

# THE ELEPAIO

Journal of the  
Hawaii Audubon Society



For the Better Protection  
of Wildlife in Hawaii

Volume 15, Number 3

September 1954

## THE CREEPERS OF HAWAII By Blanche A. Pedley

There are six species or subspecies of creeper found in Hawaii - one endemic to each of the main islands. Except for the red one on Molokai, all are small little birds, yellowish-green or olive-green in color. The difference in coloring of the green members of the creeper family is very apparent when a comparison of their skins is made. The male birds vary from the bright mustard-yellow of the Lanai male to the almost grey olive-green of the male on Kauai. The difference is much less marked among the females, all being more or less a greyish olive-green. In the field, the creeper is so similar in appearance to the amakihi that it is sometimes very difficult to tell the two apart. However, there are characteristics for which one may look - the bill of the creeper is straight, the bill of the amakihi is curved; the creeper runs up and down the trunks and larger branches of trees looking for insects, the amakihi hunts more leisurely for its food among the foliage and smaller branches; and the creeper has a characteristic "chip-ping" note quite different from any note of the amakihi.

The Olive Green creeper of Hawaii [*Loxops maculata mana* (Wilson)] has been appropriately named, as he is the most completely olive-green of any of the creepers. Munro describes him as "light green above, below green with yellowish tinge, wings and tail brown. Bill straight. Length about 4.5 inches." Strangely, there does not seem to be an Hawaiian name for this little bird, although it is probably the most commonly seen of the six species.

Palmer found it quite numerous in the upper forest of Kona in the early 90s, but less numerous in the districts of Hamakua and Hilo on the northeast side and in Puna on the east side of the island. In 1902, Henshaw reported it as being rare throughout the Olaa woods but numerous in the forests of mixed koa and ohia along the Wailuku River. He also found it to be quite common in the koa woods above the volcano where it still seems to be quite common.

Walter Donaghho, in his Journal of Ornithological Work during the Summer of 1937, Hawaii National Park, reported seeing them several times on the slopes of Mauna Loa. On September 12th, he had the following interesting experience on the trail to Mauna Kea:

".....stopped to rest under a small koa tree. Suddenly I was aware that the tree was full of birds, a flock! There were easily 100 birds there, and they came down, seemingly one by one, to look me over, then fly out of the tree and across the trail. It took a long time to 'drain' that tree of that flock."

In the ELEPAIO of November 1952, Ruth Rockafellow reported that she frequently saw the creeper while vacationing in the Hawaii National Park area. On September 16th, she saw nine on the Bryson's Cliff trail and Hilina Pali.



The Lanai creeper [*Loxops maculata montana* (Wilson)] was called alauwahio by the Hawaiians. The male was yellowish olive-green above, lemon yellow on the lower parts, about 5 inches in length and the brightest of the creepers in coloring. The female was much less colorful.

Palmer found this species on the southwest side of Lanai from about 1500 feet elevation upward to the highest peaks. It was perhaps not so very rare at that time, but difficult to get to on account of the dense brush. Although a pair was seen in March 1937, it has been scarce for sometime and is likely extinct.

The creeper on Maui [*Loxops maculata newtoni* (Rothschild)] was also called alauwahio by the Hawaiians. Although the male is quite yellow about the throat and breast, it is not as bright as the one on Lanai and is greener.

Those who studied the bird when it was more common believed its habits to be varied somewhat from those on the other islands. Henshaw noted that the Maui creeper not only hunts along the main trunks of the trees and upon the large limbs but also frequents the underbrush, descending even to the ground. He believed this unusual behavior to be due to the absence of the elepaio on Maui, which is essentially a bird of the low underbrush though not exclusively confined to it. Because the underbrush has been unoccupied by other birds, this creeper has changed its habits and has extended its hunting grounds from the trees to the scrub. Upon a few occasions he saw it feeding upon nectar from the ohia, but considered this to be a rare habit.

