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WATER FOWL REFUGE ON MAUI: Kanaha Ponds

Some places go one way and some another. Some are said to "go to seed" or to "go to the dogs", but the Kanaha Ponds have definitely "gone to the birds". Apparently, this has occurred for the most part in the last fifty years, for the accounts of early scientific studies of birds make little mention of Kanaha as a place where they could be found.

The Kanaha Ponds on Maui have been set aside for some years as a water-fowl refuge, administered by the Board of Agriculture and Forestry. The young warden in charge gladly takes people around through the refuge in his jeep to get acquainted with his charges. Since he knows them well and where they like to go, feed, or build their nests, the visitor sees plenty of birds.

For half the year, September to April, Kanaha is one of the "duckiest" places in our Islands. Hundreds of pintails, shovelers, and other wild ducks winter in its reed-grown marsh every year and the number is increasing. Most of the pintails--the most abundant wild duck species--leave for their northern nesting grounds in early March, but there were still a few of them and plenty of shovelers and baldpates when the writer visited the ponds last week.

The ducks are not as tame as our own that winter beside the Lanai restaurant. They are definitely wild birds, keeping fifty or more feet away from their guests, like shy children, but otherwise they behave like the ducks in our Waiakea and Keaukaha ponds.

The Wildlife Service men trap hundreds each year in huge, wired enclosures so as to band their legs and keep track of their wanderings. Most of the ducks so banded return to the ponds where they were banded, but one has been recorded from Canada, a few from California, and some on other islands of the Hawaiian chain. The majority of the ducks caught in the big chicken-wire feeding traps are not banded as yet. Presumably these are either young birds or birds which have come from remote regions where there are as yet no banding stations.

Even when no migrating ducks are present, the Kanaha ponds are well worth visiting. The coots (alae kea) float serenely about the edge of the marsh, build their raft-like nests there, or take off from the water in a running flight, their feet splashing along the top of the water like those in the Walt Disney movie.

Lava-gray wandering tattler (ulili) skim over the water, whistling as they go. A few of these, and some plover, stay through the summer, though those that do wear the dull winter plumage throughout the year and do not change to the resplendent breeding dress usually worn in summer by their respective species. Most of the plover seen last week were already changing their brown tweeds into gold-spangled black and white suits. Plover usually leave during late April and early May and nest farther north than the ducks.

Night-herons (auku'u) live the year round at Kanaha and nest there. One stood silent and motionless in thinly grown reeds for some time, not fifty feet from the main arterial highway which passes the ponds--connecting Kahului and the airport. The bird seemed totally oblivious to the passing cars. But a sharp, shrill whistle sent him across the ponds in flight that seemed heavy and lumbering compared to that of the stilts (aeo) nesting near by.

The aeo is a native bird, found nowhere else in the world but the Hawaiian Islands, and quite rare even in Hawaii. Thanks to the care they are getting at Kanaha and a few other places, the species is again on the increase. It is a large, graceful bird, shiny black above, snowy white below. It wades about the shallow water on long, pink legs, picking up shrimps and other small, aquatic creatures. They are most distinctive, next to the plover, the most graceful water birds in the sanctuary.

Land birds are there too: Chinese doves, ground doves, cardinals, sparrows, and linnets. In their way they are just as interesting as the larger species.

For the nature lover, Kanaha ponds are definitely one of the most interesting places on Maui and not nearly so hard to get to as most of the other show places. They should be better known on all the island, for all the islands benefit from the good conservation work done there.

Helen Shiras Baldwin

Maui, and indeed, all Hawaii owes a debt of gratitude to Donald Smith, whose interest and foresight were instrumental in bringing about this fine sanctuary at Kanaha. The above article brings home to us afresh the urgent need for similar sanctuaries on Oahu, where one by one the ponds are being drained and our birds forced to seek other refuge. G.H.

SUGGESTION FOR ARBORETUM ADJOINING

Na Laau Hawaii

By

George C. Munro

Elimination of foreign plants in Na Laau Hawaii can be carried on gradually as is being done now and as the native plants increase to take up the ground. There need be no elaborate clearing as might be done below the Army trail if it were eventually decided to make a cultivated arboretum there--which will be mentioned further on. 2, 4-D can be used on koa haole and small kiawe trees as it has shown to be effective on them. The large algeroba trees can perhaps be less expensively killed by ring barking and constant trimming of the shoots from the stumps. The trees should not be felled but used so long as they stand as a support for vines and other climbers. Slender mimosa can be cut back, and young koa haole gradually choked by the dense shade of native evergreens such as naio, a'ali'i, pua, lama, a'ala, kolea, mamani, ohai, aiea, iliahi, and others as exemplified in the Kanepuu dry forest on Lanai--at least all of these that will succeed at this lower level. This also holds good for the introduced grasses in the present algeroba forest where shade is so light that it permits them to flourish. Hairy merrima, astasia, dayflower and other small weeds with imported grasses on the kula will need to be worked out by hand. This will not be difficult and can be done gradually. They are not very aggressive on the kula as the terrain and soil are not very suitable to them. The first three are not difficult to work by hand. Prickly cactus can be eliminated by constant cut-

