate. What is needed badly is to make these regulations known to persons likely to visit the localities, and to gain their cooperation through conservation education."

(Pacific Science Association, Information Bulletin, PS/53/9, pp. 8-9)

REVIEW: Annual Cycle, Environment and Evolution in the Hawaiian Honeycreepers (Aves: Drepaniidae), by Paul H. Baldwin. (University of California Publications in Zoology, Vol. 52(4):285-398, 1953)

This is the first really detailed and intensive ecological study of particular species of drepaniids, and so is a significant landmark in Hawaiian ornithology. Baldwin has confined his study almost entirely to the amakihi, apapane, and iiwi, the field work almost all done on the island of Hawaii, and has gathered a great deal of information about them. Relations of the abundance of these birds with the flowering seasons of the ohia-lehua and other trees are carefully worked out, as are nesting cycles, molts, and other aspects of the birds' growth, behavior and relations to environment. The discussion of the bearing of the study on the evolution of the Hawaiian honeycreepers is especially interesting and important.

Frank Richardson

Field Trip, April 28, 1954

Kipapa is more beautiful than ever, it seemed to the five who made the trip. Even the approach road did not seem as bad as remembered, though perhaps that was because Mace's jeep negotiated the gullies so easily. The jeep was blessing, too, in that we were deposited at the very start of the trail, avoiding the long, hot climb up the hill.

The trail is well cleared, the vegetation beautiful and there are fine vistas over the countryside. The traveller's palm, remembered as being in sad state from numerous punctures to see if it would live up to its reputation, has now reached such heights that punctures are impossible, but several young palms around its base are in perfect condition. Yes, we did make one hole! The water was fresh-tasting and refreshing.

Despite an almost total absence of flowering trees, the birding was quite good. We saw only two apapane, both close to one of the few clusters of lehua, but elepaio were seen all along the way, and amahiki were more noticeable than usual, all of us being able to study them, and note closely the markings. Bush warblers were heard, but as usual, not seen, in several places. Owl pellets indicated that Pueo still haunts the area. Leiothrix and white-eyes were constantly seen and heard. Flocks of rice birds were seen over the adjacent pineapple fields, both on entering and leaving the trail.

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None of us will ever forget the view of the farm lands deep in Kipapa gulch, looking from our elevation like a picture book scene. And surely none of us will ever forget the exploration of the surrounding country in the rain!

Grenville Hatch

MAY ACTIVITIES FIELD TRIPS

May 9th, To Koloa Trail. This is a new trail to our group. It lies halfway between Laia and Kahuku. Mr. McGuire will lead us. Meet at the Library of Hawaii at 8:30 a.m.

May 23rd, To Poamoho Trail. Back again to our old favorite. This is the time of year when we are apt to hear and see the *Garrulax*. (we hope) Meet at the Library of Hawaii at 7:00 a.m.

MEETING, May 17th, at 7:30 p.m., in the Community Board Room at the Y.W.C.A. Dr. Richardson, who was unable to be with us last time, will lead the discussion on migrants.

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