

# THE ELEPAIO

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*For the Better Protection  
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## NOTES ON MAINLAND BIRDING

### Part III

By Grenville Hatch

Spring means migration to the mainland birder; warbler time in particular to the malihini birder. For me, it began in the latter part of March, at Okeechobee, Florida, when suddenly the swallows were everywhere. The air was full; many rested on the ground, and one of these latter gave me an opportunity to examine it closely, for it refused to fly out of the path of the station wagon in which the Audubon tour party was traveling. One of the members of the tour lifted it to one side, only to have it flutter back into its original position before Mr. Alexander Sprunt, the younger, could start the car. A second time it was lifted; this time we held it in our hands, admiring the steely-blue back and snowy breast, before removing it to a safe distance. It seemed uninjured, and quite unafraid.

Two weeks later in Georgetown, South Carolina, I stepped out into the dusk of a stormy evening to find the sky literally filled with swallows, thousands of them, swooping and swirling in their graceful wheeling flight. It was too dark to be sure of the kind, especially since I stood transfixed by the sight, too entranced to run for the binoculars. The next day the swallows were very much in evidence, perhaps remnants of the great flocks of the previous day?

That has been the only occasion when I have seen such a mass migration. The warblers have been "collected" a few at a time, probably a good way to see these fast moving, colorful little creatures. Each one has been a delight. The prothonotary I saw first in a lovely setting - Brookgreen gardens, near Myrtle Beach in North Carolina. It is a beautiful little bird of molten gold, set off by grey-blue wings. That was a rare jewel, and when yesterday in Nashville, dozens were nesting close to Lake Radnor, they were no less gems for being common.

One needs to be a poet to describe spring in the Great Smoky National Park. Here it was at its peak. The ground was covered with blue, white and yellow violets, spring beauties, adder's tongue, bluetts, and several species of trillium. The woods were indescribably lovely - dark pine mingling with the varying shades of delicate green of the leafing deciduous trees, blending into a symphony of color.

By great good fortune I happened onto the annual spring wild flower pilgrimage in the Smokies, attended by flower enthusiasts from widely separated places, college students who had been excused from three days of school in order to attend, and birders. Morning walks were held, led by the Park naturalist, and ornithologists from the University of Tennessee. More warblers - perhaps the most spectacular being the Blackburnian in its brilliant orange-yellow and black dress. It is a real achievement when I find a new one, and closely enough to study its colors and behavior. How they do hide behind leaves, and frequent the treetops, moving continually.



On the last walk in the Smokies, I met Dr. James Tanner of the University of Tennessee, who kindly permitted me to join him the next morning in Knoxville, on the annual spring count of the Tennessee Ornithological Society. This is held on the 1st Sunday of May, which they felt was too early this year to secure the largest count, coming as it did on the first day of the month. The group covers an area of about 50 miles in diameter, starting at 4 a.m. and counting until noon. The group then gathers at the Ijam's home for a picnic lunch, and to compile figures. The net result this year was 121 species, 4970 individuals.

Bird nesting boxes decorate many of the trees at the Ijam's place, unique in that the inner tube, which contains the nest, can be slipped out for examination. Two were removed for my inspection, one holding titmouse eggs, the other chickadee eggs. The bird was in the nest, flew off, but returned in a few minutes, and occasionally a bird remains in the nest while the container is in the hand.

Had I not been sure of spring before, it would be certain now, for here at Bowling Green, a pair of cardinals and a pair of robins have built their nests in the climbing roses on the narrow porch which runs in front of the motel rooms. Six feet from the ground, three feet from passers-by, they feed their hungry nestling, paying no attention to interested spectators.

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YOUNG HAWAIIAN STILT - AEO or KUKULUAEO  
(Himantopus himantopus Knudseni)  
By Ruth Rockafellow

I am a person that likes surprises, so when the phone rang about 9 o'clock on Monday, May 2, the thought occurred to me "well how nice and who might this be." The cheery voice of our Vice-President, Grace Gossard, greeted me with "How would you like to take care of a baby stilt?" Now, that WAS a surprise - I swallowed a couple of times during which time I was being told that Paul Breeze had received the baby and the Zoo was not prepared to hand-feed -- could the Audubon Society be of assistance. I rose to the bait and about 10 o'clock the bird, wrapped and tucked cozily in a blanket, and in a box, plus a box of pablum, arrived at my home.

I was given a few instructions, borrowed an eye dropper from my neighbor, the Zoo attendant mixed the first batch of pablum and from there on I was on my own. The bird was frightened, and so was I. I did not want to injure it, neither did I know how to "make" like a stilt mother. I picked the bird up and by accident stroked its head; the bill opened a bit and in went a droplet of food - it was not enough, but we were both worn out. About 45 minutes later I went through the same performance. The little thing never stood on its legs at any time. I felt of its craw, which was empty, so this time I made more of an effort because I felt more confident. All I managed was another droplet of food. I allowed more time to elapse and as I approached the box this time the little thing had one of its long legs sticking up at right angles. I tucked it under and told the bird that he had better eat or else, and with that the little thing peeped and opened its bill widely. In went a real drop of food. It swallowed, closed its eyes, rolled over on its side and was gone. Gosh, I was sad - it was the sweetest little thing, and I did so want it to survive.