Perkins also noted them feeding on the nectar of the lehua flowers. He saw them hold down large moths and tear off the wings before eating them. He also noticed their great aversion to owls and that they became greatly excited when one flew over head. He thought it probable that in past times the owls preyed upon the creepers as they lack the objectionable odor of the other green birds.

In 1892, Palmer discovered the creeper in the thick forest on the slopes of Haleakala, in the Makawao district, but it was rather rare and was found only on that side of the mountain. A few years later, Henshaw found it common in the woods of Haleakala at 4000 to 5000 feet particularly in the vicinity of Olinda where it was, at that time, the most common of the Maui birds. Munro saw a small group on the Kula pipeline trail in 1936 and, in 1951, Hannah Lou Bonsey reported that it could be seen occasionally in the Waikamoi Forest.

It is quite likely that the beautiful red creeper of Molokai [*Loxops maculata flammea* (Wilson)] has become extinct, unless it has found refuge, as Munro hopes, on the elevated plateau between Wailau and Pelekunu Valleys. The Hawaiians called it kakawahie, which translated literally means "to break up fire wood," referring to the chipping call of the bird. This bird differs entirely in color from the yellowish green of the other species. The male is mostly scarlet varying in shades on different parts of its body. The female is brown with some scarlet markings. The young males vary in coloring between the brown of the female to the scarlet of the adult male. It seems to have been the most friendly and curious of all the creepers, coming up close enough for an observer to take in every detail.

About 1890, when the Rothschild collection was being made, it was common in all the upper regions of Molokai, from the deeper valleys up to the highest peaks.

The Oahu creeper [*Loxops maculata maculata* (Cabinis)] was first described by Professor Cabinis about 1851 from an adult female and an immature male. The name maculata refers to the spotted wing coverts of the female and young. Occasionally they are also found on the male. This is the only one of the creepers to have spots. It also is yellow and olive-green in color and very easily mistaken for the amakihi which is much more common in the Oahu forests than is the creeper. It, like the species on Lanai and Maui, was called alauwahio by the Hawaiians.



Perkins says he first found it on the east side of the Waianae mountains and saw it abundantly in the forest at Wahiawa in the years 1892 to 1903. He also saw it at Kawai-loa. In recent years, it has been reported on the Palehua trail (April, 1946), on the Poamoho trail (June, 1947), the Kalena trail (May and October, 1948) and the Aiea Heights trail (July, 1950).

The Kauai creeper [*Loxops maculata bairdi* (Stejneger)] was called akikiki or akiheke by the Hawaiians. This bird is much greyer than the other species and appears to be chunkier. He is brownish-grey above tinged with olive green toward the tail and on the wings. Below he is quite light, being almost white on the chin and breast.

In the ELEPAIO of January 1947, Gordon Pearsall reports having seen the creeper in September 1946 near a ranger's cabin at Kokee, at the head of Waimea Canyon. This is what he writes:

"After breakfast I sat on a log among the trees at the edge of the clearing about the cabin. Koa, Lehua and Eucalyptus were the common trees. Some Sequoia had been planted about the cabin and were doing very well. Among the Koa and Lehua flitted Iiwis, Apapanes, Amakihis, White-eyes in small flocks and Anianiaus. I noticed two birds that reminded me of the Brown Creepers of the States. They climbed up the trees and around branches uttering a continual chipping note. They often moved along the underside of branches or head down on tree trunks, carefully searching for insects. They were olive-brown above tinged with olive-green on wings and tail. The underparts were olive-buff, nearly white on the chin and throat and yellow on breast and abdomen. They were Kauai Creepers."

For all of the above species, the classification of the family Drepaniidae as named and arranged by Dean Amadon has been used. This classification can be found in a review of Dr. Amadon's monograph on the Drepaniidae in the ELEPAIO of March 1951.

