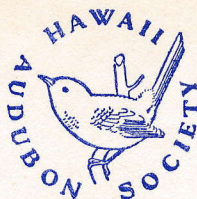


# THE ELEPAIO

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Hawaii Audubon Society



For the Better Protection  
of Wildlife in Hawaii

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## WILD BIRD DISEASES By Robert F. Cross

Diseases act as a limiting factor for all types of wildlife populations. Whenever a species gets particularly abundant there is usually an increase of the natural enemies, the food supply diminishes, and some wildlife disease assumes epidemic proportions. All these things act together to reduce the over abundant population.

In spite of the fact that epidemics in wild birds are not unusual, information about them is quite sketchy. The very fact that the birds are wild make it difficult to collect more information. Accurate figures on morbidity, mortality, rate of spread, and length of sickness are impossible to collect from a population that can't be counted and closely observed. Clinical examination of sick individuals also yields very little information. Wild birds hide their symptoms as long as possible and one that appears clinically sick is usually very close to death.

Most of the information about wild bird diseases has been developed through a study of similar diseases in domestic poultry. The study of diseases as they occur in zoological collections and pet birds, diseases arising in commercial game bird operations, and information gained through post mortem examinations of wild birds also add to the available knowledge.

In view of the difficulty of collecting information, it is sometimes surprising that so much is known. Nearly all of the diseases of domestic poultry have been found in wild birds of various types. Pullorum disease of chickens has been found in pheasants, quail, sparrows, pigeons, bullfinches, canaries, goslings, turtle doves, gold finches, green finches, and bittern. Newcastle disease has been found in ducks, geese, pigeons, pheasants, partridges, crows, sparrows, starlings, martins, owls, parrakeets, and doves. An outbreak of fowl cholera in the San Francisco, bay area was responsible for the loss of 40,000 waterfowl in 1948. There are many other examples of this type where poultry diseases affect feral birds.

In addition to these common poultry diseases, wild birds are also known to act as a reservoir for certain diseases of man and other animals. Diseases such as equine encephalomyelitis and ornithosis are in this category.

Still other diseases are restricted to specific types of birds and cannot even be spread to closely related species. Ulcerative enteritis of Bobwhite Quail is an example of this type of disease. It affects only Bobwhite Quail. Understandably, these diseases that are restricted to a single species are the ones that have received the least study. The opportunity for study is seldom present and the rarer the bird, the less opportunity there is to study its diseases.



Unfortunately, even if much more were known it would not be of much help in controlling an epidemic. Where there is no direct control over the wild populations, there is very little that can be done. They cannot be vaccinated, they cannot be treated, the sick cannot be segregated from the healthy. The disease must, as a rule, run its natural course.

Fortunately, diseases do not eliminate a wild population, they merely reduce it. Sometimes the reduction is drastic, sometimes its scarcely noticeable. The net effect in either case is the elimination of the weaker and more susceptible individuals. The current wild bird population is therefore more disease resistant than the past populations. The culling effect of wildlife diseases will no doubt continue and it may not be, in all respects, a bad thing.

(Dr. Cross is Veterinarian Pathologist, Division of Animal Industry, Territorial Board of Commissioners of Agriculture and Forestry.)

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#### WILD DOGS

By Arthur P. McCormack

On Oahu there are about three hundred dogs that live in packs, most of them in the hills but some of them close to residential areas. A few years ago several dogs were trapped in the Moiliili Quarry and just last year a number were caught on the Ala Wai Golf Course near the Palolo Drainage Canal. Hawaii, however, isn't the only place troubled with wild dogs. They do thousands of dollars of damage in the United States each year.