ting and the sisal the allied plants on the kula can be allowed to pole and flower and the resultant small plants removed to adjoining ridges. There are three species of Passiflora but they are easily coped with. Birds will bring back their seeds but there will be no difficulty with them. They are valuable for bird food on other ridges but Hawaiian plants will fill their places in Na Laau Hawaii.

Supervision over a laborer in these operations will be necessary or he might destroy valuable plants, as apparently has happened in the Waonahale forest at the Kamehameha Schools. To obviate this and keep a laborer working full time, an ideal situation would be to make the land between the trail and city properties and the valleys north and south a cultivated arboretum specializing in Hawaiian plants; to grow any Hawaiian plants that will grow there with a water supply available, even to those of the rain forest. Rare plants might thus be saved that otherwise would be lost. Undoubtedly an arrangement can be made by which water could be provided, as its elevation is lower than Na Laau Hawaii. The work on a cultivated arboretum would be well defined and an intelligent, well-paid laborer could do a great deal without the close supervision necessary in the Na Laau Hawaii project. An arrangement might be made by which the laborer in the arboretum area could be used on the natural forest area when supervision would be available. The two projects could work together, the one helping the other in various ways.

I would be glad to do what I could for the arboretum while following my activities at Na Laau Hawaii. I will frequently have rare plants to spare in my nursery to which I cannot give care in the project I am working on. I cannot risk planting seed of very rare plants in the open to await a favorable season. In the Na Laau Hawaii project the object is to have as far as possible a self-supporting dryland forest and open country vegetation to simulate as nearly as possible the natural conditions that obtained on these islands before man altered them. It will not be an arboretum or botanical garden. Some of these plants will succeed better under natural conditions than in an arboretum and some will succeed better in an arboretum. The deficiencies in the one project will be filled by the other. But the arboretum need not be devoted entirely to Hawaiian plants like Na Laau Hawaii. Plantings already made (by enterprising neighbors) of succulents and other plants and trees should not be disturbed, but extended up the ridges.

Access to these works could be made for light wheeled traffic from Makalei Street. The trail to there was evidently made for a guncarriage and little work would be needed on it except where it connected with Makalei Street. There an adjustment with property rights might be required to secure this connection, but this should not be difficult. Repair of the trail right through from Diamond Head reservoir to Makalei would of course make it much better.

An arboretum started in this way could be extended to Makalei and even back to Diamond Head reservoir at Campbell Avenue. The open sloped of the ridges, except that of Na Laau Hawaii, could be made quite spectacular by planting with sisal, century plant and allied species. On the borders of the dry forest at Kanepuu, Lanai, I simply scattered the bulbils of the century plant and they took root and grew thickets of large plants. These old plants poled and died and cattle ate the young plants but there is probably a remnant from which bulbils could be obtained. One of the most spectacular sights I have seen in plant life was a hillside of poling century plant in Makaweli valley on Kauai.

To finance this a fund could be established from contributions, donations, bequests or allotment from Foundations such as that of the McInerny estate. In the absence of a public botanical garden there are surely enough persons interested in the preservation of our remarkable and unique flora who would be glad to aid financially

in an undertaking such as this. Seeing that large fortunes have been made on the land by the displacement of this dryland flora, the financing of this should be an easy matter. Of course it will take a little time to demonstrate unmistakable to others that Na Laau Hawaii will be a success, however plain it may appear to myself. However, there would be no risk in an arboretum with labor and water available.

I can probably go along for some time as at present using about two days a week on the job, only two hours of the day being spent at Na Laau Hawaii. I plan to make a botanical collection of the native plants that flower there and the foreign ones that need attention. One set of these will go to the Bishop Museum in return for its correct identification of names and one to the Hawaii Audubon Society for its guidance, and to store in its museum, herbarium or library when it can afford housing for these. At present the Board of Agriculture and Forestry is very helpful in this but the Society should have facilities of its own for storage and meetings. This of course will come in time when the public realizes the value of this institution.

The arboretum might be under some other institution such as the Board of Agriculture and Forestry, Outdoor Circle, or Honolulu Botanical Society while the Hawaii Audubon Society continues its interest in Na Laau Hawaii. The Hui Manu perhaps could also take an interest in it as it would furnish additional food for the birds it is importing to these islands.

