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FURTHER OBSERVATIONS OF GARRULAX ON OAHU

By Robert Pyle

During the last several years, there have been numerous reports of an unfamiliar bird being heard, and occasionally seen along the Poamoho Trail on Oahu. A detailed description of this bird was given by Paul Porter in the Elepaio, vol. 9, no. 11, May, 1949, and on the basis of a description submitted to the Smithsonian Institution in 1950, it was tentatively identified as a species of Garrulax (Elepaio, vol. 10, no. 11, May, 1950). Since then, Audubon hikers have heard its clear whistled notes frequently along a certain section of Poamoho Trail. It is recorded on almost every visit in April and May, but rarely at any other season.

A mile or so beyond the end of the jeep road, there is a section about 50 yards long where the trail is cut in the valley side and there is no tall vegetation blocking the view across Poamoho stream to the opposite ridge. The bird is often heard in this area, calling from the depths of Poamoho Valley. It isn't often encountered much earlier on the trail, although one was reported on the Christmas Count in December, 1953, from a point on the jeep road. This one must have wandered a bit from its normal haunts, as well as having been inclined to show off its vocal powers quite out of season. The bird may be heard anywhere along the trail from the "viewpoint" described above on for another mile or so until the trail approaches the head of Poamoho Valley. Here it crosses to the Helemano side of the ridge. The area around this ridge-crossing, in both Poamoho and Helemano Valleys, is where the garrulax is heard and seen most regularly. But so far as I know, it has never been reported from any farther along the trail.

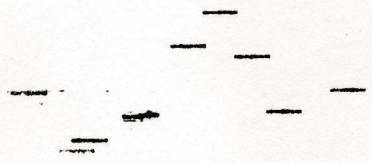
On April 18, 1953, a group of us heard birds calling at several spots along the trail. Again on May 10, we heard them at the same localities, and tried to whistle an immitation in response to their calls. After one such session of whistling back and forth, the bird abruptly ceased calling and a few moments later one suddenly appeared on the trail. This was at the ridge-crossing, and three of the party had a brief but good look at it. We were on the trail again on August 30, this time hiking all the way to the summit of the Koolaus, but none of these now familiar whistled calls were heard.

So on May 9, 1954, my wife and I hiked up Poamoho Trail in special quest of the garrulax. We left the car well back at the wide place in the jeep road and got off to an early start. About 100 yards beyond the "viewpoint" mentioned above, we heard the first garrulax quite close by on the north side of the trail. We responded to his whistles with the best immitations we could contrive; and it apparently showed interest by calling at more frequent intervals. However, it de-

clined to make an appearance and after about twenty minutes, it drifted off to the north. As the trail wound in and out for the next quarter mile, we heard birds calling from several points down in Poamoho Valley but our frequent attempts at immitation were not sufficient to entice them any closer.

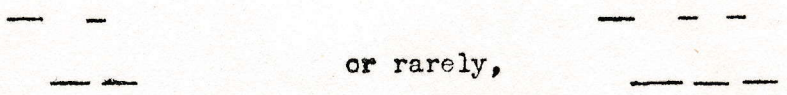
Then suddenly there was a whistle almost upon us, and in a moment a bird flew onto a bare branch of a small tree at eye-level about twenty-five feet ahead. It was joined almost instantly by another. A moment later they crossed the trail to the north side, and as we advanced, they worked around in the branches about ten feet above the ground, well below the upper canopy of tree foliage. As we watched, one of them alighted on a twig in an old rotting trunk. It reached over and flecked off the bark from the trunk, and then ate what were apparently insect larvae thus revealed. All the while the two were calling back and forth with soft whistles, using either a single note or sometimes two notes. In a few moments they had worked back out of sight. The whole episode hardly lasted forty-five seconds, but as is usually the case at such times it seemed like many minutes, and we were probably holding our breaths most of the time.

At this point it might be well to describe the calls in a little more detail. The full song consists of five to ten clear whistled notes, much like a human's whistle, and following a definite pattern. In the crude notation below, the length of the line indicates the duration of the note, and its position relative to the others corresponds roughly to its relative pitch. There are a number of different patterns used, but a typical one would go as follows:



At close range these notes are no longer heard as pure whistled tones, but instead are really quite intricate and beautiful sounds worthy of the finest notes in the song of a thrush or lark.

Quite frequently a shorter 4-note call was given in the following pattern:



or rarely,

The two birds we saw together were heard giving simply the last two notes of this call: a very short note followed without pause by a longer note on a lower pitch.

We continued along the trail for several hundred yards, occasionally whistling an immitation but getting no response until we had approached to almost within sight of the ridge-crossing. Pausing here, I whistled a few notes, and Poamoho Valley fairly erupted with garrulax whistles from near and far. There were too many voices to count in a second or two. Suddenly there were three birds in a tree-top perhaps thirty-five feet below us. We watched all three at once through the binoculars while a fourth was singing off to one side. There was an almost continuous outpouring of whistles for fifteen or twenty seconds before it gradually subsided.

