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HAWAIIAN ORNITHOLOGIST: WILLIAM ALANSON BRYAN
By Margaret Titcomb

In this biographical note of William Alanson Bryan, for the Elepaio, it may be appropriate to mention first his accomplishments as to bird study in Hawaii.

Mr. Bryan was the first Curator of Birds at Bishop Museum (1900-1907). He was, however, a man of many abilities, one of his skills being taxidermy. His first task seems to have been the mounting of a New Zealand whale skeleton. Next mentioned in Bishop Museum reports is the Tropic Bird group, which has been enjoyed from 1901 to date. There followed several other Hawaiian bird groups, all still on view.

Besides taxidermy of birds (and whales!), Mr. Bryan went collecting. His first trip was to the high regions of Kauai, in 1900, when he and his companion, Alvin Seale, brought back 140 specimens, of 17 species. In the next year there was published his "Key to the Birds of the Hawaiian Group" (Bishop Museum Memoir, 1:3), which he called a "preliminary list." It seems remarkable that he could have prepared this extensive information so quickly. He bases his study on Bishop Museum's "most representative collection of the Hawaiian avifauna extant", on the British Museum's "Catalogue of Birds in the British Museum", Wilson and Evans' "Aves Hawaiienses", and other works, as well as the published "notes by Gadow, Dole, Perkins, Stejneger and others". He had also the "pleasure of examining the material in the National Museum, in Washington, the Academy of Sciences of Philadelphia, the British Museum, the Tring Museum and the Jardin des Plantes." Whether his examination was of material loaned or whether it occurred before he got to Hawaii, we do not know. He had already traveled extensively in Europe, studying museum techniques. It is likely that all Hawaiian birds collected and known were represented in these collections.

Between collecting, mounting, studying and writing on birds, Mr. Bryan must have been a busy and effective scientist. Outside of birds and whales, he assisted with most of the groups showing Hawaiian cultural activities, using figures made by the sculptor, Allan Hutchinson. The Director, William T. Brigham, says of them (1902 report):

"The care and skill Mr. Bryan has shown in this work will give pleasure to many visitors in future years, and without the important accessories he has furnished the admirable casts would be almost useless...to illustrate the most important or characteristic employment of the Hawaiians..."

In taxidermy Mr. Bryan's method is the same used with such capital success in South Kensington, New York, and other great museums, and it marks the passing of the old method of mounting stuffed birds upon stiff perches without any of their natural surroundings. We may place his work in the front ranks of modern taxidermy."

During 1902, a field trip was made to little known Marcus Island claimed by Japan in the northwest Pacific. Though his stay was curtailed in time and freedom of moving about, he managed to collect enough to publish, "A Monograph of Marcus Island." He hoped this would be a forerunner of many trips to Pacific Islands. In this he was disappointed, except for a trip to Midway, in 1905, and to Laysan in 1911.

The next years were packed with taxidermy and museum exhibit work, including a model of Kilauea Crater, as well as more bird groups. Bird collections were received from other collectors, and birds, nests, and eggs were classified and put into correct place, on exhibit or in the study collections. Four short papers on birds were also products of this time.

Unfortunately for Bishop Museum, Mr. Bryan terminated his connection. He had great enthusiasm for going in quest of funds to establish the "Pacific Scientific Institute", the object of which was the comparative scientific survey of the Pacific Ocean and its islands. The parting words of Bishop Museum's Director were, "His attractive groups of bird life in the gallery of Hawaiian Hall, as well as his usefulness in many ways will give him an honorable place among the builders of this Museum, and a suitable successor will be hard to find." (Report, 1906)

Mr. Bryan stayed in Hawaii for several more years, and a note of these years is offered by Edwin H. Bryan, Jr. (Curator, Bernice P. Bishop Museum - not related) who knew him.

"From 1909 to 1920, he was Professor of Zoology at the College of Hawaii. His chief interest was in birds; but particularly through his marriage to Elizabeth Jane Letson, ScD., an expert conchologist, he became interested in the marine shells of the Hawaiian Islands. Between them they built up a very extensive shell collection, a large part of which was acquired by Bishop Museum. Mrs. Bryan served as Librarian at the College of Hawaii, from 1913 until her death in 1919.