FIELD NOTES, OAHU

On August 9th, a trip was taken to a spot seldom visited by the Society, Opae'ula region, on the northeastern end of Oahu. No rain fell in the uplands of the region, and the spot is strongly recommended for good birding by those who went. The report is as follows:

Preliminary stop at Aiea: 2 plover, the first of the season, still showing a bit of breeding plumage; 4 Hawaiian stilt; 2 turnstone; 1 auku'u (black-crowned night heron); 2 rice birds.

A second stop, at Schofield: 2 rice birds; 1 plover. No skylarks!

Opae'ula: 2 Kentucky cardinals; 6 rice birds; 4 barred doves; 7 white-eyes; 9 Liothrix; 6 amakihi; 8 elepaio (one of which afforded us opportunity for discussion, being different in size and coloring); 1 Brazilian cardinal; 1 pheasant.

Final stop, at Moanalua: 18 coot (1 showing considerable color in frontal plate; 1 gallinule; 2 Brazilian cardinals.

We missed our favorite leader, Tom McGuire, and his wife. A bird-lover from Pittsburgh joined us, Miss Jerry Howard.

Ruth R. Rockafellow

In mid-August, a party of scientists in one of the valleys of the Napali Coast, on Kauai, reported seeing a love bird. Mace Norton recalls seeing one here in Oahu many years ago. Scarce they are in these islands!

On August 23rd, John Obata, going it alone, beyond the end of the trail in the Kawaiki region, observed 5 amakihi; 4 apapane; many elepaio and Liothrix, some as close as 10 feet, and a mystery bird. It was on the ground, near a stream, and flew up and away at his approach. It was a strong flyer, like a thrush, and rose up 100 feet or so into an ohia tree. What was it?

On August 23rd, the Audubon Society group, to the number of eight, chose the Pa Lehua trail in the Waianae region. The report is:

We stopped on the way to inspect a marshy reach of Pearl Harbor. Though the birds were on the opposite shore, Mace Norton's red telescope showed them clearly--stilts, an almost motionless auku'u, turnstones, and speckle-fronted plover, classified, after much discussion, repeated inspection, and referent to Joe King's book as immature golden plover.

On the road up into the Waianae, a hen pheasant hurried across in front of the car and disappeared in dry underbrush that matched her dun colors.

Where we parked at the end of the road, the air was moist and cool, a refreshing contrast to the heat of the plain below. Every tree we braced a hand against on the first part of the trail shook the raindrops off its leaves and onto us. (Here a word of praise to ohia and bamboo trees for the comfortable hand-holds they offer--trunks of convenient size for grasping, the ohia's bark almost cushiony, the bamboo clean and smooth.)

On the ridge trail proper, with magnificent views beginning a few feet away on either side, we were careful to come to a dead stop each time we searched for the source of bird songs. There were lots of songs, mostly white-eyes and amakihi, although the amakihi couldn't always be seen. Lehua blossomed all along the trail. One low bush with small yellow flowers was identified as the Hawaiian tea plant. On the plain between the Waianae and the Koolaus stood high pillars of smoke from cane fires. Where the ridge widened into a stag-fern carpeted space, Grace Gossard found her first land shell.

Rain clouds began to drift across the trail and we decided to eat our lunch near the shelter of a cabin a short distance below the ridge trail. The moist greenery around the cabin was a-swarm with singing birds. We sat with our sandwiches half-way to our mouths and watched an amakihi hop nervously from branch to branch and fit her bill into a lehua blossom. An elepaio paid us three visits, lured back again and again by the "tweets" of our bird whistles. We lingered here a long time. When we finally regained the ridge trail, homeward bound, the clouds had passed over the Waianae leaving a sun-baked trail.

One carload of us returned to Honolulu via the marsh near Waipahu. The heat simmered above the water, the sun glittered on broken glass in the dump that allows access to the marsh. There were plover and stilt in great number, and several pintail ducks with just their heads showing above the marsh grass. Two cars--fiercely resented by our group--rattled up to the edge of the marsh and frightened the birds into flight. We saw many of the same birds--we assumed they were the same--sitting in the dry fields below the plantation settlement a short distance away.

The next stop was at Moanalua where a prolonged discussion centered around three coots with red on their frontal plates, and one coot whose plate was yellow merging into orange.

We stopped to look at Salt Lake, practically birdless, then headed for the city. It was nearly 5 o'clock--a long, very pleasant and interesting day.

Helen Chambers

Bird Count for the day, recorded by Grenville Hatch:

Pearl Harbor: 1 auku'u, 6 stilt, 15 turnstones and 3 golden plover.

