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THE BIRDS OF PUU AHUMOA By Helen S. Baldwin

In Hawaii Island, on the leeward flanks of Mauna Kea and across the Saddle Road from the Girl Scouts' Camp Kilohana and mauka of it, rises a huge cinder cone of magnificent proportions known to sportsmen by the undignified name of "Chicken Hill".

Nobody today seems to know the true translation of its Hawaiian name, Puu Ahumoa. Some say it means "Hill-where-chickens-were-tied-in bunches" or "Chicken Roosting Hill", or perhaps a corruption of Ahuamoa----"Chicken-gathering-place". The one thing everybody is agreed upon is that the name has something to do with chickens. Likely the big puu did in the old days before wild chickens vanished from Hawaii Island.

For chickens are closely related to pheasants and would thrive in the same kind of habitats. Today pheasant and quail are so numerous in this region that it is counted one of the choicest hunting places on this island and has been incorporated into the game bird management area and improved still further so as to make it even more attractive to pheasant, quail and other game birds.

So it is easy to visualize the jungle fowl, which the Polynesians brought to the Islands and liberated on them, roosting in the mamani, naio and other native trees which thickly but not too densely clothe the cone; or feeding and nesting among the weeds, grasses and low bushes between the trees; or dusting and sunning themselves in the open ashy places; or sipping water from the droplets left on the leaves by the mists which almost daily sweep over the country.

Because of the way clouds eddy about the flanks of Mauna Kea at this elevation (between 6,000 and 7,000 feet above the sea), and because the steepness of huge Ahumoa's western slope permits them to pile and precipitate more than in other parts of the country, this part of leeward Mauna Kea is better watered than that for many miles around. So trees, shrubs, grass and weeds grow better here and seed more abundantly than on most parts of leeward Mauna Kea; yet the climate is not too cold and wet to be injurious to the birds and especially their nestlings.

The work of the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Board of Agriculture and Forestry's Division of Fish and Game has improved the area for non-game species of wild birds as well as the game species. Just enough grazing is permitted, mostly by horses, to keep the grass from growing too high and thick for the game birds to get around; yet the pastures are not grazed so closely as to lack seed and cover for birds as happens on so much of the neighboring Parker Ranch land. Some plants of especial value to game birds for their seed or nesting cover have been planted in the game bird reservation too.

All this is a boon to all the wild birds who live in the area. So as you travel through this region, even before you park your car, you will be aware of wild birds.

Skylark and linnets fly up everywhere. In season, plover wheel and whistle ahead of you on the road. Pheasants perch on the fence posts or fly up from the roadside. Quail scuttle across the open spaces or whirl from the grass land to the protection of trees and bushes. In dull weather, or at dawn or twilight, owls fly by silently or light in the road ahead of the car, their great eyes shining brightly with reflected light.

But you must park your car and get out and walk up Ahumoa itself to see forest birds. Climb up one of the several dry or nearly dry watercourses that wrinkle the puu's sides, use a bird call or your own squeaks and whistles, and watch the trees and bushes closely.

The first bird you will see in them will likely be the amakihi, for this is easily the most abundant tree-dwelling species. These birds will come quite near if you keep calling them and have patience enough to stay still near the trees they happen to be in. These trees are all small, none more than 30 feet high and most are smaller. Because Ahumoa's sides are so steep, you can get above many of these trees and look down on their tops----an ideal set-up for birdwatching.

The amakihi of Ahumoa all seem to be duller colored and have less yellow on them than those about Kilauea Volcano. So many are grayish instead of yellowish on the breast that some observers vow they are creepers; but their habits and songs are those of amakihis. In spring when the males are trilling, their songs are unmistakably those of amakihi.

Almost as common as the amakihi is the ubiquitous mejiro or white-eye. Although this bird is the last to come to Hawaii Island, it is more abundant than any other species on this island and enjoys a wider range of habitats than any other introduced bird. The mejiro on Ahumoa often visit the bright yellow mamani flowers, not so much for their abundant nectar as for the insects which gather there for the sweets.

At certain seasons when the mamani is heavily in bloom and flowers are lacking in most other places, the scarlet iiwi move in to feast from the blossoms, too. At other times you may clamber all over the cone and never see or hear an iiwi. Singularly enough, the apapane which is often found on the mamani flowers in many other parts of the island, seems to shun Ahumoa, perhaps because of the complete lack of ohia-lehua trees which are the usual habitat for these birds.

