

# THE ELEPAIO

Journal of the  
Hawaii Audubon Society



For the Better Protection  
of Wildlife in Hawaii

Volume 15, Number 11

May 1955

## THE HAWAIIAN BAT By E. H. Bryan, Jr.

It may seem strange to discuss bats in a publication devoted to birds, but since the native mammals of Hawaii number only two, and one of these, the Hawaiian rat, probably arrived with the Polynesian ancestors of the Hawaiians as a stowaway, it may not seem out of place to say a word about the other species here; besides, it can fly.

The native Hawaiian bat was described by Harrison Allen as Atalopha semota in 1890. Students of bats now have classified it in the genus Lasiurus, so that its scientific name now is Lasiurus semotus (H. Allen).

Comparatively little has been written about the Hawaiian bat, chiefly because very few persons have made observations on it. That is a good reason for putting on record every bit of information which seems pertinent and accurate.

One of the few recent articles is "Occurrence and Behavior of the Hawaiian Bat", by Paul H. Baldwin, *Journal of Mammalogy*, 31 (4): 455-456, November 1950. He notes some 20 records of the mammal between 1938 and 1949. They include various places in Kau, Kilauea, Puna, South Kona and Hamakua, all on the island of Hawaii. He states that they seem to be found in both wet and dry regions, chiefly between sea level and 4,000 feet, but avoiding dense, wet forests. Times of day when seen in flight were between 3:00 and 7:00 p.m., ordinarily after the sun had set or gone behind the mountains. Flight generally was rather steady, except when foraging, when they would dip and circle, over openings in woods and over streams and ponds near the seashore. They were reported to roost in branches of Pandanus. They seem to breed in early summer.

William H. Meinecke has given some interesting notes on his observations on Hawaiian bats to Bishop Museum. In November 1947 he presented a specimen which he had captured near his home at Waiohinu, Kau, Hawaii. He again saw a specimen on the evening of July 9, 1954. Concerning it he says, "I saw a single Hawaiian bat flying over my house in Waiohinu. It made several rounds, flying just over the house, in front of or in back of the big avocado tree in the back yard, around a few trees and back again over the house - always in the same direction (clockwise). It was around 6:30 p.m., between sunset and dark."

Later Mr. Meinecke wrote as follows: "In the early evening of November 12, 1954, I saw a single bat flying around the large avocado tree in my back yard in Waiohinu. I first saw it at 6:10 p.m. In a few minutes it was gone, and I immediately made note of it. Last Friday evening, November 19, 1954, again at 6:10 p.m., I saw a bat flying around the same tree. It appeared to be the same one seen on the 12th. All of a sudden I saw two bats, of about the same size. The first bat chased the other one far up in the sky. They circled high over my house in short quick circles several times, then



moved toward Kona, still "fighting" and flying quite high till they disappeared in the distance. On earlier occasions, when two bats would be flying together, they would be close together most of the time and apparently hunting together, although now and then one would take a dive at the other for a brief moment and then continue their flight. If my memory is correct, one usually was a little larger than the other, - most likely being male and female. Since the two bats seen on November 19th were of about the same size and since the "attack" was a long, drawn out or sustained fight, I presume that they were both males, evidently from different roosts. Most likely they would not be male and female, mating while feeding."

Although most bat specimens and observations have come from the island of Hawaii, several near Mt. Hualalai, bats have been found on other Hawaiian Islands also. George C. Munro collected a bat on Kauai, October 16, 1893. Dr. C. M. Cooke, Jr. stated that he had heard bats on the cliffs of Haupu, Kipu district of Kauai, about the middle of the 1890's. Dr. Cooke also stated that about 1891 or 1892, a bat flew into the Mossman home, near the corner of Beretania and Fort Streets. Margaret Mossman had told him about the incident, when she came to Funahou next day. A. H. Winkley picked up a bat on his lawn at Puunene, Maui, November 3, 1936. Dr. C. E. Pemberton collected a bat which he found "asleep in a kukui tree," at Honokaa, Hawaii, 900 feet elevation. C. E. Blacow collected one at Hamakua, Hawaii; and Julian Monsarrat collected one at Kapapala Ranch, Hawaii, October 7, 1905. These last specimens are preserved in Bishop Museum.

