

THE ELEPAIO

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Hawaii Audubon Society



For the Better Protection
of Wildlife in Hawaii

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REPORT ON AUDUBON SCREEN TOUR PROJECT

The committee is entirely cheerful about the chances for success of this delightful project.

The schools that have engaged the movies are especially fortunate in being the beneficiaries of a promptly offered and generous gift of the Hui Manu for reduction of cost to them. It is a great pleasure to report this co-operation, for which we are grateful. We hope many members of the Hui Manu will enjoy the series with us.

The project is moving forward steadily, the translation of which statement into most direct terms is: tickets are being bought. Let no one delay in purchasing. January 11th will be upon us very soon.

National headquarters is taking care of us most solicitously, sending material for use in advertising, keenly interested in our progress.

ORNITHOLOGICAL NOTES, MIDWAY ISLANDS, 1940

By
Walter Donaghoe
(continued)

April 30, 1941: Bulwer's petrel very common on Eastern Island, sitting under the low, dense parts of the Scaevola; more are still streaming in. The baby goonies are developing their breast feathers. White feathers have nearly displaced the down on some of the older birds. Noted one bird walking uphill on its toes, going as fast as a full-grown bird.

May 6: Albatrosses, frigate birds and the boobies on Midway Island (at least on Eastern Island) are doomed. An order has been received from Pearl Harbor which starts their destruction. Alas! That man may defend himself, the birds must pay with their very lives! On a visit to Eastern Island, I found that the Marines had already started on the goonies. Half of the north beach had been cleared of its population. Only a few bewildered goonies walked around in vain, trying to puzzle it all out. Halfway along the southern side of the runway, the space was devoid of the white forms that used to be amassed by the hundreds along its banked-up edges.

Visited the grey-backed tern colony at the east end of the island. On a previous visit, the birds were all sitting on eggs, but now the entire colony has evacuated the site. I couldn't even find any trace of their eggs. The cause of this strange desertion will always remain a mystery. Terns were settling on piles of trash about fifty yards to the north.

May 8: A second colony of sooty terns has settled on the east end of Eastern Island. They have picked a spot in the midst of a small bridled tern colony, several of which were on eggs. They like to settle under the Scaevola. The sooty terns in the first colony, and in older colonies of Sand Island, are now in the throes of sexual affairs.

May 16: A third colony of sooty terns has settled near the middle of Eastern Island, a site vacated now by the colony of grey-backs that had settled there on May 6th and have now chosen another place about seventy-five yards to the north.

A Christmas Island shearwater that I noted in sexual affairs on April 11th is on an egg, very fresh--not three days old.

Sooty terns, first colony on Sand Island, found on eggs by one of the workmen. Fairy tern egg has hatched, after 39 days of incubation.

Many young goonies have just about all their feathers developed now, though the down is still present.

Pectoral sandpiper seen on the south shore of Eastern Island, first one I have seen since my return to Midway.

May 18: Visited all the sooty tern colonies on Sand Island, except one west of the PAA hotel; found more than half the terns on eggs in the large colonies around the tennis courts south of the camp. Only one other colony, that in the center of the island, south of the high central area, was found with birds on eggs, and here actually only one. The north point colony is still unsettled; nearly all the birds are flying about.

Golden plovers that lived about the camp are gone.

May 22: All of the terns on Eastern Island appear to have landed. The site vacated by a colony on May 16th has been settled by another colony which has grown to large proportions. The oldest colony (landed April 6th) is still in the throes of mating.

Several grey-backed tern chicks noted in the colony on the southwestern side of the island. Laid on April 23rd, the eggs have hatched after the 16th of May. The chicks appear to be two or three days old.

May 28: The colony west of the hotel still in the air, none on the ground. Many young, full-fledged Bonin petrels noted recently in their burrows.

May 30: Found a finch nest with three eggs, the first definite confirmation of the season, though doubtless many others are on eggs, possibly on chicks.

May 31: The air over the east dune area of Sand Island filled with bosun birds that have just arrived on the island, apparently.

June 1: A colony of sooty terns noted to have landed on the North Point site. New arrivals are still hovering above the camp; flocks have been hovering since April 14th. As one flock gives up the idea of landing and goes elsewhere, a new flock arrives.

June 3: A bosun bird noted with a chick several days old. Many Bonin Island petrel chicks in full-fledged plumage. Sooty terns of North Point colony on eggs.

June 6: Most of the terns in the colony west of the hotel are still in the air, a small number on eggs. Noddy terns reported on eggs among the dunes south of the former engineers' camp.

June 7: Noddy tern report in error, the terns referred to are apparently sooties. Did not find eggs in any area frequented by noddies, though saw several terns sitting on the sand or on the bushes.

