

# THE ELEPAIO

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Hawaii Audubon Society



For the Better Protection  
of Wildlife in Hawaii

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## HONOLULU CHRISTMAS COUNT

December 26, 1955

( ) = estimated or  
partly estimated

	AREAS													TOTAL
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
Laysan Albatross	1													1
Red-footed Booby	(400)	(750)												1150
Brown Booby	(20)	13												33
Man-o'-war-bird	(75)	11												86
Heron		4												4
Pintail		180	72										4	256
Ring-necked Pheasant		7												7
Gallinule				3									1	4
Coot		23	91									2	108	224
Golden Plover		122	37	52	42					2		12	99	366
Turnstone		23	13	1	164							6	1	208
Tattler		4		2	13							2	3	24
Sanderling					22							14		36
Stilt		24												24
Hawaiian Noddy		6										10		16
Spotted Dove		67		19		1		25		2		18	63	193
Barred Dove		93	20	122	50	34	4	11	1	176	3	63	37	614
Owl						1								1
Skylark		2	4											6
Japanese Tit													4	4
Chinese Thrush				5										5
Leiiothrix				5			67		250			68	72	462
Shama Thrush							2		1			7		10
Elepaio							5		14			7	48	74
Mynah		83	27	35	7	81	24	30		121	8	193	31	640
White-eye		33	2	12		3	22	6	70	22	2	40	190	402
Anakihi									14				88	102
Creeper													3	3
Apapane									35				124	159
Ricebird		218		71		5				80		32	15	421
English Sparrow		15		19	9	52		50		115	15	65	41	381
N Am Cardinal		76	2	51	1	3	9	6	4	19	2	19	20	212
Brazilian Cardinal		35		2		4		4		11		35	3	94
House Finch		4		76		1				1	3	5	1	91
TOTALS	496	1793	268	475	308	185	133	132	389	549	33	598	956	6315
Nr. of Species:	4	22	9	15	8	10	7	7	8	10	6	18	21	34
Hours on foot:	$\frac{1}{2}$	$5\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{4}$	1	$\frac{1}{4}$		$1\frac{1}{2}$	3	5	3	2	$4\frac{1}{2}$	16	43
Hours by car:		3		2		1						$5\frac{1}{2}$	2	14
Miles on foot:		$\frac{1}{4}$	$\frac{1}{4}$	2	$\frac{1}{2}$		2	1	6	$4\frac{1}{2}$		2	9	28
Miles by car:		16	9	9		12						58	20	124



The following areas were covered in this year's count:

- AREA 1) Moku Manu (Through telescope from Ulupau Head)  
 2) Ulupau Head, Kaneohe Peninsula and Ponds  
     Both by Carvel Blair, Chuck Hanson, John & Lua Lee Horning, Bob & Bille Pyle, Al Stoops, Ed Wilson  
 3) Kaelepulu Pond & Kailua: Bob & Billie Pyle, Ed Wilson  
 4) Bellows Field & Waimanalo: Grace Gossard, Kay Imamura, Blanche Pedley, Joe King  
 5) Kuliouou Pond & Park: Ditto  
 6) Manoa Residential area & St. Louis Hts. to Fiko Drive: Ditto  
 7) Manoa Falls Trail: Ditto  
 8) University, Mid-Pacific Institute: Irma Botsford  
 9) Tantalus Trails 2 & 2A to Pauoa Flats: Priscilla Harpham, Al Labrecque  
 10) Makiki Area: Bernice Kuhns  
 11) Yard on Spencer Street: Dorothea Taylor  
 12) Nuuanu Valley, Kaneohe area: Grenville Hatch, Phyllis Hihn  
 13) Aiea Trail: Part by Ruth Rockafellow & Unoyo Kojima, part by John Obata  
     Connecting Trail to Summit: John Obata  
     Salt Lake, Damon Pond, Sand Island: Ruth Rockafellow, Unoyo Kojima, John Obata

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#### HAWAII AUDUBON SOCIETY BIRD COUNT 1955