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#### NOTES ON MAINLAND BIRDING By Grenville Hatch

I landed in San Francisco on June 10th, after a lapse of many years away from the mainland, and mainland birds. In addition to not having been actively interested in birds when on the mainland last, I found that I had forgotten so much that only the very obvious birds, like the robin, were familiar to me. I was more fortunate than I deserved - Ruth Fahl, Howard Cogswell and Hans Meinhardt all came to my rescue. Ruth and I went birding together in Golden Gate Park four times during the ten days I was in San Francisco. Howard took me on a trip starting from the Cliff House to down the Peninsula, spending the entire day, and Hans took me to a Caspian tern colony which compares with our booby colony. Had it not been for the help of these three I would be in worse straits than I am for recognizing birds.

Those of you who remember Ruth will be interested to hear about her little Martha, a darling child 28 months old, who is already a veteran bird walker. She never seems to tire, and already knows an astonishing number of birds. It was amazing to see her point out a mallard duck, saying its name, a quail, and several other birds. Golden Gate Park is not far from their home, and a smaller park, containing a little lake is less than a block away, so Martha gets plenty of opportunity to learn her birds, and is always told the name of what she is looking at. Ruth is, of course, proficient in bird lore, and tried to teach me not only the look, but the songs, also. She was instrumental in arranging a trip through Marin County, on which I was thrilled to see my first American egret, snowy egret, and great blue herons.



With Howard I learned the pigeon guillemot, the cormorants (although sad to state I still cannot distinguish between the sub-species), pelicans, both brown and white, and too many others to mention. Howard knew just what bird would be in every clump of bushes down the entire peninsula, I think. During that week in San Francisco I was shown about sixty species of birds, clearly. That was wonderful, but how I need some tutoring now! My bird walking friends know that I rely heavily upon my ears, and what frustration to catch a glimpse of a little brown bird, too quick to see identifying marks, and to hear a completely unrecognizable call or song! California friends would no doubt be amused to know that one of my most thrilling moments after I was thrown on my own was when I sneaked up on an unknown songster, so that from henceforth I shall know that song of a very common bird - the spotted towhee. A few days later I thrust my head into an opening in a clump of willows, and found myself nose to beak, so to speak, with the same bird.

We have driven for the most part along the coast route, stopping very frequently at strategic points, and staying several days at a time in good spots. One of these was at Bandon, on the Oregon coast. There is a magnificent stretch of beach, with many rocky islets just off shore, upon which thousands of birds breed. Seagulls virtually cover the tops of the islets, while pigeon guillemots, which are easy to identify because of a large white patch at the shoulder, and bright red feet, are to be seen on the steep sides, and fishing off shore. Cormorants are numerous, also. I spent many hours on the beach watching them, incidentally nearly freezing to death, despite having on every warm garment that I own. Bird watchers in these parts have to be hardy.

Pettingill's "Guide of Bird Finding West of the Mississippi" is a wonderful help. Let me confess right now that I do not always find the birds that I am supposed to, or do not recognize them when I do, but we get into places which are delightful aside from the bird population, which a stranger would never find otherwise. There are also extra dividends, like the large sea lion which I watched off Point Reyes, although being disappointed at not being able to get down the steps to watch the birds off the point, as I had hoped. That was the point, you will remember, which figured so largely in Mrs. Reynolds' picture.

On Monday of this week I went to the Pittock Sanctuary here in Portland, which is maintained and owned by the Portland Audubon Society. There are about 25 acres, containing a pond, a creek, and varying types of vegetation. Nesting boxes are many, and feeding stations are maintained. I spent some very enjoyable hours watching the warblers (three varieties), bush tits, chickadees, and several unknowns. One delightful feature which should appeal to the unenergetic watcher is a large glassed-in porch on Audubon House, on the premises, where one can look out on feeding stations and a bird bath, and watch the parade. The house contains a beautiful collection of original bird paintings, nest collections, a library where I saw our own ELEPAIO, a meeting room, with a fireplace, and an adjoining kitchen. The caretaker made us welcome, and showed us the various collections. Portland Audubon Society schedules bird walks each week from March through June only. I have missed both walks and meetings everywhere I have been so far - a matter of regret, since I would certainly welcome more instruction.