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Letter from Rockport, Texas:

... I had planned to stay some days at Brownsville, drove blithely into town, and found every motel in the area filled. We ended up in a second rate hotel in Harlingen, and I had a fine day in the Santa Ana refuge, where my biggest thrills were the Derby flycatcher and the green jay. To see both of these gorgeous birds practically at the same moment, was almost too much. The green jay is, I think, the most spectacular bird I have seen. With great reluctance I left the area, but now consider it providential that we came on. Mrs. Hagar has been most cordial and I have been out with her three times - she goes every morning at seven, so I've had two morning trips. Yesterday she took me out for two and one-half hours and I have learned a lot. I almost believe that I'm sure of the Western and red-backed sandpipers - those little ones have been an awful confusion to me - and there are plenty of other things she has helped on, too. The black skimmers have been the most entrancing things here. To see them in the clouds - hundreds of them, is marvelous. They are so graceful - such effortless and beautiful flight. Then later when I was alone, I found several hundreds sitting on the sand, only a few yards away.

When we leave here, on the 23rd, I'll stop at Aransas to have a look at the whooping cranes. Mr. Davis says the best way is to go by boat, that one can get fairly close, and that the cranes seem to pay no attention to a boat. However, unless the weather moderates, boats cannot go out, for the wind is blowing a gale. Mr. Hagar tells me they have an observation tower, and a scope, and that one can always see them fairly well from that. I hope to see sandhill cranes, too.

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Grenville Hatch

#### RECENT LITERATURE

Report of the Conservation Council for Hawaii. Fifth Annual Meeting, February 11, 1955

This mimeographed, yearly report of the Council should be of interest to, and read by all members of the Audubon Society. Of special interest to the Society are the reports on the Committee for Game Birds and Mammals by John R. Woodworth, and the one on Birds Other Than Game Birds by Joseph E. King. The report has no table of contents, or index, and is a very poor job of printing.



The following letters were sent out by the Society:

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE MEMBERS OF THE TERRITORIAL LEGISLATURE

February 25, 1955

GENTLEMEN:

The Hawaii Audubon Society, organized to promote the better protection and appreciation of wild life in the Hawaiian Islands, is heartily in accord with the completion of the transfer to the Hawaii National Park of lands involved in the so-called "Kalapana Extension" on the Island of Hawaii. This transfer was previously authorized by both the Territorial Legislature and the United States Congress.

The Society would like to point out that these lands are of little value for agriculture, but that they do contain kipukas or "islands" of native vegetation and attendant wild life within the lava waste. These kipukas are unique and afford sanctuary for many species of native flora and fauna. Once destroyed, they can never be replaced. They serve their best use to the people of the Territory when preserved in their native state for present and succeeding generations to see and enjoy. The same is true of the marine life along the shore parts of this tract; as well as the heiaus and other archeological remains found in these lands, among which are some of the finest on the island.

The Hawaii Audubon Society believes that the Hawaii National Park is the organization best fitted to take proper care of these valuable assets.

The Park assures this Society that neither the Ainahou Ranch nor Kalapana village are involved in the land transfer. Furthermore, we are assured that the lands involved do not include any homes now occupied by persons of Hawaiian descent, or any plots of land now cultivated.

When this land transfer is completed, the Park has agreed to build a motor highway from the present Chain of Craters Road to the Park boundary near Kalapana village. This highway will make the scenic attractions of the country and its wild life more accessible for people to visit and enjoy. It will provide means for speedier and more adequate protection against possible fires in this area, and will serve as a safety route for people in Kalapana village and neighboring regions should the county road now serving them be blocked by fire, flood, earthquake or lava flow.

The cost of construction and maintenance of this highway will be borne solely by the United States Government. Since supplies and labor for its construction will probably be obtained locally, the Territory stands to gain considerably from gross income taxes and other taxes on materials and services involved in its building; from gasoline taxes incident to its use after construction; and from income from increased land values along the circle route.

The Hawaii Audubon Society therefore respectfully requests you to do what you can to expedite transfer of these lands to Hawaii National Park so that the natural heritage present in these lands will be better preserved and made more available for the enjoyment of the people of Hawaii and visitors both now and in succeeding generations.

Respectfully,

HAWAII AUDUBON SOCIETY

Robert L. Pyle, President



Letter to Honorable Elizabeth Farrington, Delegate from Hawaii.

