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

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V. Probable Effect Had Native Birds Survived

Forests are very essential as water holders in Hawaii. Conservation of water is important for the well being of the population and success of agriculture. It has been shown in a former paper that the Hawaiian birds were of importance in the maintenance of healthy forests. The reduction in species and numbers of birds has undoubtedly had a delictorious effect on the native forests.

As entertainers the Hawaiian birds excelled. Had they remained in their original numbers they would have been a source of great delight to the residents of Honolulu and the towns of other islands. The honey eaters, insectivorous and fruit eating birds would have periodically frequented the gardens, such trees as eucalyptus when in flower would have attracted the honey eaters. The insectivorous birds would have followed them as they did in the mountains of Kauai and Hawaii in the 1890's.

There is nothing conjectural about this. The tui of New Zealand which is closely allied to our oo comes from the distant "bush" to the suburbs of Auckland when honey bearing trees are in flower. The oo of Kauai was a fine strong singer, a fearless and interesting bird in its actions. The oo of Hawaii was a beautiful and spectacular in its movement. It was a close follower of honey bearing trees. The other oos were fine looking birds and would certainly have been attracted to the tall profusely flowering eucalyptus. The ranch house gardens at Kalae, Molokai, and Koele, Lanai, used to be frequented by native birds, the latter as late as the 1920's. All who have heard the Kauai, Hawaii and Molokai thrushes sing were loud in their praise of them as songsters.

The singing of the ou might have vied with the house canary. Some of its notes were similar to notes of the canary. These in numbers and other interesting forest birds would have made a pleasing addition to our gardens. The iiwi and apapane flying up and down, continually on the move with incessant chirping and singing, would have been enlivening. They were not fine singers but the babble of voices certainly had a pleasing effect in the forests of Hawaii and Kauai in the early 1890's.

I was recently on one of the coral island naval air bases where the people are friendly to the birds. Fledgling black-footed albatrosses with a wing spread of over seven feet are in colonies of thousands bordering the airplane runways and roads. In the village, Laysan albatrosses are on the lawns, around the buildings, under the tree plantations and shrubbery, almost everywhere one looks. Not so closely packed as the other species in the open, but numbers of them. The residents make pets of them and feed them. Some are named and come when called to be fed. One resident has a group of motherless ones which are surviving under his care.

Countless thousands of sooty terns sit on their eggs which are spaced about two feet apart, closely bordering the roadway. Vehicles and pedestrians are unnoticed as they pass. At any hour of the night I could hear the call of the terns, the moaning of the wedge-tailed shearwaters and the rapid clapping of the bills of the Laysan albatrosses. This bill clapping is part of the famed albatross breeding season performance. Being late in the season, it was not so spectacular as in November when the birds come in to the island. The dance was still carried on by parties of two or three and the bill clapping was a particular feature.

Had we been able to ward off the diseases that had depopulated our forests of the birds, we might have had the close association of our unique forest birds as the residents of this coral island have these beautiful and interesting sea birds.

VI. Birds on an Island Naval Base

In my last article mention was made of the large number of sea birds on the island base I visited. I was surprised and delighted to see how the birds had become accustomed to the presence and activities of man. To see thousands of black-footed albatrosses, full grown but not fully fledged in the midst of barbed wire entanglements beside the airplace runways; to think that the old birds came back last November, mated, laid their eggs, hatched them and raised the chicks to full size in such an environment wholly foreign to them. To see the old birds coming in, flying gracefully over the wires without striking them; alighting in a clear space and walking to their young among the wires, are surely matters of great surprise.

In the village, the Laysan albatrosses, after visiting their young scatter on the lawns around the buildings, and walk out on to the macadamized road, having learned that here they have a clear space for their run to take off in flight. This they could not do among the buildings and trees. I saw one take off and make a around and over the buildings, return and alight again on the road. With the growth of trees and buildings on the island the albatrosses have learned to modify their incoming flight and slow down as they approach the obstructions. I saw one bird that had struck a wire but it seemed little discomfited and walked away. Some of course meet with disaster by colliding in full flight with airplanes and other impediments.

All dead birds are buried and fly traps are placed around the buildings. This probably promotes more healthful conditions for the birds and helps to offset accidental killings. Everything on the island is strictly regulated. No cats are allowed. Any dog caught molesting birds is condemned. Drivers of jeeps and trucks must avoid running over any birds that stray into the roadway. The alluring two red tail feathers of the tropic bird must not be plucked. Consequently, the appearance of these birds in their spectacular mid-day flight is not thus marred. On this island the birds are encouraged in every way. Some species are probably doing better than on the islands not occupied by man.