The Honolulu Christmas Count was taken within a circle of  $7\frac{1}{2}$  miles radius centered near Nuuanu Pali. It was shifted slightly this year so as to include Moku Manu at the expense of some of the waterfront & harbor area of downtown Honolulu. Counting extended from 6 a.m. to 5 p.m. The weather was generally cloudy or partly cloudy in the morning, clearing somewhat in the afternoon. Temperature ranged from  $65^{\circ}$  in the early morning at Tantalus to a high of  $81^{\circ}$  in the lower districts in the afternoon. The wind was southeast and very light: the Tantalus party reported no wind at all, and off Ulupau Head the sea was very smooth. There were 22 observers who spent a total of 57 party-hours observing (43 on foot, 14 by car), and who covered 152 party-miles (28 on foot, 124 by car). Previously, the highest number of observers to take part was 21 in 1954. The 57 hours of observing is also a new record, exceeding last year's total by 5 hours. Again this year, 34 species were found, equalling last year's record number of species. The total of individuals, however, was only 6315, down by more than a thousand from last year's total.

There were several exciting finds on this year's count. A Laysan Albatross was studied carefully on Moku Manu, through the 'scope, and all members of the party had a good look at it. The bird was sitting apart from the red-footed boobies, but was noticeably larger than the boobies. Its huge bill and black wings and back could be seen easily as it perched and when it flew off a few moments later. At Bellows Field, 5 Chinese thrushes were seen together, which gives some hope that this species may be coming back. The Aiea Trail party found 3 Hawaiian creepers and 4 Japanese tits, both of which are extremely rare at any time of year.

There are two main differences apparent in this year's statistics as compared to last year. First, Kaelepulu Pond was completely dry until the heavy rains just a few days before the count, so that very few ducks had accumulated there. Thus the pintail total was way below last year, and the baldpate and shoveller were missed entirely this year. The second main difference is that the mynah roosts and other bird concentrations in Waikiki and Kapiolani Park were not covered this year. This was partly offset by a far more thorough coverage of Kaneohe Peninsula, but even so the totals for mynahs, both doves, and English sparrow are considerably below last year. These two factors



explain the lower figure for total individuals this year, but in other respects, the count was pretty much the same as last year.

The value of having the same areas covered each year by the same people, in so far as possible, will become more and more apparent as counts from future years are added to the records.

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SUMMARY OF CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT - HAWAII NATIONAL PART (KILAUEA SECTION) - 1955

December 31, 1955. 6:45 a.m. to 3 p.m. Rain on Napau Trail, otherwise partly cloudy. Temperature 53° to 69°. Wind calm. Thirteen observers in five parties. Total party-hours, 32 (27½ on foot, 4½ by car). Total party-miles, 105 (20½ on foot, 84½ by car).

AREAS:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	TOTAL
Hawaiian Hawk					1	1			2
California Quail	6								6
Pheasant -Ring-necked & Japanese Blue						11	2		13
Golden Plover	7		2		29				38
Spotted Dove	10				3				13
Barred Dove					2				2
Skylark	27				10	4	3		44
Red-billed Leiothrix	13	7	6	3	49	53	50	10	191
Omao			1		9			9	19
Elepaio			9	3	33	29	13	5	92
Mynah	14				23	17			54
White-eye	28		7		20	25	42		122
Amakihi	161	2	16	4	30	24	37	6	280
Hawaiian Creeper						3	4	1	8
Akiapolaau					4				4
Apapane	135	82	95	37	308	83	67	500*	1307
Iiwi			2		32	14	8	15	71
Ricebird	2				2	8			12
English Sparrow					2	15			17
N. American Cardinal						11			11
House Finch	132				38	64	2		236
TOTALS:	535	91	138	47	595	362	228	546	2542
Number of species:	11	3	8	4	17	15	10	7	21
HOURS - on foot	3	½	4	1½	8	6	4	½	27½
by car	1		1		½		1½	½	4½
MILES - on foot	3	¼	6½	2	5	2½	4	¼	23½
by car	27		26		2		1½	9	65½

\*Estimated

- AREA: 1) Hilina Pali Road to a short distance beyond Kipuka Nene: George Ruhle and Helen Baldwin
- 2) Fern Jungle: Helen Baldwin
- 3) Napau Crater Trail, Old summer camp, Thurston Lava Tube, Halemaumau Road: Bob Baldwin and Mace Norton
- 4) Byron Ledge Trail: Bob Baldwin