I miss my good friends at home, and send aloha and greetings to you all.

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HAWAIIAN BAT SEEN IN KAU, HAWAII: William H. Meinecke, recently retired to his home at Waiohinu, Kau, Hawaii, after many years connection with the University of Hawaii, recently sent the following note to E. H. Bryan, Jr., at the Bishop Museum.

"This evening, July 9, 1954, I saw a single Hawaiian Bat flying over my house, in front or in back of the big avocado tree in the back yard, around a few other trees, and back again over the house, - always in the same direction (makai to mauka on the Kona side and of course mauka to makai on the Hilo side of the circles) that would be clockwise. It was around 6:30 P.M., between sunset and dark. My sister also saw the bat.



"Since then, I have not seen any bats, although I have watched for them every evening 'till after dark.

"The last previous record of any bats being seen in Waiohinu was the date on which I got the specimen which is now in the Bishop Museum." [That date was November 1947.]

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#### BIRD NOTES:

**RUDDY TURNSTONE:** On August 1 the former swamp area at Kahuku was checked to determine what shore birds might have arrived. As I was not expecting to see any, thinking it was still somewhat early for them, we were amazed to discover that the ruddy turnstones had apparently arrived in considerable number. On the pond side of the road we counted 224 in a horizontal sweep of the scope, though it was our impression there were others in the grass beyond. On the opposite side of the road we counted 50. Many still had their bright ruddy coloring on their backs with the black face and breast markings while others were more subdued. It is possible that these latter are immatures, as Peterson says that "Young birds and winter adults are more sober in color but easily recognized." The birds seemed fairly quiet with less activity than we usually observe, and this was confirmed by Blanche Pedley and Ruth Rockafellow who saw them on August 4. They seemed to be hunched down on the ground. I went back to see them on August 5, 6, and 7 and this time they were more scattered and definitely more active in searching for food. I wasn't able to estimate the flock as so many stayed hidden in the low grass, whereas before they had been on an open bank of a drainage canal, or in a dried up pond-like area. When I returned to the area on August 15 I am sure there were fewer there, although without a telescope and knowing there were some in the grass it was impossible to count. Since then the birds have been observed on other areas of Oahu in the usual small numbers that we see them. The large group at Kahuku were mingling with mynahs, which made counting difficult with our field glasses, but with the telescope we estimated there were about 225.

**SANDERLING:** No sanderling were observed in the Kahuku area until August 6 when they were found feeding in with the turnstones, but again without a telescope it was hard to count them, and it was impossible to get any closer without crossing a canal full of black mucky water which no one was willing to do. They were as busy as we usually see them searching for food which made me wonder if they had been there for several days and just not seen.

**PLOVER:** On August 1 a flock of 20 Pacific golden plover were observed at Kahuku quietly feeding together in some grass, and later a flock of 5 flew overhead. All were in various stages of breeding and winter plumage. In the following days no other flocks were observed though on each occasion we saw and heard individual ones in flight. On August 2nd, 4th, and 5th Arthur Nakagami reported seeing a plover at Kapiolani Park in the zoo area and as their plumage was in different stages, obviously 3 different birds were seen. Since then other scattered ones have been observed in the park.

**STILT:** At Kahuku 20 to 25 stilts were consistently observed during the period the areas were being checked.

**PINTAILS:** Mace Norton reported that he heard of a pintail duck which landed at Kewalo Basin on August 20. Unfortunately it was captured and disappeared before interested persons were notified. It was said to have had a band on it from Washington State but other details were not available. Since that date Mace has seen ducks on several occasions flying from the Lanikai area towards Kaneohe MACS. He has counted a total of 20, with 4 being the largest number at any one time.

Grace Gossard

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FIELD TRIP - August 22, 1954:

When this trip to the shore areas was planned, we hoped to be fortunate enough to see some of our migrant birds arriving from their northern breeding places. We were just a little late, however, as they began arriving the first of the month. Next year we shall have to plan to visit these areas earlier in the season.