But the elepaio is there and will call to you, answer your call, and keep a watchful eye on your movements. As always, he is more common in the underbrush, which here consists mostly of aalii and pukeawe, than in the tree tops. You will hear the cat-like mewling of his mate, too, but be careful not to confuse it with the similar alarm cry of the amakihi.

From time to time you will hear strange bird calls that are hard to place. Usually these come from places just tantalizingly near enough for you to think you can see what makes them, yet far enough away to be hard to locate. Some persons say they are made by the palila, a little grayish bird with a yellow head that feeds on the insects and green beans of the mamani trees.

About the time you think you have located it at last and are slowly approaching some trees and thick shrubbery where you saw some leaves stir, intently watching for a bird smaller than a canary, you are almost shocked when a huge dark brown and gray shape whirrs out of the bushes and realize you have roused one of the Parker Ranch range-turkeys. These are domestic birds which are liberated when partly grown to mature on the pasture lands and are "rounded up" before Thanksgiving. Recognizing no man made boundaries and knowing a good thing when they see it, they sometimes wander into the game bird reservation and like to stay there.

At the edges of the woodlands and along the watercourses where they enter the flatter country, flocks of house finches and ricebirds sometimes gather, especially when the grasses and weeds are full of seed. Chinese doves gather there, too. Sometimes you can see flocks of wild rock-pigeons flying over.

And always you can see and hear the skylarks, except in the thickest part of the woodland. If the flat land below Ahumoa were not so famous for its pheasant and quail, it would be famous for its skylarks. As you depart, the last thing you will hear is the song of the soaring larks.

Persons whose chief interest in birding is the compiling of lists of species seen will not enjoy Ahumoa nearly so much as those whose major interest is the habits and lives of the birds themselves. A person will be very lucky if he can see 15 species on and about Ahumoa. But the species that are there can be seen to such good advantage that it makes a fertile ground for the study of bird lives.

Not only are the species abundantly represented, but the trees are spaced just far enough apart and the undergrowth is just sparse enough so that it is easy for a hiker to see his footing and go wherever he pleases.

Ahumoa is 45 miles from Hilo and can be reached by the Saddle Road, one of the main highways of the island. Permission to hike over Ahumoa must be obtained from the Division of Fish and Game at the Hilo office or from David Woodside at Pohakuloa. According to latest reports, the Army has withdrawn its request for Ahumoa and placed the boundary for its maneuver area close to the Saddle Road some distance below the cone. The geology of the cone is interesting, too; but that is another story.

SIR LIONEL WALTER ROTHSCHILD, THIRD BARONET AND SECOND BARON ROTHSCHILD
OF TRING (1868-1937)

By Grace Gossard

Ornithology in Hawaii was advanced many steps when as an undergraduate at Cambridge Lionel Walter Rothschild became interested in the fauna of the Hawaiian Islands, a land which he never visited.

Being of delicate health as a boy, Rothschild was educated at home and then spent some years at Bonn and Cambridge, following all the time his great love for natural history. His boyhood collections of butterflies, moths and other insects increased to such an extent that when he became of age in 1889 he built a cottage in a corner of his ancestral estate at Tring for the safe housing of the collection. To this from time to time he added other buildings to accommodate the great study collections of birds, mammals and insects he amassed. He purchased large historic collections of birds and sent out collectors to many parts of the world to secure rare or nearly extinct species and to explore areas little known ornithologically. He built up an unrivalled collection of birds, major part of which amounting to nearly 28,000 skins he sold in 1931 to the American Museum of Natural History. He took to the study of the giant tortoises restricted to the Galapagos and Mascarene Islands, and of marsupials, and supported all measures for the protection of animals and plants by the creation of Nature reserves. His reputation as a zoologist was established before he was 30 years of age.

Following family tradition, he entered the bank of his family to study finance, but his interests were elsewhere and he gave it up in 1908 to devote himself entirely to science and civic duties. From 1899 until 1910 he represented Mid Buckinghamshire in Parliament, and in 1911 he was elected a fellow of the Royal Society in recognition of his services to the natural sciences. He travelled a good deal in Europe and North Africa, but being a bad sailor never visited the tropics. On the death of his father

in 1915 he succeeded to the title.