Many of the young blackfooted albatross are quite large, with the feathers of the head well-developed. The birds are now thinking seriously about flying, many stretching and vigorously flapping their wings, leaping into the air, hoping to leave the ground that way.

June 9: The air above Eastern Island filled with hundreds of bosun birds this afternoon, all going through their curious aerial dance in which the birds fly backwards, in circles. (Going backwards, the birds fly upwards in a half circle, then dive frontwards down, swooping upward again to complete their circle.) These are probably new arrivals. At three o'clock they were descending to land, pair by pair, and at four there wasn't a bosun bird in the air.

Noted a fledgling Laysan finch following a mother bird. The parent fed it once or twice, in the manner of a pigeon.

Several pairs of Bulwers petrel had made their homes in piles of trash, piled up at the edges of clearing. These piles were also favorite nesting places of the finch and the grey-backed tern, as well as wedge-tailed shearwaters.

June 15: Noted that the eggs of the first colony on Sand Island, just south of the camp, are hatching. This is twenty-nine days after they were first noted on eggs--May sixteenth.

This is a very hot day and a constant stream of sooty tern flew back and forth between their colonies and the water just offshore, seeking a drink and a dip in the cool ocean. Diving down quickly, they immersed their bills and flipped the water over themselves.

Another group of terns hovering over the camp. I found that all the rest have new sites further inland to the south, where they have settled on and around the high central area of the island. Found colonies settled on eggs, on cleared areas which just previously had been scenes of great slaughter, as the tractors ploughed through the colonies already there.

The black-footed albatross young are becoming fully aware of their wings, and are jumping up and down, and flapping them vigorously, trying to fly. A few adults are still coming in, but I believe they will be off very soon.

Noted a strange sandpiper in the garbage pit this afternoon. It is a slim bird, standing higher than a plover, on long, orange-colored legs. The general color was grey, darker on the back and wings, lighter on the head, neck and breast, which was streaked with fine, sooty streaks. The wings were finely mottled with darker grey. Striking was the white tail, exposed in flight. As it was scared up, it uttered a loud whistle, "chew to!"

Noted a pectoral sandpiper feeding on the beach near the pier.

On an evening visit to Eastern Island, I had my conception of the Christmas shearwater dashed. They arrived by hundreds as the night came on, in company with hundred of Bulwers petrel. The latter seemed to outnumber the wedge-tailed shearwater, and the former seemed nearly as common. The strange notes of the three--

the shearwater's moans, the "humming" and barking of the Bulwers petrels, and the strange cries, yowls, and coos of the Christmas shearwaters--blended to give a strange, eerie feeling to the night, enough to send cold shivers up and down the backs of the uninitiated. The cries of the petrel and Christmas shearwater seem to dominate over the moans of the wedge-tailed shearwaters.

June 16: Had a splendid look at the sandpiper through 8 power binoculars, and identified it as a Greater Yellow-legs (Totanus melanoleucus), second record of the species in Hawaii. Closer inspection disclosed that the legs were the characteristic golden yellow, instead of orange, as previously supposed. Also, the wings were greatly mottled with brownish grey and white. The tail had dusky streaks across it. The bill was slightly upturned at the very end, compared with the straight bill of the Lesser Yellow Legs.

June 20: Found a rail's nest with four eggs, placed among the dead fronds and other trash under clumps of umbrella plants.

Found a Bulwers petrel sitting on its egg, which was in a hollow under some umbrella plant clumps. The bird had formed a bed for the egg of ironwood needles and umbrella plant fronds.

A report came to me of forty curlew on Eastern Island--most likely arrivals from the south. There never have been that many winter residents. I believe many of the resident curlew and plover have gone.

Noted a white gooney on Sand Island with the contour feathers of the head in nearly full development.

June 21: Wedge-tailed shearwaters are now laying; found eggs in several burrows examined. Found them on Eastern Island, sitting right on the ground. In many cases the egg was placed in hollows underneath the Sesuvium or Scaevola, lined with dead leaves.

(to be continued)

BIRDS IN KAPIOLANI PARK

By George C. Munro

In August and September the lawns in the southern end of Kapiolani Park where I enjoy my morning stroll were patchy with the dry weather, partly green and partly grey. It is difficult to keep this sandy soil uniformly green in dry weather. Nevertheless it provides a lovely walk on the soft springy grass through the majestic old algeroba trees and one of the two large banyan trees in new light green foliage and drooping branches. The foliage of the other is dark with the ends of the branches turned upward, probably a seasonal difference.