"It was during this period (1915) that Professor Bryan produced his monumental pioneer natural history of the Hawaiian Islands, "Natural History of Hawaii". For years Professor Bryan had carefully noted questions asked concerning Hawaii's natural history, and had painstakingly investigated the answers to these questions. The book, long out of print, and now somewhat out of date, remains the most extensive single work on the geology, plant and animal life of these islands.

"Professor Bryan was a man of great energy and wide interests. He entered enthusiastically into civic activities and campaigned extensively for such issues as making Honolulu a "free port". He took an active interest in politics and was considered for appointment to high office in the government. Because of some personal reason he left the territory in 1920, and became Director of the Los Angeles County Museum. Just before beginning this work he made a scientific trip to Latin America, including Juan Fernandez Islands."

Some of Mr. Bryan's former associates are living in Hawaii. It is difficult to find many of them, though several remember him from a slight acquaintance. Dr. C.E. Pemberton, of the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association, remembers him well as a prominent member of scientific circles here, and tells us that he was a gracious, highly intelligent man, and excellent teacher, an effective speaker, able to wake and hold attention of any audience. He was doubtless a member of all the scientific clubs that sprang up during the first quarter of the century. At Entomological Society meetings, Dr. Pemberton remembers that Mr. Bryan carried on vigorous debates on natural history, many on the subject of origin of fauna and flora of the Pacific. Dr. Frederick Muir was one of his "antagonists" and lively, friendly, discussions often occurred between the two.

The University of Hawaii has a record of the amazing variety of courses that Mr. Bryan taught at the fore-runner institution: College of Hawaii. They were in

zoology, geology, both dynamic and structural, as well as geology for engineers, oceanography, ichthyology, human and comparative physiology, and evolution and animal life.

An excellent summary of Mr. Bryan's whole life and personality has been written by John H. Comstock. Sections of which are reprinted herewith. (Bulletin Southern California Academy of Sciences, Vol. 41, part 2, 1942) Now we may go back to his early life, before he came to Hawaii, and on to the last long chapter in California:

"WILLIAM ALANSON BRYAN - Dec. 23, 1875 -- June 18, 1942

"Dr. Bryan was born near New Sharon, Iowa, December 23, 1875, the son of William A. and Catherine M. (Pearson) Bryan. He received his elementary education in the public schools of his native state, and in 1896 graduated from Iowa State College with the Bachelor of Science degree.

"As a youngster he early showed his love for the natural sciences, and his spare time was always devoted to the study, collection and classification of natural history objects. This led to the accumulation of some ten thousand specimens, which in 1903 he presented to the New Sharon (Iowa) High School.

"While still in college he was assistant in the department of Zoology and in 1893 was in charge of the Iowa State College Museum. In 1894 he headed an expedition to Big Stone Lake.

"From 1895 to '97 he was special lecturer on museum methods at the University of Minnesota, Indiana University, the University of Chicago, Purdue University, Iowa College and Drake University. From 1898 to 1899 he served as assistant curator of Ornithology at the Field Museum. Late in 1899 he was appointed representative of the United States Department of Agriculture to investigate the fauna of the Hawaiian Islands. During the year 1900 he traveled extensively through America and Europe studying methods of museum administration. From 1900 to 1907 he was Curator of Ornithology of the Bishop Museum in Honolulu.

"In 1921 Dr. Bryan's contact with the Southern California Academy of Sciences began, when he was appointed Director of the Los Angeles County Museum of History, Science and Art. He became a member of the Academy's Advisory Board at that time, and in 1922 was elected to the Board of Directors. In 1925 he served as President. In all of these posts, his excellent judgment and unselfish expenditure of time were of inestimable value to the Academy.

"When he retired in 1939 after eighteen years of service the Museum had expanded to an institution of national reputation, with some fifty galleries filled with exhibitions, twenty laboratories, numerous work shops, store rooms, machine shops, lecture rooms and offices. It operated an art school and supervised a park. Its staff numbered in excess of one hundred persons, many of whom were recognized authorities in their special fields.