With Rothschild's deep interest in biology and possessing large zoological collections which he was ever increasing for the benefit of science it was inevitable that he inspired the imaginative Press of many lands to publish fanciful reports which gave him a publicity often very embarrassing. His interest was so intense and so wide, his ever-ready support of science so valuable and his scientific publications so important, that he held a high place of honor in zoology and was elected an honorary fellow by many foreign scientific societies. Entomologists, ornithologists, herpetologists and mammalogists all claimed him as one of their own.

Rothschild came under the influence of the renowned ornithologist and professor, Alfred Newton, who showed him species of Hawaiian birds discovered by Scott Wilson. Rothschild had engaged Henry C. Palmer to make a collection of birds on Chatham Islands south of New Zealand and instructed him to start for Honolulu. He arrived in Hawaii December 1890 and remained until August 1893. For 15 months he was assisted by Mr. George C. Munro. They collected 1832 birds on Oahu, Hawaii, Kauai, Maui, Lanai, Molokai, Niihau, Laysan, French Frigate Shoals, Lisiansky and Midway. While this collection was by no means large, Rothschild proudly reported that Palmer procured all the known land birds with the exception of 7 which were undoubtedly extinct and most of the seabirds. Palmer discovered 15 species entirely new to science and several birds new to the islands. This collection formed the basis of many important contributions by Mr. Rothschild to English Scientific journals as well as The Avafauna of Laysan and the Neighboring Islands with a Complete History to Date of the Birds of the Hawaiian Possessions. This handsome volume in three parts, with its many and fine illustrations, and including in its scope the whole Hawaiian group, must ever remain a landmark in Hawaiian ornithological literature.

HAWAII'S BIRDS IN THEIR HOMES: HOW TO SAVE THEM FROM EXTINCTION
By George C. Munro

Published in the Honolulu Star Bulletin, July 28 - August 25, 1945

XIII. Bird Sanctuaries

If the perusal of the foregoing articles has stimulated an interest in the birds of Hawaii, it may have raised the question of furthering their protection. Why not create sanctuaries where the birds, unmolested will furnish entertainment to spectators and add to the pleasure of the great outdoors? Such sanctuaries would become the objective of picnic parties as well as students. There, in the course of a day's outing, the habits of the birds in their familiar habitats, fearless in their confidence of security, would furnish unguessed satisfaction.

A recent stay of a week on Sand Island of Midway, a bird sanctuary, decreed by law a federal reservation, convinced me that we are losing rich experience in not developing our potential native bird sights.

We have been introducing the birds of other countries and neglecting to develop and sustain our own native birds and the unique opportunities they furnish at our very doors. For instance to acquire for the city and county of Honolulu the lease or purchase of the Kaelepulu pond, landward of Lanikai. For a number of years I have been interested in having this pond eventually made a bird sanctuary and worked cautiously with the former owners to this end. But the property has now changed ownership and there should be an opportunity to do something about it. Here, easily accessible are to be seen birds in a wild state, carrying on their fascinating habits in a habitat ideally suited to them. This pond could be made into a wonderful show place of bird

life, a delight to residents of Honolulu and tourists in future years. The Kanaha pond by Kahului, Maui is an outstanding example of how tame wild birds become when unmolested.

The small islands off the east coast of Oahu which I frequently visited from 1937 to 1941 already are bird sanctuaries and are worthy of better care and development than they have had in the past. Due to the attention John F.G. Stokes drew to the abuse of the birds on those islands in the early 1900's action was taken and the islands set aside as protected areas. The Board of Agriculture and Forestry later erected signs. As late as 1937, the signs having by then deteriorated there was a good deal of vandalism and torture of the birds. I saw on two islands a small pile of dead birds, wantonly killed and left to rot on the ground; a bird wound round with vines and two bound together and left to die; birds killed for fish bait, even some with U. S. biological survey bands I had placed on their legs to learn of their movements, and young birds taken to eat. The Board of Agriculture and Forestry took action with their ranger and a young Hawaiian fisherman, Solomon Mahoe, was given a police commission, without pay, and a great improvement resulted till 1941. Then the war and the islands were kapu to civilians.

The U. S. Navy has been good to our sea birds on the islands under its charge. Rear Admirals Oren G. Murfin and Claude C. Bloch, before the war; Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, Rear Admiral David Worth Bagley, Capt. Gordon Rowe, Commodores G. E. Short and Gail Morgan, and many other officers, after the war started, have done excellent work in bird preservation. Admiral Nimitz, when he took charge of the United States Pacific Fleet issued instructions to his personnel "to refrain from using bird sanctuaries as targets unless definite evidence indicates such localities are being used for purposes inimical to our national interests." The only coastal island I have visited since 1941 was Moku Manu in August 1943. The island and its birds were then in splendid condition.