Through an error in publicity, some of us did not arrive at our usual meeting place, the Library of Hawaii, until 8 o'clock. Some of the early arrivals went on ahead to the Aiea-Kamehameha Junction to check on the birds in that area. They found the species usually seen there, in about the usual numbers.

The rest of us went directly to the Waipahu mud flats where we met the other group. It was worth wading around in mud and water up to our ankles to see the large flocks of stilt closely gathered together here and there in the water along the shore line. One particularly large group was concentrated around a group of small mangroves near the shore below the high school buildings. One lone duck was seen, which according to the experts among us, was definitely not a shoveller, but might have been a pintail. A few other birds were seen on the flats, but the stilt far out numbered them.

Kahuku had been in our original plans, but as two or three of our members had been checking this area quite frequently the past few weeks, we decided before leaving the Library to omit this area. So, from Waipahu, we started back toward town, making stops at Makalapa and Salt Lake.

The flat muddy area in Makalapa, just to the rear of the CINCPAC headquarters has been discovered just recently by our president, Grace Gossard. We were delighted with the place and tarried much longer than we had planned. We saw stilt, turnstone, plover and a couple of tattler, but were impressed by the large number of sanderling. Usually the turnstone outnumber the sanderling about ten to one, but here we found them in approximately the same numbers. Could this have been a flock that had not yet broken up for the season?

We approached Salt Lake through the housing area, which was the wrong side for us. Unfortunately the birds were all on the far side, much too distant to take an accurate count. We do not know what else might have been there, but we could see several hundred coot.

Some of us, who are just becoming familiar enough with the shore birds to see differences among individuals of a species, have been impressed by the ruddiness of some of the turnstone still in their breeding plumage. It is very easy to see why they are called "ruddy" turnstone.

We stopped a few minutes at the Damon Pond on our way back to the highway from Salt Lake and were pleased to see it full of water again. We usually see several coot on this pond with one or two gallinule shyly showing themselves, but this trip we saw only two coot and one gallinule.

By this time the morning had slipped by. So we decided to call it a day and do Kuapa Pond and Kaneohe Air Station another time. As most of us are very eager to learn more about the shore birds, we decided before separating for the day to schedule the first bird walk of each month for the remainder of the migration period to the shore areas.

## Count for the day:

## Aiea - Kamehameha Junction

Stilt----- 7  
 Heron----- 2  
 Turnstone---- 8  
 Sanderling---- 1  
 Plover----- 7  
 Tattler----- 1

## Waipahu

Stilt----- 304  
 Heron----- 5  
 Plover----- 8 flying, 3 on ground  
 Tattler----- 1 or 2  
 Coot----- 8 to 15  
 Duck----- 1 (not a shoveller,  
                   probably a pintail)

## Makalapa

Stilt----- 12  
 Turnstone---- 30 to 35  
 Sanderling---- 30  
 Plover----- 45 to 50  
 Tattler----- 2

## Salt Lake

Coot - several hundred

## Damon Pond

Coot----- 2  
 Gallinule--- 1

Blanche A. Pedley

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## SEPTEMBER ACTIVITIES:

## FIELD TRIPS:

We hope to be able to work out an arrangement with the Kaneohe Marine Air Corps Station to observe water and shore birds on the first bird walk of the month for the next two, or three months. Thus on September 12 and October 10 we will plan to go to Kaneohe, meeting as usual at the Library of Hawaii at 7 A.M. Transportation - 25¢.

September 26: We will go on the Laie trail. This was a trip we were rained out of on June 27. Same time and place of departure as above. Transportation - 75¢.

## MEETING:

September 20 at 7:30 P.M. in the Community Board Room of the YWCA. Mrs. Blanche A. Pedley will report on the Weaver Finch family.

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## HAWAII AUDUBON SOCIETY OFFICERS:

President: Miss Grace Gossard  
 Vice-Presidents: Mrs. Blanche A. Pedley  
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MAILING ADDRESS: P.O. Box 5032, Honolulu 14, Hawaii