- AREA: 5) Keauhou Ranch Road (Called Nobriga Ranch Road last year): Bob and Billie Pyle, Boyd & Carol Evasson
- 6) Bird Park, and walk to KMC via golf course: Grenville Hatch, Grace Gossard, Al Labrecque
- 7) Mauna Loa Road to 5500' elevation and Kipuka Kulalio: Ruth Rockafellow, John Townsley
- 8) Wright Road: Helen Baldwin, Grace Gossard, Grenville Hatch, Al Labrecque, Mace Norton, Ruth Rockafellow

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#### HAWAII NATIONAL PARK CHRISTMAS COUNT - 1955

A circle fifteen miles in diameter in Hawaii National Park and environs about Kilauea Volcano formed the area for the Christmas count on the Island of Hawaii. Several of the Park personnel, two members from Hilo, Mr. and Mrs. Robert I. Baldwin, and seven members from Oahu were the census takers.

Only those on the Chain-of-Craters and Napau Crater trail encountered rain. They came back soaking wet with such poor counts that it was decided to abandon this area another year. This is the third consecutive year that this section has been counted in the rain with poor results.

The party which took the trail through always beautiful and always popular Bird Park and on through the golf course to the Military Camp found, as usual, that the height of the trees and density of the foliage made identification difficult except when sunlight illumined plumage. But in spite of this they were able to get a good count of all the common species, and had the largest count of pheasants, sparrows, leiothrix, elepaio and mejiro.

The party on the Mauna Loa Truck Trail and Kipuka Kalalilo area, though hampered by the exceedingly rough a-a lava off the trail, found birding delightful in the clear sunny air. Several creepers were the high light of the trip. More creepers were seen and studied at the "turn-around", which was outside the area, and is mentioned only as a guide to future bird watchers.

The fern jungle, Thurston lava tube and Byron ledge area yielded, as always, a higher count of the apapane than all other species put together. This is the apapane's own country, and will be as long as the ohia-lehua trees grow and bloom there. No rare species was recorded there.

By far the finest area for birding, both as to number of species seen and total number of birds identified was the Keauhou Ranch, which Mr. William Nobriga kindly permitted the Audubon members to visit. Jeep trails and cattle trails thread the virgin woodland with its fine old koa trees and as yet abundant undergrowth. Along one of these the bird watchers saw four akiapolau recognizable by the long curved upper mandible and sweet trilling song. The observers also saw and heard nine omau, the brown and gray native thrush whose chuckling gurgling notes are like those of no other bird in Hawaii, and more iwi than were reported in any other area, although most had a few. In the open pasture lands they saw plover, skylark, ring-necked dove and even the little barred dove which is slowly spreading throughout this island.

The party who took the Wright Road also had excellent birding, especially at its far end deep in the virgin woodland. But they could only estimate the number of the more common species, so numerous were they and so large the trees and dense the undergrowth of bush, vine and tree-ferns. So here the party concentrated on the rarer species and were fortunate in not only seeing and hearing the iwi and omao in considerable numbers, but also in finding another creeper and even the rare o-u - a chunky gray-green bird with bright yellow head and thick parrot-like bill, claimed to be Hawaii's finest native song bird.



Altogether the observers counted over 2,500 birds belonging to 21 species. Over half the total number were apapane. Next in order of abundance were amakihi, house finch, leiothrix, mejiro, elepaio and iiwi. Only the mynah and ricebird were found in much smaller numbers than last year. But these are nomadic species when not nesting and range widely, so their absence does not mean that their numbers are decreasing.

Abstracted from an account by:  
Helen Shiras Baldwin

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#### FIELD NOTES:

Field Trip - January 15, 1956: A party of six (Grace Gossard, Joseph King, Al Labreque, Bob and Billie Pyle, and Ruth Rockafellow) departed the Library at the usual time and headed for Aiea. Of course we made a few stops along the way. The first at Damon Pond (0800-0855) produced the following: golden plover (5), tattler (1), immature night heron (1), coot (4), barred dove (3), Chinese dove (3), Brazilian cardinal (6), mynah (5), and English sparrow (6). One of the coot was somewhat lighter in color than the rest and had red as well as some white on the frontal piece. This one we judged to be an immature bird.