One bird even gave a fairly creditable rendition of the first line of "Anchors Aweigh".

We had excellent views of several garrulax during the morning, and found that they look much like Porter's description in most respects. The five birds we saw looked identical as far as we could determine. About the size of a Chinese Dove or a mainland jay, these birds have a heavy straight jay-like beak. The outer half of the beak is yellow and the rest black. Extending back from the beak is a black triangular patch covering perhaps half the side of the head. We could see absolutely no white on the head as described by Porter. The rest of the plumage is divided into areas of three different hues, each hue remarkably uniform in color and well demarcated from the others. The remainder of the head, back, upper breast, and forewings is a soft silky olive beige. The lower breast, abdomen, and underside of the tail is white, somewhat dingy on the breast. The upperside of the tail is a rich rufous brown, and a slightly more pinkish version of this hue is found on the wing primaries. When the wings are folded and the bird is seen from above, these rufous primaries appear as two well-defined triangular patches nearly covering the lower half of the back. A very brief glimpse of the bird at eye level is apt to give one the impression of a female North American cardinal, although of course, much larger and without any crest.

The tail is proportionately quite long, and is often fanned out when the bird flies from branch to branch. When fanned out, each tail feather is tipped with a prominent white spot bearing some resemblance to the tail pattern of a Chinese dove. The central tail feathers are longest and the outermost tail feathers are shortest. When perched, the tail appeared long, straight-sided and slightly rounded at the tip.

When the wings are folded, some fine pure white fluff feathers may occasionally be seen protruding from under the wings.

By this time it was about 11:30 A.M. After noon, we started back, but only heard one half-hearted call during the return trip. Nevertheless, we felt that the quest had been thoroughly successful.

NA LAAU HAWAII
(Plants Belonging to Hawaii)

When I arrived in Hawaii in December, 1890, Honolulu was a small town. There was little building from the entrance to Manoa Valley out to Koko Head, all was open country. Pictures in the National Geographic Magazine of May 1954, pages 614-615 of Honolulu thirty years ago and now, show something of that. You can imagine what it was thirty-four years before that picture was taken. When I went to work on the Makaweli ranch in 1902, the Makaweli lands were all kula (open country); so were the flats of Mana and the slopes above Waimea and Kekaha. I roamed the lands of the Molokai ranch from August, 1899, to near the end of 1906. All the dry country was kula then, there were no pineapples or Hoolehua homesteads. Lanai, from when I went there in 1911 till 1923, was all kula except the small rain forest on the mountain top. Now, there are many thousands of acres of sugar cane and pineapples on those three islands on what was originally kula land. No one knows how many species of native plants have been exterminated by cultivation, building, and live-stock in that development for human needs. How many more will be destroyed if

the present rate of development continues, unless efforts are successful in establishing them in sanctuaries. Few, if any, besides myself are working to save the native grasses and small plants of the dry Hawaiian kula, and these are the native plants that are most in danger of extinction. When I think of the many thousands of acres of land that have been taken from the Hawaiian kula plants, I cannot believe that any citizen would grudge a little three-acre portion of the western slope of Diamond Head to be dedicated as a living museum for these plants to be grown under natural conditions.

The Governor and Commissioner of Public Lands are favorably interested in Na Laau Hawaii, probably to be under the Board of Agriculture and Forestry, but the demand for house lots so close to the city is so great that there may be difficulty in holding all of the site for native plants. However, we will endeavour to secure for this purpose all of the ridge we have been planting on down to the town boundary at about 100 feet elevation. That would leave below the Army trail perhaps between one and two acres of a beautiful site for a cultivated and watered arboretum of native trees and above the Army trail to where the converging valleys on each side almost join at about 400 feet elevation for the dryland trees and plants without cultivation or water provision. If that is deemed excessive, we will bargain for the precipitous hillsides at the top and as much of the slopes as can be spared, say from 150 feet elevation. This surely cannot be denied us. For the last two years I have concentrated planting on the lower slopes from the Army trail upwards and have put a tremendous amount of seed of rare trees and plants into the ground there that were gathered by willing helpers. I owe it to them, if for nothing else, to make as good a case as possible to hold this portion where some rare Hawaiian plants are already growing. If the decision is against that, we will hold out for the steep hillside on which I am now planting and scattering seed where it is necessary to have trails dug to be able to traverse it at all. I find on that hillside the native plants have survived the drought years well. The area of Na Laau Hawaii where we have been planting has so many advantages over any other ridge on the outside of Diamond Head for a living museum of our dryland plants, and so much work has already been done in connection with it that it would be a great pity if the site must be abandoned now. Personally, I could not be actively interested in any other.