It is hoped other islands off the coast have not suffered badly from war conditions. However, when they are returned to the Board of Commissioners of Agriculture and Forestry they undoubtedly will receive better attention than they have had in the past. I hope the public will support the Board in forwarding such projects. I am sure there will be returns in interest, pleasure and bird life conservation commensurate with expenditure. I approached the Board in 1940 regarding the possibilities of these islands being developed as show and recreation places for the public but funds were not available at that time.

I believe that every available pleasure spot should be used for as large a section of the public as possible and the public educated to respect them as public assets just as the public of Midway respect the birds of that island.

(The End)

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Since the foregoing was written, the off-shore islands have been made bird sanctuaries, closed to the public. Under these restrictions, bird life has increased very greatly.

(Editor)

FIELD NOTES

Field Trip, April 22, 1956. Clear, slight overcast in afternoon.

The "best laid plans" do go wrong from time to time, and so it was with our projected trip to the booby colony. Since the weather was perfect, and forest birds should be nesting, we decided to go to Poamoho, not without regretful thoughts of the group

we knew were waiting in vain for us at the Kaneohe gate. Despite the sign at the entrance warning us that the trail was occupied by the Army we found little evidence of recent use. Poamoho was beautiful as ever, but there was little blossom of any sort, so that birds were not as plentiful as we had expected. Our count was as follows: apapane, 87; amakihi, 26; elepaio, 14; white-eye, 25; bush warbler, 3 (all fairly close to the trail entrance); leiiothrix, 39; ricebirds, 15.

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Field Trip, March 26, 1956. Upper Pa Lehua

The day was heavily overcast until noon, considerable fog, occasional rain drops, and a cold steady wind estimated at 30 knots with gusts up to 40. In protected areas the trail was wet and slippery although the wind swept barren ridges were dry. The wind made an actual bird count impossible, although we saw all the species anticipated.

On the road leading up to Pa Lehua American and Brazilian cardinals, and barred and Chinese doves were numerous; ricebirds were common. A splendid male Chinese pheasant was seen on the road and allowed close approach before taking wing.

On the lee side of the ridge protected from the wind, particularly beyond Green Peak, apapane and linnets were numerous. Only a few elepaio and white-eyes were seen. Leiiothrix were common. A nest of a leiiothrix was discovered in a fork of an ohia shrub, about 4 feet off the ground. The outside of the nest was neatly woven with dried coarse wide grass, while the inside was bedded with soft fine dried grass. The nest contained three oblong eggs, light blue with muddy brown spots. We had two fleeting glimpses of the bird on the nest.

Bush warblers were heard occasionally all along the trail and were fairly common between Green Peak and the next peak, particularly on the protected side of the ridge. Four were briefly seen. Most of them made their usual call although a few were trilling the long melodious song indicating possible mating activities.

At West Loch where we briefly stopped the tide was high but we found the usual water and shore birds with the exception of the stilt. (Note: Two weeks later, on April 8, no ducks were in evidence.)

Grace Gossard

MARCH MEETING:

The regular monthly meeting held March 19th at the Aquarium was well attended by society members and visitors, who apparently were attracted by our guest speaker, Mr. Paul Breese, Director of the Honolulu Zoo. He showed slides of bird inhabitants of the zoo, including the exotics as well as the native birds. He described the problems a zoo has including finding the proper diet of individual birds. His description of the tender loving care some of his charges require made it clear that his job is one demanding imagination, patience, and as well as technical know how.

IN RESPONSE to the many requests for Bob and Billie Pyle's address -
4037 8th Avenue, N. E.
Seattle 5, Washington

More news of them later - it is all good, and they are enjoying good birding.

THANKS TO THOSE OF YOU who have contributed missing issues of THE ELEPAIO. They have been most welcome. Any other contributions will be gratefully received.

MAY ACTIVITIES:

- FIELD TRIPS: May 13 - To Manoa Falls. The Shama thrush is usually seen and heard in this area. Meet in front of the Library of Hawaii at 8:00 a.m.
- May 27 - Destination unannounced. Meet in front of the Library of Hawaii at 8:00 a.m.

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- MEETING: May 21 - At the Aquarium at 7:30 p.m. Mr. Dick Woodward of the Board of Agriculture and Forestry will show his motion pictures, including pictures of the nene, and talk on the work done by the Board.

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