Through the efforts of the officials of the Parks Board and cooperation of the public, this beautiful picnic end of the park is rapidly becoming a pattern of neatness. It is hoped that the efforts of the Outdoor Circle in their October campaign for neatness will meet success, that this will become a habit in Hawaii, and it will be exceptional to leave papers and picnic rubbish at recreation and scenic places.

The surface of the lawns is kept closely clipped, yet grasses and other plants adapt themselves to the situation. They flower close to the ground and provide food

for sparrows, ricebirds, and Brazilian cardinals. Chinese doves flock under fruiting hybrid date trees and pick the flesh from the small yellow fruits. The barred doves are not so much in evidence in this part of the park at present and are probably concentrated under the large ironwood trees, picking up the tiny seeds shaken from the little cones by the wind. I doubt if there is competition for food between the two species of doves, the barred doves preferring the very small seeds. Brazilian cardinals descend from a Morton Bay fig tree and pick industriously, either at the fallen fruits or ants attracted to them probably both. An unusual sight one morning was a flock of ricebirds feeding in a Morton Bay fig tree on what was evidently a small insect. They were flying out into the air and catching them on the wing as well as hunting among the foliage. Another unusual and entertaining sight in the very early August morning was mynah birds, young and old, sweeping through the park from the south corner--walking, hopping, running, flying, following one another and collecting in groups of ten to fifty or more around scraps left by picnics. Extremely good-natured, no fighting or scrambling for the food. They seemed to be satisfying their curiosity as much as their desire for sustenance, all waiting their turn to pick at the food. Sometimes they would flock round the base of a large algeroba tree, flying up the stem and picking ants from the bark. Whether these are the same ground ants that furnishes food for so many of the birds of the park, I do not know. The old algeroba trees shed a well-developed, heavy crop of beans which people gather and utilize for feed for stock. Birds pick the fleshy part surrounding the seeds in the pods, leaving the seed capsules attached to one another. One side of the bean is generally picked clean, but occasionally both sides are cleaned, leaving the seed capsules attached and looking like the backbone of some small animal. It is astonishing to me to see the number of birds that find sustenance in Kapiolani Park.

No Pacific golden plover were seen in the park by me after April 26, and I had word from the east side of Oahu that they were gone from there by the 30th. They had gone to their breeding place in the Arctic. Though I saw returning birds from August 10, at first only pairs, later five, then ten for two days, there was no evidence that any of them were the birds I had under observation last season till August 27. By September 4, I was definitely sure that they were the former birds on their old beats. That would give them about 120 days or four months to fly to the Arctic, prepare their nests, hatch, rear their young, and fly back--if they did breed this year. They did not, as I expected, bring other birds to take up their respective feeding areas. They seem to have settled down for the third season in the park. Henshaw has stated, however, that the young may continue to arrive till November, so there is still a possibility that a change may take place. The birds that came in September, 1949, came back for the second time in August, 1951, but did not stay and seemed to leave younger ones to occupy their beats. These are now staying on for the third season. Of course there is no certainty about these conclusions, but they seem reasonably near to fact, and later evidence may substantiate or disprove them.

Since the foregoing was written, the plover have definitely changed. Young birds arrived about the end of October and by the end of November three pairs had taken up areas close to those occupied by the birds of the last two seasons using parts of what was previously neutral ground. The present birds are probably this season's chicks as distinguished by appearance and action. They appear slightly

smaller (probably thin in condition) a little darker on the upper parts. They are less active, standing still for longer periods, easily approached, some remaining till one is very close before taking wing, others running before the following observer.

The action of the Pacific golden plover for the last five years in Kapiolani Park is surely evidence that they have a regular system of distribution and occupancy.

REVIEW

Lindsay, H. A. Birds helped to colonize the Pacific. (Walkabout; the Australian Geographical Magazine, Vol. 19(10):13-16, 1953) This short article stressing the use of sea birds as navigational aids to the early Polynesians is of general interest. Parts of the article recount the legends of the discovery of New Zealand and the use of stars in navigation, but the value of sea birds (primarily boobies, terns, and frigate birds) in indicating the proximity of an island by their daily flights to and from surrounding ocean waters, is well described. Emphasis is placed, too, on the probable importance of migratory species, such as the golden plover, in showing the Polynesians which direction they might go to discover new lands. Although migratory species may have occasionally aided navigators, I feel that this point is somewhat conjectural and is overdrawn in the article. It does not seem likely to me that much of the east-west navigation, even to South America, by the Polynesians, could have been appreciably helped by migrating birds. Even north-south migration is likely to be so meandering, sporadic, and the individual birds often so scattered, that its value in showing direction to land must often be questionable. I think, too, that many migrating birds in the Pacific widely bypass islands, whether intentionally or not, and may travel for thousands of miles over the ocean before happening to encounter islands. Such migration could not have been of specific value to the Polynesian navigators except to give them faith that they might eventually reach land. This whole subject is of much interest, however, and one on which observations could and should be collected.