At the present time, we are keen for tourist attractions. I can imagine what an interesting Hawaiian exhibit Na Laau Hawaii will be in another fifty years when almost all the dry lands will be under human use if it is continued as planned now as a natural dry forest with open country vegetation alongside and a wonderful view of Honolulu from the top of the open kula. I am not working on a monument to myself but to the much neglected dryland plants. The greatest honor that can be accorded me in connection with it will be if the Hawaii Audubon Society make provision that it takes a perpetual interest in its continuation as planned. The only difference from a natural scene would be the trails and perhaps some labels.

The following are a few species that have apparently gone for good in the time I have been here: A spatter work form of a leaf of what Dr. Earle E. Sherff considers was a variety of Munroidendron racemosum made by Mr. Francis Gay could not be identified by Dr. Joseph Rock with any plant known to botanists. Nor could a description of it as seen by myself on Makaweli lands, now canefields, be recognized by Mr. Chalres N. Forbes then botanist at the Bishop Museum. Mr. Gay had the Hawaiian name as pokalakala. If it originally was pookalakala (hairy head), it would well describe the tree with its smooth grey bark and few woolly leaves and flower pani-

cale on the blunt end of its otherwise bare branches. Forbes afterwards found trees of it at Nonou and Haupu on Kauai and named the species Tetraplasandra racemosa in Occasional Papers Vol. VI No. 4 of the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum, 1917. He stated at the time that it differed in "...a character which excludes it from the generic limits of Tetraplasandra as hitherto known". He goes on to say: "The panicale is strictly pendulus...those in the illustration being bent in order to mount them on the herbarium sheet." This give an idea of the length of the hanging flower panicale. An herbarium sheet is 16 inches long so the panicale would be eighteen or twenty inches long. It certainly was a peculiar looking tree. The illustrations of the leaf cluster and flower panicale are exactly as I saw them. Dr. Earle E. Sherff in Botanical Leaflets Number 7 published by himself, Chicago, Illinois, December 26, 1952 created a new genus for the type specimen and called it Munroidendron in honor of myself with some kind remarks on my botanizing efforts. I certainly much appreciate the honor. He named the species M. racemosum and the variety Forbes found on Haupu ridge near Nawiliwili (one tree only) M. racemosum Forbesii. I harbor hopes of getting seed of this variety or of the type specimen or another variety Sherff named M. racemosum Macdanielsii which was collected by Laurence H. Macdaniels.

On Molokai, kokio (Kokia cookei or drynorides) has disappeared in nature though preserved in cultivation through the efforts of Dr. Joseph Rock, Mr. George P. Cooke and my brother James G. Munro. On Lanai, a variety of Euphorbia lorifolia, Haplostachys munroii and Abutilon erimetopetalum at present cannot be found. The first covered thousands of acres of what is now pineapple fields in the memory of three persons in the early 1900s. The other two were my discoveries and it is hoped that they may still be found. Plants of all three were flourishing at the Kanepuu dry forest in 1935 but could not be found in 1952. As that interesting forest in now clear of cattle, dormant seed of these may germinate and survive and the species yet be saved. This shows the precarious position of our kula plants. Na Laau Hawaii is planned to be carried on under natural conditions as near as possible. Watchfulness against foreign plants, spreading of seed of natives, and some thinning when necessary is all that is needed to make it successful.

George Munro

FIELD TRIPS

On Sunday, May 23, 1954, over a dozen of us went to Poamoho valley. It was foggy and cool, and full of the song of crickets. This seemed to lend an intriguing atmosphere to the fern-covered valley, especially for those who were there for the first time. We braved the onslaught of chilly wind and rain until we had penetrated the territory of the rarer birds, then we turned back, for with the rain, wind, and the lack of flowering ohia, the birds were very scarce. A few elepaio, apapane seen at a distance, the ever-present white-eyes and leiothrix, were seen. We had set out with high hopes of seeing the garrulax, knowing of Bob Pyle's experience as told in this issue, but heard only one short song near the entrance of the trail and saw not even a feather of him.

Tiare Emory

FIELD NOTE

On June 9th, at the mud flat near Kuliouou, ten plover were seen. Their plumage was just beginning to turn into breeding plumage. There were also twenty-five to thirty turnstone in the flock.

JULY ACTIVITIES

FIELD TRIPS

July 11: To Green Valley. This will be a new trip for our group, and will be in the nature of an exploration, to see what we may find here in the way of bird life. Meet at the Library of Hawaii at 7:00A.M.

July 25: To Waiawa. This was a most popular trip last year, with a delightful easy trail for some distance, banks of the ditch studded with flowers and ferns. The last part of the trip is steeper, and we are warned that we may come back through the tunnel--bring your flashlight if you like. Meet at the Library of Hawaii at 7:00 A.M.

MEETING

July 19 at 7:30 P.M. in the Community Board Room of the Y.W.C.A.

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