There is a guiding hand behind all this which is fortunate. Even though it is a federal bird sanctuary, if the large bodies of men stationed there were not under strict regulations it might be disastrous to the birds. As it is, a friendly interest has sprung up in them, and there have been preserved many beautiful bird sights; the Bonin Island petrel coming in the middle of August, filling the air with their numbers and voices; the tens of thousands of albatrosses coming in near the end of October and their wonderful dances; the successive immense flocks of sooty tern starting their colonies throughout the season; the white tern flying so gracefully among the trees or joining with the red-tailed tropic bird on its sunny day flights; the exercising of the young albatrosses' wings in late June and July. This mass waving of wings would not likely be so spectacular here as on some flat islands where there are not trees as I saw it once on Lisiansky Islands. That was a wonderful sight. On Laysan it would be even more spectacular as there would be more birds. I did not see the circular back-

ward flight of the tropic birds as described by Hayden and Donaghho. This probably takes place earlier in the season just as the albatrosses dance is more spectacular at that time than when I saw it later.

We shall hope that Laysan Island, which has not been disturbed at all by the war, will be a show island as well as a sanctuary. A caretaker to watch over the island and the birds and control visitors would make it still safer for the birds. The airplane after the war will bring these places very close. So that all the sights described may likely be seen to greater advantage and by a greater number of people.

To be continued

HAWAII AUDUBON SOCIETY MEETING Minutes for Meeting of September 19, 1955

The meeting was called to order by our president, Bob Pyle, at 7:30 p.m.

Minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved.

Visitors were Mr. and Mrs. Max Basker.

Mr. Basker, representing Hawaiian Views, had been invited to our meeting to tell us about the possibility of having bird postcards printed. He explained that in the course of selling postcards to the Bishop Museum Bookshop the suggestion was made that postcards of Hawaiian birds might be popular. It was suggested that the bird paintings in "Aves Hawaiiensis" could be photographed for a series of 18 or 20 postcards or folders, and that the Audubon Society make the selection of at least 18 birds for this series. The Bishop Museum will cooperate with the Society in their distribution. It will be necessary to place an order for 6500 of each view, but these may be sold at a profit of 3¢, as they cost only 2¢. A folder with 18 views costs 9¢ and may be sold for 25¢.

It was decided that the Hawaii Audubon Society had no funds to invest in this project, but it was hoped the museum might be able to carry it out. Mr. Bryan and Margaret Titcomb were requested to assist the Museum in the selection of birds for the cards.

Grace Gossard suggested that some of the many communications which come to the president each month from National and other societies might occasionally be briefed in the Elepaio.

Bob Pyle mentioned a recent meeting of the Conservation Committee at which an outline had been drawn up of the various ideas for action to be presented to the Executive Committee later.

Joe King was asked for a report on the Audubon Nature Camp he attended this summer as a delegate from our Society. He said Grenville Hatch was there also as our second delegate, but that only eleven delegates were in full attendance during the session from June 19 to 25. The camp was eight miles from Greenwich, Conn., where the Audubon Society has a 300 acre sanctuary, including a wilderness area. The full report is attached to these minutes. (For permanent record purposes) One of Joe King's observations, after camping in many national parks and monuments, was that the Canadian National parks were better cared for than ours and were provided with better facilities.

After expressing our appreciation of this excellent report, Bob Pyle adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Secretary

FIELD NOTES:

Field Trip, Audubon Society, August 14, 1955.

In spite of a soft Kona rain, five members met at the Library Sunday, August 14th, to go out and greet the first of the winter migrants. At East Loch, our first stop, we saw 5 aukuu of all ages and in all stages of wakefulness, 3 stilts, 2 plovers and 2 or 3 tattlers. We left this spot about 8:45 and drove to Waipahu to the banks of West Loch, arriving about 9:15. The tide was out and a fair-sized gathering of the early shorebirds could be seen scattered about on the mudflats. Coots were plentiful and aukuu numbered 21. Stilts scurried back and forth following schools of fish and they seemed anxious to be counted several times by those of us who were trying to count them. The final estimate was 301. One pintail preened himself in the mud and 2 tattlers were seen. Other shorebirds varying in number between 5 and 15 were plovers, sanderlings and turnstones.

In Haleiwa we were joined by Bill and Suzanne Omhstede and Jim Nicholson and at 11:40 arrived at Kahuku where we found more early shorebirds. Plovers, turnstones, stilts, a lone tattler and many coots were there. Besides these were some newcomers for us at Kahuku -- two or three gallinules swimming in the far grassy edge of the pond. After scanning the beach we ate lunch by a ditch emptying into the ocean. The fragrant beach heliotrope or hinahina was in bloom, its small clusters of white flowers with yellow centers dotting the banks nearby. We watched the ocean waves push their way upstream and then watched the currents in the ditch drive the wave back out. This led to a lively discussion on which of the two is stronger. After lunch we parted, feeling it a day well spent welcoming the earliest of the winter migrants.