Frank Richardson

FIELD TRIP, November 22, 1953

Six members gathered at the Library of Hawaii at 7:00 a.m., waited a few minutes for late-comers, then sped across the Pali to the Kaneohe Marine Air Station, where we were met by Bob Pyle, Mrs. Smith, a newcomer to our group, and a station wagon, which miraculously held ten perfectly behaved little girl scouts, shepherded by Mrs. Barrere and Mrs. Summers, our guests for the day.

The ponds immediately provided birding, for there were a number of pintails, coot, and stilt close at hand. While we were watching these, Bob Pyle went across to the mauka pond, on which birds have been scarce since it was dredged several years ago. Here he discovered a bufflehead, among a small flock of pintails. Great excitement, although he it confessed, since the duck flew away before we got the telescope to the scene, this observer, at least, could never identify a bufflehead after that long distance view of this one.

The booby colony was next on our list. We were surprised at the large number of birds, estimated at between 500 and 600. Several were seen on nests, at least one of which contained an egg. We had been there some little time when the girl scouts came running to say that a booby was hanging by its tail! So it was--the feathers of the tail were tightly wedged into a crotch formed by the junction of two small stout twigs. The poor creature had evidently been dangling in this position for some time, head down, feet and wings flapping futilely. Mace and Bob to the rescue--Mace cut the confining branches, while Bob held the wings and neck, for the booby still had enough strength to try to bite his benefactors. Bob banded the bird, which was an immature, then it was placed on the bare rocks of the headland to recuperate. This seemed to take some time, for when we left some ten minutes later, the bird was still sitting, apparently dazed.

A brief look (for some of us) at a sea turtle, at brown boobies, for some of the rest of us, then back to the makai side of the ponds. Here we found the least tern again, probably the same one we saw in May, as it seemed to frequent the same area. Then the bird was in breeding plumage, but now in winter dress, with black bill and dark legs. We watched it for a long time, circling, fishing, resting. In fishing, it dropped rapidly to the water, making quite a splash as it scooped the fish from the water, but not going below the surface.

After watching the tern, tattlers, plover, turnstone, sanderling, and stilt, we lunched on the beach, then six of us went on to Kahana, where we found only two gallinule, plus seven tattlers. Then on to Kahuku, but here the hot rods have taken over the air strip, so we paused only briefly. We ended our day at Waipahu. There was no dearth of bird life here, but the afternoon sun made it almost impossible to identify the distant flocks. No count was attempted here.

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| Red-footed booby | 500-600 | Mixed flock of turnstone, plover | 80 |
| Bron booby | 5 | Tattler | 18 |
| Frigate bird | 4 | Sanderling | 8 |
| Pintail ducks | 26 | Stilt | 18 |
| Bufflehead | 1 | Coot | 11 |
| Plover | 46 | Barred dove | 22 |
| Turnstone | 28 | Kentucky cardinal | 2 |
| | | Brazilian cardinal | 2 |
| | | Ricebirds | 11 |

Grenville Hatch

A LATE ANNOUNCEMENT

Children not otherwise provided for in the school showings of the Audubon Screen tours may apply to Miss Louisa Palmer of Hanahauoli School, telephone 997870, to be included in a showing at 10:30 a.m., on January 11th.

NEW OFFICERS

New officers were elected at the meeting of December 21st. We welcome them, and pledge our help and support.

JANUARY ACTIVITIES

FIELD TRIPS

January 10th. To Makua, where we will walk along the old track, close to the ocean, toward Kaena Point. Mr. Thomas R. L. McGuire will lead us again. Meet at the Library of Hawaii at 8:30 a.m.

January 24th. To the trail leading to Pokakea Pass, weather permitting. Several of our members have scouted this trail, and report good birding. Meet at the Library of Hawaii at 7:00 a.m. Mace Norton, leader.

MEETING

January 18th, at the home of Mrs. Ruth R. Rockafellow, 2238 B Kalia Road, at 7:30 p.m. Screen tour business will consume much of the evening. Miss Grenville Hatch will lead the discussion on the wandering tattler.

HAWAII AUDUBON SOCIETY OFFICERS: President, Miss Grace Gossard; Vice-Presidents, Mrs. Blanche A. Pedley, Miss Margaret Titcomb; Secretary, Miss Irma Botsford; Treasurer, Miss Margaret Newman.

EDITOR, THE ELEPAIO: Miss Margaret Titcomb

MAILING ADDRESS: P. O. Box 5032, Honolulu 14, Hawaii. All officers have telephones listed under their names.