"His was a gentle, kindly spirit, nurtured in the Quaker associations of his early years. There was nothing of the ruthless executive in his make-up. He never compromised with his conscience, but he preferred to retire from conflicts and avoid dissension rather than to engage in battle with forces that he could not respect. His devotion to duty left him little or no time for recreation, and this may have been one factor that brought on the illness which caused his retirement."

It is tempting to add this personal note. Going through Los Angeles in 1936, I called to see the Museum, and an old member of Bishop Museum staff, not yet known to me. Mr. Bryan made the call an extremely pleasant and friendly one. I remember well the vacuum tank - a marvel to me - and the amazing tar pits where animals of ancient time got hopelessly caught in the tar. Their lives were painfully ended, but our knowledge of them was thereby made possible. But the most vivid impression was from

a room where thirty-nine miniature habitat groups of primitive and historical life in the Southwest were on temporary display. They had been made by school children. Mr. Bryan had decisive opinions as to the merits of each. It seemed to me that all had been well done, and a great credit to Mr. Bryan, who stimulated and guided their making.

It may be that others in Honolulu remember Mr. Bryan and will offer their recollections to our Editor, in this way filling out the story of a most gracious man, one of the most forward-looking and effective museum directors of his time. What a delight it would be to him to live his life over again now, when museum education is going ahead so rapidly.

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FROM THE MAIL BAG:

We have selected, to share with our readers, two interesting letters, one from Mrs. Baldwin, who lives on Hawaii, the other from Bob Pyle, who is studying at the University of Washington.

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Mrs. Helen S. Baldwin to Mrs. Blanche A. Pedley

"... We are spending the summer as caretakers for the home of friends who are touring the mainland this vacation time. We are about a block from where we staid at the Volcano during the bird count last winter, but this house stands out in the open and so we do not see so much of native birds as we did at Ahuimenu (the house where we were for the bird count).

"Introduced birds, Chinese dove, house sparrows, hill-robins, and the California house finch all throng into the duck yard to feast on the food we put out for the owners' white Muscoveys. The ricebird and mynah are conspicuously absent from our immediate surroundings, which is strange as it is a place you would expect to find them.

"When we had a car at our disposal and the mornings were sunny (which has been very little of the time this cool misty summer) we went down the Wright road where we saw and heard so many native birds last winter, but were disappointed at seeing and hearing so few. Only the iiwi seem to have increased in numbers over their winter population, among native birds. Of course the hill-robins and white-eyes are there in abundance as they always come up from the lowlands in summer. The white-eyes are fond of flitting about the plum trees in the yard by the house, too.

"But we did see a fledgling iiwi on July 6, still in the green and yellow phase but with a red bill, near the end of the Wright road. We spent a full half hour prowling around in the dense tree ferns trying to get a better look at him but failed, though he stayed in the same tree and kept calling incessantly----a single loud chirp repeated every two or three seconds.

"Bob watched him through binoculars and reported that the little fellow kept poking his beak into the bark of the branches and kept clinging close to the bark, his short little tail laid flat to the bark. From the shortness of his plumage, the iiwi shape to his bill and the red color of it, we are sure he was a fledgling iiwi and not an akiapolaau. Also, a resplendant adult iiwi kept constantly near by, though he made no attempt to feed the young one.

"At least one iiwi boldly comes to the fuchsias which are growing half wild about the margin of the lawn at the house where we are staying. The iiwi come surprisingly close to the ground to the blossoms, heavy with rain drops or dew. These iiwi enter the flowers conventionally from the front to suck the nectar and do not pierce them at the base from the side as we have seen the amakihi do. There are few amakihi here, by the way. Apapane are about, of course, and they, too, come to the fuchsias but do not seem so interested in them nor to probe so deeply as the iiwi.

"On July 7, early in the morning, we drove up the Mauna Loa "truck trail" (now widened and gravelled into a respectable road for 2 or 3 miles) thinking we would find many native species there, too. But again we were doomed to disappointment, and the majority of the birds seemed to be hill-robins, house finches, and white-eyes. A few ohia were in bloom, but little else, so I guess the birds have fled to more flowery regions. We soon abandoned birding to blackberrying and enjoying the lovely scenery.