The bird was picked up on a sugar cane road in Waipio, near Middle Loch in Pearl Harbor, by Mr. George Gilbert of the Board of Agriculture and Forestry, Fish and Game Division. Mr. Gilbert is on the ship, the Makua. He saw the stilt on the road about 5:30 p.m. Sunday and chased it about 500 yards before catching it. He was afraid a mongoose would get it and did not know that the little things run about as soon as they are hatched and that mama stilt knows all about this and takes care of her own. He took it home to care for it, but did not feed it. Monday morning he decided that his boat might be called out so perhaps it would be better to turn it over to the Zoo, and that is where this article began.



The description of the bird as observed by Miss Gossard and the writer is as follows: back - mottled black and golden brown; breast - buff; head and neck - mottled black and golden brown; bill - black,  $\frac{3}{4}$ " long, thick at base and pointed; eyes - black lines over each eye, black lines extending out from rear and front of eye; legs - dark brown 2" plus 1 length over all, semi-webbed feet, talons 1" in length; wings - very small, about  $\frac{1}{4}$ "; habit -- constant nodding of head.

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#### Report of MAY MEETING

The regular monthly meeting was held on Monday, May 16, at the usual time and at the usual place, and was attended by an unusually small number of people. There were three guests to swell the ranks: Mr. Arthur Roy, from San Diego, who is now making his home in the islands; Miss Mildred Anderson, also from San Diego, who will be in Hawaii for two years; and Mrs. Lester, a visitor from Pasadena.

Miss Margaret Titcomb gave a report on the action of the Executive board regarding the Audubon Screen tours. She said that there was general agreement that it would be best for the Society to spend its energy, as well as its funds on spreading the idea of conservation and increasing the knowledge of local birds. She read the letter (which follows below) which was sent to Mr. Short, prepared in collaboration with the members of the Executive board.

There was some discussion of whether a token repayment of funds should be made to the Foundations that have helped in the Screen tour program. Joseph King suggested that we designate a use for the funds that remain in the Screen tour account, and Margaret Titcomb suggested that this amount be set aside as a nest egg for a Sanctuary fund. The resident, Mr. Pyle, announced that he would welcome any other suggestions for the use of the funds.

It was agreed that the Society should start immediately to work out a program for the stimulation of conservation education. The hope was expressed that some of the members of the Society would be able to give a portion of their time to work with young people.

Mr. Pyle spoke of the Delegate's session at the Audubon Camp in Connecticut in June at which Mr. Joseph King will be our official delegate. It is hoped that Miss Grenville Hatch will be able to attend this session, also.

It was announced that Mrs. Ruth Rockafellow is now in charge of the distribution of the Field cards.

Mr. Arthur Nakagami showed his collection of slides of birds and animals in the Honolulu Zoo. All ye slackers who weren't in attendance, missed something worth seeing.

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#### New Members in the Hawaii Audubon Society:

Miss Alice Born  
Mr. Charles Hanson  
Mrs. R. W. Melander

Dr. George C. Ruhle, Hawaii National Park  
Mr. Al Stoops  
Mrs. H. H. Warner

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#### Recent Literature

Janssen, O. G. The Nene's Comeback. Nature Magazine, February 1955, p. 97.  
Richardson, Frank and Woodside, D. H. Rediscovery of the Nesting of the Dark-rumped Petrel in the Hawaiian Islands. Reprint from The Condor, vol. 56, Nov-Dec 1954, No. 6, pp. 222-223.



May 16, 1955

Mr. Wayne Short, Executive Assistant  
National Audubon Society  
1130 Fifth Avenue  
New York, N. Y.

Dear Wayne,

A few days ago the Screen Tour Committee met and talked over our situation thoroughly.

We are sorry to disappoint you - and ourselves, in many ways - but we have decided that we cannot attempt the program again next year.

The first reason is financial. From our evening and school programs we made a profit of about \$107.00. However, if we had not received the \$800 from the foundations, we could have had a loss of about \$693.00. The foundations' help has been vitally necessary both years. We could ask for it again, and get it perhaps. However, we have done less well the second year than the first, and feel no zest for asking for help again at present, as you can well understand.

Besides the financial angle there is the educational. The Audubon Screen Tours have proven their worth on the mainland and their worth is not in question. But Hawaii is so set apart from the mainland geographically that all scenes in those movies are farther off from knowledge and experience of most of us here than from citizens in any part of the mainland. And also it is likely that in our mixed population there is less appreciation and knowledge of the natural world than in most areas on the mainland. We feel very strongly that we should teach or stimulate teaching about Hawaii, and about conservation in Hawaii. It is becoming increasingly important in our small islands filled with many people.

When we have made a good start at that task we shall then feel ready again for your movies, keen to stimulate interest in other parts of the world. We do wish the movies would stress conservation more. Entertainment alone does not seem enough use of the opportunity to see those beautiful scenes and the life going on.