Extra Trip, September 4, 1955.

On September 4, Grace Gossard, Bob and I visited the same localities to compare numbers with the August trip. Stopping first at East Loch (8:30 - 8:45), we saw 3 stilts, 3 plovers, 2 herons and 1 or 2 tattlers. These numbers are about the same as in August. While we stood watching these shorebirds a duck flew by overhead and landed about a mile down the road in the vicinity of some small rice and taro farms near Pearl City. Remembering that we hadn't visited Damon Pond for some time, we retraced our journey to this spot (8:45 - 9:00). In one of the ponds (the right one as you face the mountains) there was 1 coot, 1 gallinule, 1 tattler and 3 stilts. There was more activity in the pond to the left where we watched 6 coots, 9 stilts, 4 herons and 1 tattler. The fish seemed plentiful and we could plainly see them being caught and held by one or two of the coots and stilts. We were close enough to make out the bright red eyes of the herons.

At Waipahu (10:00 - 10:30) we counted 350 stilts, a larger number than previously seen. There was about the same number of turnstones and sanderlings: 5 to 15. The plover population had grown and they were numerous over the flats. Our one pintail of the previous trip had grown to 6 and there were 20 or more herons, this being about the number of herons we have seen on several occasions. A new arrival, not seen by us since last fall, were two black-bellied plovers, easy enough to distinguish when standing next to their golden kinsmen. And there was still another new arrival. Grace and I studied a bird that to us looked like a "skinny tattler with a white front". Bob was down the tracks counting stilts and when he rejoined us he ventured the thought that it might be a yellowlegs. After we skirted the mangroves and waded through the pickleweed, we obtained a better look at it and approached to within 20-30 feet. It was a greater yellowlegs, the first one any of the three of us had seen in the islands. He stood on high bright yellow legs showing his white front, patterned sides, and back, and long bill. Soon we found a tattler for comparison and could see that the tattler was grayer all over and not so long legged, also a little plumper. When near the plovers, the yellowlegs seemed smaller and slimmer, but he is actually a longer bird from beak to tail.

On our way to Kahuku, we took a look at the pond across from Haleiwa Beach Park and counted 6 gallinules. At Kahuku we saw 25 pintails in the pond where we had seen none in August. There were flocks of turnstones and plovers all about the area and numerous coots at the pond. We did not see any of the gallinules here today, but we did see a couple of herons. The day was warm and sunny with a few clouds in the sky, except for one hard shower which caught Grace and me in the middle of the large pasture. The drenching was very refreshing. We turned towards home well satisfied with our finds for the day.

Billie Pyle

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Resume of Some Recent Trips:

Our annual trek to Popoeia was delayed by a month's time, however, the results were most gratifying. Contrary to our usual procedure we boarded the boat at about 2:30 p.m. which enabled members so inclined to take numerous pictures before darkness set in. Several immature shearwaters and one immature Bulwer's petrel were removed from their respective burrows for observation and photography and then, after their performance, were carefully returned. They were in various stages of growth and a species of immature shearwater and mature petrel were banded. The general concensus was that there was a marked decrease in the amount of moaning that was heard at this later date - due perhaps to a lesser number of birds.

We did go off on an entirely new tack on Sunday, September 11th, under the guidance of Joe King - we went looking for frogs and we found 'em. They were no bigger than a quarter and some even smaller; of a dark, almost black coloration over all but liberally sprinkled with vivid Kelly green stripes. They were pretty little fellows. When handled they excreted a poisonous substance. These frogs (genus dendrobates) were introduced by the Department of Agriculture and Forestry as a mosquito control in Manoa Valley and that is where we found them. We also heard liothrix, elepaio and the Shama thrush on this different and interesting trip.

Mr. Munro and his nephew, Hector Munro, accompanied the group over the trail on "Mt. Leahi" (Diamond Head) where he is concentrating on a botanical garden, which now includes some 60 or more rare plants and trees all indigenous to the islands. We were greatly impressed with the comprehensive design of the trails and the clever way in which the gulches enclose the area selected by Mr. Munro for his Hawaiian garden. The shortage of water in this area is a serious handicap and we were made aware of the effort involved in bringing this spot to its present attractive condition. Mr. Munro deserves commendation for devoting so much time and effort to this worthwhile ideal.

Ruth R. Rockafellow

ERRATA:

October 1955 issue of the Elepaio was erroneously numbered as "Volume 16, Number 3" should be "Volume 16, Number 4".

NOVEMBER ACTIVITIES:

FIELD TRIPS: November 13 - To Kahuku to observe shore birds. Meet in front of the Library of Hawaii at 8:00 a.m.

November 27 - To Pa Lehua. Meet in front of the Library of Hawaii at 8:30 a.m.

MEETING: November 21 - At the Aquarium at 7:30 p.m.

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