March 5, 1955

It is the understanding of the Hawaii Audubon Society that Mr. William J. Nobriga, Senator from Hawaii Island to the Legislature of the Territory of Hawaii, has submitted a brief to the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, House of Representatives in the United States Congress. In substance this brief requests that certain lands which are part of Hawaii National Park be withdrawn from the Park for the purpose of grazing by privately owned domestic livestock, or that such grazing be permitted on these lands although the lands remain under the jurisdiction of the Park.

The Hawaii Audubon Society emphatically protests against this or any other move to take away from Hawaii National Park any lands which are now part of the Park or which are in the process of being incorporated into the Park. The Society takes this stand for the following reasons:

1. The lands of Hawaii National Park were chosen and set aside by the Congress of the United States for the express purpose of preserving the wildlife and other natural features in their primitive state. These lands are for all the people of the United States and their posterity to appreciate and enjoy, and it was not intended that they be used for the immediate profit of a few local ranchers exclusively.

2. The areas involved, which lie adjacent to lands already leased or owned by Senator Nobriga and certain other persons, contain some of the choicest parts of the Park. Here are the only examples of upland and lowland native woodland, and the only large stands of mature native koa-mamani-naio forest in the Park. These forests form the major habitat of many wild birds during large parts of the year. They are the only areas in the Park in which are found the Nene or native Hawaiian goose and the Akepa, a native perching bird. Both of these are nearly extinct. In addition this section is one of the few areas anywhere on Hawaii Island where certain other rare species of native birds have been seen in recent years.

3. Experience has proven repeatedly in Hawaii that the native forests, especially the koa-mamani-naio type, cannot stand the ravages of grazing livestock. Permit this kind of forest to be grazed even for a short while and all its young trees and undergrowth, with the exception of a very few species, will be trampled to death or eaten. If over-grazing is allowed for a generation, the area will be reduced to patchy grassland dotted with a few dead trees and scanty shrubbery. This has already happened on pasture lands adjacent to the koa groves of the Park and to hundreds of thousands of acres of land pastured elsewhere on Hawaii Island. In fact more acres of forest have been sacrificed to grazing on Hawaii Island than to any other form of agriculture.

4. If the koa-mamani-naio forests and neighboring areas are withdrawn from the Park, fire hazards there and on some remaining portions of the Park will increase while fire fighting by the personnel of the Park will be greatly hampered. Some areas such as that about the summit of Mauna Loa volcano and parts of Kilauea volcano's rift zone where volcanic eruptions are most likely to occur, will be cut off completely from other parts of the Park. Roads and trails to these areas could not be maintained by the Park nor new ones built there.

5. Withdrawal of lands from Hawaii National Park would set a dangerous precedent which would encourage similar withdrawals from other National Parks.

The Hawaii Audubon Society, therefore, earnestly requests that you do everything possible to prevent any land withdrawals from Hawaii National Park and to keep it intact. We would appreciate knowing your views on this matter, and if possible we would like to be informed of the status of any legislation pertaining to this.

Respectfully requested,  
HAWAII AUDUBON SOCIETY  
Robert L. Pyle, President



FIELD TRIPS

Kapalama Heights - February 27, 1955

A group of five of us met on Sunday, February 27, to bird the trail behind Kamehameha School with the intent to devote most of our efforts to spotting the mocking bird. We hung around the entrance of the trail both at arrival and departure, but neither saw nor heard the bird. A chilly wind was probably responsible for poor birding in general, as we saw only a few elepaio and leiiothrix, which ordinarily are rather numerous. The same was true of the cardinal and doves. The trail was overgrown and we became confused about the various paths we came across, so we did not go any distance into the mountains.

I spoke to Mr. Donald Mitchell, an Audubon member who resides at Kamehameha School, who said that he had not heard the mocking bird for several months. He spoke of the possibility of their tendency to disappear for a while each year and wondered if there was any connection between this and a migration tendency. He agreed to let the writer know when he next hears them so we could plan another trip to the area.

Grace Gossard

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Pa Lehua - March 13, 1955

Despite unpromising weather eleven persons gathered for the bird walk to Pa Lehua. Having parked cars near the beginning of trail No. 19, we set out along the ridge. A few barred doves and Kentucky cardinals had been seen along the road on the way up. Cardinals continued to make themselves heard for a short time on the trail, but our attention was drawn to the notes of leiiothrix, house finch, apapane, elepaio, white-eye, and amakihi, most of which seemed to be numerous. But the strong wind probably kept them in the shelter of the more dense foliage, for few were seen. There were very few lehua blossoms; some ohelo berries were picked along the trail. None of us could identify the evergreens a short distance below the cabins, but Tom McGuire says they are Cryptomeria japonica. A short side trip was made to the comparatively sheltered area surrounding these cabins near Palikea, but no birds were sighted.