The next stop, Salt Lake (0900-1000) was quite rewarding. While walking along a dirt road leading in to the SW corner of the lake, and on the lake itself, we sighted the following: golden plover (2), buffle-head duck (1 male), coot (55), mocking bird (2), ricebird (est. 50), N. American cardinal (5), Brazilian cardinal (13), barred dove (14), Chinese dove (4), white-eye (1). The mocking birds were quite a surprise, as we did not remember any previous reports of their occurrence here at Salt Lake. They were seen perched in plain view in the tops of the kiawe and cactus along the hill overlooking the road. At one time one of the birds was seen apparently carrying food. Salt Lake was not very salty today; the surface water was only slightly brackish to the taste. The reason, no doubt, is the heavy rainfall of the past week. The lake may still be highly saline beneath the surface layer, however.

Next stop--Makalapa Flat (1007-1035); sighted were golden plover (35), ruddy turnstone (25), sanderling (2), tattler (1), N. American cardinal (2), Brazilian cardinal (2), barred dove (6), ricebird (1), white-eye (1), English sparrow (1). The flat was almost a lake this morning, and there seemed to have been considerable growth in the vegetation since we had seen it last.

Next stop--East Loch, Pearl Harbor (1045-1055). On a falling tide we sighted golden plover (6), night heron (1), tattler (1), mynah (1), English sparrow (1). The night heron was in adult plumage and displayed an exceedingly fine plume. Stilt were conspicuous by their absence from these localities where they are usually seen.

Note--All this time Messrs. Hanson, Stoops and Obata were waiting at Aiea, expecting the group to arrive there sharply at 0830. This should teach these school teachers a lesson. An Audubon Society trip begins at the Library and frequently doesn't follow scheduled routes, for the reason that many times the best birding is before you get to where you're going.

We finally reached Aiea and spent the remainder of the day (1110-1530) on the trail above the heiau. Our original group of six persons saw amakihi (10), apapane (9), elepaio (6), ricebird (4), white-eye (3), N. American cardinal (1), leiothrix (6). In addition, many amakihi and apapane were heard but not seen. Some ohia and eucalyptus trees were in bloom but only sparingly. Messrs. Hanson, Stoops and Obata who finally grew tired of waiting, covered the trail independently. Besides the expected number of amakihi, apapane and elepaio they saw a Japanese tit, so they didn't fare so badly.



The sky was partially overcast in the morning with some sunshine, changing to a low heavy cloud cover in the afternoon, but we had no rain on the Aiea trail.

Joseph E. King

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Field Trip - December 11, 1955: On December 11 our monthly check on shore birds at Kahuku was the plan for the day. As usual, this was done in a devious manner. Our first stop was at East Loch at Aiea. We were greatly disappointed in the count at this point; 1 Tattler, 1 Golden Plover and 5 Stilt - no Aukau which was most unusual.

Next we stopped at West Loch where we had a good look at a male Shoveler duck - he truly was in beautiful plumage - other Shovelers too were seen as were some Pintail ducks, Turnstones, Aukuu and the usual number of noisy Hawaiian Stilt. With a bit of extra "high stepping" over pickerell weed we saw three Black-bellied Plover - one obligingly posed next to a Golden Plover so we were afforded an opportunity to note the particularly different identification points in the two species.

Then off to Kahuku where the systematic filling and drainage is reducing the water area to an alarming extent. The usual Pintail ducks, Turnstones, Sanderlings and Golden Plovers were to be seen, however, less in number than at the beginning of the year.

Ruth R. Rockafellow

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It is with deep regret that the Society has accepted the resignation of Priscilla Harpham as editor of the ELEPAIO. Our most sincere thanks go to her for her careful and efficient work during the past year. It is only because we realize that the pressure of other work makes it impossible for her to continue that we release her from the duties of editor. Mahalo nui, Priscilla!

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#### FEBRUARY ACTIVITIES:

FIELD TRIPS: February 12 - To Poamoho to observe native forest birds. Meet in front of the Library of Hawaii at 8:00 a.m.

February 26 - To Kawaihoa for forest birds. Meet in front of the Library of Hawaii at 8:00 a.m.

MEETING: February 20 - At the Aquarium at 7:30 p.m. Grenville Hatch will talk on a few highlights of her recent mainland birding trip.

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#### HAWAII AUDUBON SOCIETY OFFICERS:

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