The average person expects the wild dogs to be fierce. The truth is that they are usually timid and will run and hide, but will attack in defense of a litter of pups or when cornered. These dogs are not always large but may be medium in size; they are very muscular and heavy. Wild dogs are best defined as dogs that are not friendly with people, that live in packs and hunt for their own food. In many areas pet dogs join the packs and go away for several days, return home for a short time, then join the pack again. In the Waialae area a pack of wild dogs killed five goats and badly injured seven others. In the Koko Head area in a period of five months a rancher lost thirteen calves. In Ewa, twenty-six pullets were killed, and in another area forty-two rabbits were destroyed. Truck farmers suffer damage when wild dogs and pups play in vegetable gardens, flower beds and water-cress patches. These are only a few of the hundreds of cases handled by the Humane Society.

Our dog traps have been very successful. Last year our ten traps caught 129 wild dogs. We have just received eleven new traps which were built by the Honolulu Technical School. These traps were urgently needed and now that we have them we hope more people will report crop and stock damage due to stray dogs, which no doubt are wild dogs.

(Mr. McCormack is manager of the Hawaiian Humane Society.)

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TWO RECORDS OF OSPREY ON OAHU. The note about an osprey seen near Ewa, Oahu, in the December 1956 issue of Elepaio reminded me of records of an osprey seen at Salt Lake in 1949 and 1940.

In April 1939 Walter Donaghho told me that an osprey had been seen at Salt Lake, Oahu, and on April 22, I arranged with a fisherman to take me out in his boat to see the bird. It was perched on the top of one of the dead submerged trees. As we approached it flew along the shore and we had a close view. It flew about, swerving high in the air and low over the water, once it dipped its feet below the surface. It gradually



rose higher and disappeared towards the ocean.

On March 3, 1940, an osprey was again seen at Salt Lake, perhaps the same bird. Charles Dunn and I went out in the fisherman's boat and found the bird perched in a dead tree. As we approached it flew over us to the far side of the lake, where it dived and rose with a fish in its feet. It flew to a tree and started feeding and we had a fine view. We again approached and the bird started to soar in circles, carrying the fish in its feet. Higher and higher it went till it was only a speck in the sky and then down it came with half closed wings at a great speed, twisting and tumbling. It alighted on a tree where we left it to finish its meal in peace.

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HAWAIIAN STILTS NESTING ON OAHU. It is sad to hear that Kaelepulu Pond will be destroyed. Over twenty years ago we spoke to the Bishop Estate about preserving it but received little encouragement. Even at that time drainage ditches were being dug.

It was long suspected that stilts were nesting somewhere on Oahu, and on May 13, 1934, three nests were found with eggs at Kaelepulu. One with three eggs was in one inch of water near the shore. This was a substantial nest made partly of dead reed stems with a covering of purslane. It may have been the foundation of an old coots' nest. The other two nests contained four eggs each, the normal complement. These nests were very slight, the eggs were lying on the wet soil near the edge of the water. A few bits of purslane were arranged in a ring, with bits of clam shell, snail shells and small stones.

The following year (1935) several nests were found with eggs on May 19. Some were just scrapes in the mud, others were built up on mounds of purslane in six inches of water. On July 1, family parties of old and young stilts were seen feeding along the edge of the reeds. The parent birds spent a lot of their time driving away other birds which came near. Mynahs and doves moved hurriedly when the stilts approached them but a black-crowned night heron squawked and flapped and stood its ground until both stilts made a concerted attack and the heron moved away protesting.

That year was probably the last time that stilts nested on Oahu.

J. d'Arcy Northwood

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(We are sure that Mr. Northwood, who still has a keen interest in Hawaii, will be as pleased as we are to read the note which follows on the stilt nests recently discovered.)

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#### FIELD NOTES:

On Saturday, March 30th, I visited Kaelepulu Pond with my family and some friends. The stilts were quite alarmed at our presence near the shore. We suspected that possibly there was nesting activity nearby. Two of us decided to explore the grass islands in the pond. So we rolled up the legs of our pants and started wading. We found many abandoned nests and some that were freshly made. Finally a stilt's nest was discovered with four of the heavily spotted olive-drab colored eggs.

As we searched further we found four more stilts' nests and two coots' nests.

The following Sunday, April 7, Grenville Hatch, Dennis Hanson and I went back to check on the nests. We found four stilts' nests and two coots' nests.