Of course we are disappointed in not going on now, for we and many others enjoyed the movies and the contacts we made in putting them on. There is one point that did hurt - that handicap of \$200 travel expense. It was a stroke of bad luck that our small organization had to pay it. Thank you for helping us all you could in other ways. And do tell us what we owe to National so that we can square off as soon as possible.

I think you will see from the above that our not going on is not a matter of losing interest or courage. We do not have the money back of us to do the job, nor the surety of getting along next year as well as the first two. And we think we can do more good at this time in devoting our efforts directly toward education in knowledge of our world here and the conservation of it.

Some day you will undoubtedly hear from us again and I hope you will then be willing to send along more of those fine films.

Sincerely yours,

Margaret Titcomb  
Chairman  
Hawaii Audubon Screen Tour Committee



FIELD TRIP

Poamoho - May 8, 1955

Seven bright-eyed and wide-awake birdwalkers, including two visitors, assembled at the Library at 4:45 a.m. on Sunday, May 8, for the hike along the Poamoho Trail.

Appropriately, the first bird to make his presence known to us was a rooster, who crowed at dawn (5:30 to you late sleepers) as we bowled along the highway. Cardinals whistled at us as we drove on toward Wahiawa.

Cars were parked at the entrance to the forest reserve. Although the jeep road continues for some two miles farther, a bad stretch just inside the forest reserve deterred us from driving on.

By six o'clock we were on the trail, where we encountered a series of light drizzles wafted down by the trade wind. Those of the party who remembered a certain very wet birdwalk on beautiful Poamoho had brought raincoats and soon donned them.

The birds, unlike the birdwalkers, voiced their joyous optimism on all sides. Liothrix, apapane, ricebirds, white-eyes and spotted doves joined in the chorus. While many birds were heard, only a few were seen.

The showers became lighter and less frequent, then practically ceased altogether. The sky remained mostly overcast and occasional strong gusts of wind swooped down ridge and valley.

The highlights of our excursion began to appear while we were still on the jeep road, when two bush warblers were heard and seen. Near the end of the road an iwi was seen in an ohia tree beside the trail.

The path was lined with low flowering plants. In addition to the ubiquitous Philippine ground orchid there was a profusion of four-petal pale pink blossoms, about an inch in diameter, growing on a small weed-like plant. It was identified by one member as "pearl flower." Thimbleberry bushes, with their snowy blossoms and large, juicy, red fruit, were quite plentiful.

Sandalwoods were in heavier foliage than usual. Half a dozen jacarandas were in full bloom at the bottom of a deep valley on the Waialua side of the ridge. A small bottle-brush shrub bloomed along the road. Everywhere, ohia bloomed in great profusion. In addition to the usual red variety, there were many orange, a few lemon yellow and an occasional coral colored one.

It was with keen anticipation that we approached "garrulax country" -- that stretch of trail between the "overlook" and where it crosses to the Helemano Valley side of the ridge. We were not disappointed. Soon we heard the loud, flute-like notes of the bird we had come to observe. At least two and possibly three, quite near the trail, sang for us several minutes before moving away in different directions. Fleeting glimpses were obtained of two of them. As their song is very much like a human whistle, it is easily imitated. But our imitations evidently fooled no one except other members of the party farther along the trail. No birds were attracted by our whistled "garrulax" tunes. The bird is about the size of the spotted dove, with a body shaped like that of a jay, and with large head and beak. It was nine o'clock when we heard this first group. Two more garrulax were heard at ten o'clock a couple of miles farther along.

Bird-walkers are generally thought of as old fuddy-duddies, who sit or dawdle along the trail. Those of us who are also members of the Hawaiian Trail & Mountain Club gaped



n astonishment when two Audubon members suggested going to the summit, "now that we've come this far." They had never been to the summit. So, in spite of a wet trail, we hiked on to the top. Considerable work had been done on the trail, evidently by the military. Low places were covered with "corduroy"; the sedge, *cladium augustifolium*, which grows all along the trail, had been cut and laid on the pathway, making the wet terrain less slippery.

Unfortunately, the wind at the summit was so strong that one could hardly stand up. After a quick look at beautiful Kahana and the saw-tooth ridge of the rugged Kaaawa outcrop, we were glad to turn back. Was this the first time that bird-walkers reached the summit? No birds were seen up there.

Once more, Poamoho had proved highly rewarding and we left it, saying - we must come back soon, preferably when Tom McGuire can come along to answer our questions, "What is this shrub with the beautifully embossed leaves?" and "What is that, growing on the ohia above the trail, with a foot-long stalk like the branch of a monkey-puzzle tree, and with a fringe at the ends?"

Al Labrecque

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#### UNE ACTIVITIES

- FIELD TRIPS: June 12 - To Waimano. Meet at the Library of Hawaii at 7:00 a.m.
- June 26 - Mr. McGuire is going to lead the trip to Peacock Flats. Meet at the Library of Hawaii at 8:00 a.m.
- MEETING: June 20 - At the Aquarium at 7:30 p.m. A film about the Pacific Islands from the Bishop Museum collection will be shown.

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#### WAI AUDUBON SOCIETY OFFICERS:

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