We continued along the ridge, which becomes more and more heavily forested, until, as we neared a peak that was probably Puu Kaua, we were stopped dead in our tracks by the melodious and varied song of a bush warbler close by. After listening to him for a few minutes, and, as he showed no sign of "running down," we settled ourselves along the trail overlooking the wide Waianae valley and began eating our lunches while enjoying the warbler's serenade. He continued for 15 or 20 minutes longer with hardly an interruption. However, only two fleeting glimpses of his small grey form were obtained as he flew from one clump of trees to another.

Bob Pyle was startled by the sudden appearance of a much larger bird than he was looking for - a spotted dove. A white-tailed tropic bird was seen as we looked down on Lualualei.

A few more warblers were heard and two or three were seen farther along the ridge, and also on the way back. As a light drizzle had set in, we did not linger much on the return trip. A short stop at East Loch was rewarded by the distant sight of two night herons, a few plover, two or three coot and a few sanderling..

Persons making the trip were Bob and Billie Pyle, Grace Gossard, Joseph King, Clifford Pollard, Louise Haliburton, John Meissner, Irene Cornue, Mr. and Mrs. Enger of Tacoma, Washington, and the writer, Al Labrecque.

Al Labrecque

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Al Labrecque also writes:

On a hike with the Hawaiian Trail and Mountain Club to Ulupau Head, on March 20, no stilts were seen on the ponds along the highway. There was only one coot in sight. However, 12 ducks were seen on the mauka side, about 200 yards from the road.

There were an estimated 300 boobies at Mokapu Point and Moku Manu was thickly dotted with them. One frigate bird was seen. Our Marine escort did not permit us to do much "visiting" with the birds. There appeared to be numerous nests with eggs, but no young were seen in the few nests approached.



The unusually heavy rainfall of the past few months has given new life to the haole koa in this area, which has grown into high, dense thickets.

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Manoa Cliffs Trail - April 24, 1955

Members and guests of the Society hiked around Mt. Tantalus on the Manoa Cliffs Trail. A number of leiiothrix were seen and one of these small, red-billed birds approached close enough for everyone to get a good look. Some of the hikers also got a close view of the bright yellow amakihi.

Several elepaio were calling and a few were seen as progress was made along the trail. It was a first for some of the guests from California. White-eyes were moving through the undergrowth and a few were seen. Toward the end of the trail, a mound of leiiothrix feathers were found and the members speculated as to what might have happened to the bird.

After the Manoa Cliffs Trail hike was completed, most of the group returned home, but a few enthusiasts journeyed to Kaelepulu Pond to check on waterfowl. Quite a few stilt were in evidence and a number of coots and ducks could be seen at the distant edge of the pond. The water of the pond has gone down a great deal from the high mark of the past winter.

Golden plover and turnstones were flying around in mixed flocks. They seemed restless and eager to begin the spring migration to Alaska.

C. Pollard

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#### Report on Past Meetings:

At the March meeting a long discussion was held as to whether or not the Audubon screen tours should be contracted for the 1956 season. No vote was taken on the matter, because the President, Robert Pyle was not in attendance - being on the Mainland. After this discussion, Mr. Hector Munro showed colored slides of vegetation and flowering plants and trees on the Island of Lanai.

At the April meeting, Dr. Brinkman, a dentist from Eau Clair, Wisconsin, showed a couple of reels of colored movies, taken by him, of a duck project he has developed on a small stream running through his property.

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#### MAY ACTIVITIES

FIELD TRIPS: May 8 - To Poamoho, starting at 4:45 a.m. from the Library of Hawaii.  
May 22 - To Kaneohe and Ulupau Head, starting at 8:00 a.m. from the Library of Hawaii.

MEETING: May 16 - At the Aquarium at 7:30 p.m. Arthur Nakagami will show pictures of the birds and animals at the Zoo.

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#### HAWAII AUDUBON SOCIETY OFFICERS:

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DUES: Regular - \$2.00 per annum  
 Junior (18 years and under) - \$1.00  
 Life - \$50.00