We are very happy to find this evidence that the stilt is nesting and trying to hold its own. We are only sorry that plans are in progress to drain Kaelepulu pond and thus do away with one more of our so few nesting ponds.

Charles Hanson

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FIELD TRIP, April 14, 1957

After much bumping, scraping and stalling, Grenville Hatch, Al LaBrecque and I arrived at the end of the jeep trail and started our hike on the Poamoho trail. The time was 7:30 a.m. on Sunday morning, April 14th. The weather was cloudy, with an occasional mist falling.

We counted 50 apapane that were feeding hither and yon on various blossoms. We felt fortunate in seeing that many, as the paper bark trees were not in full blossom. Other birds seen were amakihi, elepaio, white-eye, cardinal (North American), ricebirds, and both kinds of doves.

We were hunting for some sign of the garrulax but were disappointed as none were seen or heard.

The day was made perfect, however, in the observation by the group of a pair of beautiful iiwi. Excitement reigned supreme for a while after that find.

After a good lunch and a stop to gather pineapples at an abandoned field, we drove home a wet but satisfied trio.

Charles Hanson

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#### BOOK REVIEWS:

Bailey, Alfred M. Birds of Midway and Laysan Islands. Pub. by the Denver Museum of Natural History, 1956. (Museum Pictorial No. 12) 130 p. Illus. Bibl. \$2.00

This publication is an interesting contribution to the growing literature on the birds of the Central Pacific. The small paper-bound book includes, besides the expected descriptive list, a history of the islands and a plant list, both by E. H. Bryan, Jr., of the Bernice P. Bishop Museum, Honolulu.

The remainder of the book is a factual and interesting account of 58 species. For each species there are descriptive and sometimes extensive notes on location, plumage, nesting and feeding habits. These have been compiled from Dr. Bailey's observations, and notes from others, from the time of George C. Munro and Henry Palmer, in 1891, down to Philip A. Dumont and Johnson Neff, in 1955. Much information has been drawn from the journals of Walter Donaghho, which were published in the ELEPAIO.

The book is generously illustrated with excellent photographs, many of them taken by Dr. Bailey and by Thomas M. Blackman. The cover bears a reproduction in color of a photograph of the extinct Laysan Honey-eater, one of the Drepaniidae.

Euphie G. M. Shields  
&  
Grenville Hatch



## FROM THE MAIL BAG:

Johnson A. Neff writes to Mrs. Pedley: "I note Miss Hatch's expression of astonishment to find the skylark as one of the predators. This is not new. Skylarks and near allies have caused untold damage to germinating pasture and grain crops in the Negev Desert reclamation district in Israeli; way back in 1941, when food for the second world war became a necessity, staid old Britain removed all protection from the skylark. Here in our own country, the near relative, the horned larks, are one of California's worst species in injury to agriculture. They flood down off the foothill ranges when the grass starts to burn out in mid-June, and attack the truck crops on the irrigated valley floor. Tomatoes, lettuce, bell peppers, spinach, beans, peas; I've seen as high as 60 acres in the center of a much larger field completely cleaned out by horned larks, and I once saw a germinating 40 acre spinach field completely cleaned up in 4 days. They're bad customers under certain circumstances.

"So it's no surprise to me. It's just that even most well versed bird lovers in California have not even yet learned of the heavy damage done by birds of this genera."

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## MAY ACTIVITIES:

FIELD TRIPS:        MAY 12 - To Pa Lehua. This is one of our favorites, where breath-taking views are sure to be seen, and also, we hope, many birds, including the elusive bush-warbler.

MAY 26 - To Waiawa Ditch trail, led by Mr. McGuire. This is a delightful, level trail with ferns and flowers, as well as birds, to enjoy.

Meet at the Punchbowl Street side of the Library of Hawaii at 8:00 a.m., for both trips.

MEETING:            MAY 20 - At the Aquarium Auditorium at 7:30 p.m.  
"Guano Birds of Peru" - a talk and motion pictures  
by Mr. Ray Greenfield.

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