Waianae foothills: 1 hen pheasant.

Pa Lehua trail: 15 amakihi, 1 linnet, 9 elepaio, 25 white-eyes, 7 liothrix, 4 Kentucky cardinal, 10 rice birds, 1 white-tailed tropic bird.

Waipahu (Pearly Harbor): 132 + plover, 230 + stilt, 4 pintail ducks, 4 turnstone, 6 tattler, 5 auku'u.

Moanalua: 18 coots, plus 3 with red on frontal plate (gallinule), and 1 with yellow-orange on frontal plate.

REVIEW

"Recent records of some Hawaiian honeycreepers", by Lawrence P. Richards and Paul H. Baldwin. (Condor, 55:221-22, 1953)

Many of us have had the thought and the hope that some endemic Hawaiian birds may still live in the further reaches of the forests where few bird observers have the opportunity to go. These two men have "had unusual opportunities to search for the rarer species on Hawaii and Maui at various times in the past decade." They were rewarded in finding some of the rare species, formerly thought to be extinct. Nomenclature used, they specify, is according to Amadon. Excerpts from their article follow:

Palmeria dolci. (crested honeycreeper) On Maui in 1942 and 1943, not recorded for Maui since the 1890's, near the north rim of Kipahulu Valley, Maui, Haleakala, and two other localities near by; six observations in all; last previous record: Molokai, 1907.

Pseudonester xanthophrys. (parrot-billed Koa "finch"), in 1950, Puu Alaea, Maui, 6400 feet, north slope of Haleakala, two individuals; not reported since the 1890's.

Loxops coccinea coccinea. (akepa), in 1938, at Keawewai, 6800 ft. Ka'u district, Hawaii, fairly common; another in 1941, Puu Oo trail, island of Hawaii, from 2000 to 3000 ft.; three occasions in 1941 and 1943 on the Kalapana trail, southern Hawaii, between 2430 and 2550 feet; in 1948 near Keauhou, at 6800 ft., Ka'u island of Hawaii; in 1950 about 12 observations at 4350 ft., north slope of Hualalai, Hawaii, possibly some individuals seen twice in the 5 days they were seen; another at Kipuka Akala, Ka'u District; previously observed alive in 1936/37; one found dead in 1943, top of Mauna Loa.

Loxops coccinea ochracea. (akepa), in 1950, "three small orange birds", in a gulch, 2000 to 3000 ft., between Kipapa and Nakaaha areas, Hana District, Maui, s. slope of Haleakala, by Amy B. H. Greenwell; last reported in 1894.

Hemignathus wilsoni. (akiapolaau), in 1938, 1940, 1941-1946, in or near the Hawaii National Park, Hawaii, "rather common locally...on the north-eastern slopes of Mauna Kea and the eastern slopes of Mauna Loa, between 3900 and 7750 feet.

Psittirostra psittacea. (ou) Individuals reported in 1936 and 1938-40 in the Hawaii National Park, Hawaii, and the Upper Olaa Forest Reserve, Puna; 6 in one day southwest of Napau Crater, 2650-2800 feet; in 1950

and 1951 in the same Olaa region, four observations; 8 to 12 individuals were heard and 3 seen.

Psittirostra bailleui. (palila) Not uncommon in 1943, 1948-49, and 1950, on the western and northeastern slopes of Mauna Kea, Hawaii, at 7750 to 8300 feet.

A sharp lookout was kept for the mamo, akialoa, ula-ai-hawane, nukupuu, the greater amakihi, greater koa finch, lesser koa finch, and kona finch, without success.

FIELD NOTES

On Labor Day five groups of stilts, each flock closely following the preceding one, passed over the Paul Porter home in Kailua, evidently going from the Kaneohe ponds to Kaelepulu. This was an unusual occurrence; the Porters often see small flocks, or hear them overhead at night, but never before in such large numbers.

OCTOBER FIELD TRIPS

October 11th. To Kanehoa Valley, following the contour trail. This is in the Kunia area, leading behind Leilehua and Schofield. It is a new trail to our group, and should prove interesting. Meet at the Library of Hawaii at 8:30 a.m. Mr. Thomas R. L. McGuire will lead.

October 25th. To Waipahu for shore birds - at least we will start there. Birding has been excellent in this section the last few times we have been there, with several unusual birds to identify. Meet at the Library of Hawaii at 7:00 a.m.

OCTOBER MEETING

October 19th, at 7:30 p.m. at the home of Mrs. Ruth Rockefeller, 2238 B. Kalia Road. We will study the ruddy turnstone and the sanderling. Several business matters will also need our attention.

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

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