"We were lucky to go the day we did, for since that time it has been misty and the only bird observation worthy of note is an owl which we have seen flying over the recently cleared lands along the Wright road----one native bird at least who approves of opening up the land for settlement. ... "

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Mr. Robert L. Pyle to Miss Grenville Hatch

" ... We didn't have nearly as much time for spring birding as we would have liked --though I guess that's always the case. I had one splendid trip Easter weekend with Frank Richardson and some other men on a boat out into the Straits. We visited a small island where glaucous-winged gulls and Rhinoceros Aulets nest, and although we were a bit early for the real nesting, we saw lots of each. Puffins also nest there, but they hadn't returned by then. It's quite a good-sized island--perhaps $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile long or longer with a high level central part where a fellow raises grain. He has a small cottage on the beach where he lives during the busy part of the season, and since he owns the island he can do pretty much as he pleases. He has stocked the island with pheasants and encourages pheasant-shooting, but this is probably not harmful to the nesting seabirds since it tends to draw attention away from them. He has a very fine attitude about the birds in general, and it was nice to meet him. Billie wasn't able to go on that trip, but in June during the Cooper Club meetings they had a field trip out there and she was able to go that time. The puffins were back then and we had excellent studies of them.

"We also had one fine weekend trip to the mountains and through the eastern part of Washington during the spring migration. We camped one night in the mountains and the other night in a canyon along a creek in the dry part of the state, the latter being especially good for migrating landbirds. We went with two friends so that it made a very enjoyable trip.

"The Cooper Society meetings and the other scientific meetings that week pretty much filled the time between the spring and summer quarters. However, we did find time to take a four-day driving trip around the Olympic Peninsula. It was then too early to drive up into the higher mountains, but we explored all the lowland country including the rain forests on the west side. They have the highest rainfall in North America there, and it was interesting to compare it with Hawaii's forests. Here the main trees are of course fir and spruce, and the "trademark" of the rain forest is the huge growths of moss that cover the limbs and droop down, making the scene very impressive and beautiful, particularly when the sun streams down through the tall trees. The birding was interesting but not particularly spectacular. The Olympic Peninsula is sort of isolated from the main mountain areas of the west, and does not have the abundance of birdlife that one might expect.

"The summer quarter I spent up at the University's marine laboratories at Friday Harbor. This is in the little group of islands lying between the main part of Washington and Vancouver Island, and is a favorite vacation area for Washingtonians. However, I was taking a full program of courses and it didn't seem quite so much like a vacation to me. The islands are mostly wooded, except on the large island on which we were, where much of it was devoted to farming. Boating is the main activity around there, and there are all kinds from the smallest dinghy up to the largest yachts. It is wonderful boating territory, with many small and irregularly shaped islands with little coves and beaches, and most of it well protected from any rough water. The water is, however, very cold--around 50 to 55 degrees, and swimming is not especially popular. Unfortunately Billie had to stay here in Seattle, but she came up several weekends and I came down several weekends so it wasn't quite so bad. They have regular ferry service through the islands, as you perhaps remember since they lie on the route to Vancouver Island. There were lots of landbirds around at the beginning of the quarter since nesting was in full swing, but things quieted down later on. One pair of violet-green swallows nested in a corner of the laboratory dock, which was fine during early June before the summer program got under way. But when all the students arrived and the dock became the center of activities, the poor birds had to desert the nest, and the three eggs that were in it. I was able to capture one of the pair and band it, which so far is the only bird I've banded since leaving Hawaii.

"So now we're in Seattle this month waiting for the fall quarter to begin October 3rd. Labor Day weekend we took a trip up into the Hurricane Ridge section of Olympic Park. That's the highest road in the park, and goes up above timberline, though it is only around 6000 ft elevation. We camped out for two nights and took a nice 8-mile hike on the full day we had there. It was rather cold in the early morning--frost was on everything each morning, but it didn't take too long to warm up. Again the birdlife there is rather meagre, although we had fine views of Sooty grouse, and the Canada Jays came down and pecked at the sandwiches we were making for lunch. Enroute there, we explored a few side roads and had the good fortune to scare up a Horned Owl which was brand new for Billie. But in the Park the scenery is superb, and we were blessed with perfectly clear weather after a rather ominous rainy start from Seattle, so we got lots of pictures. ...

"... And I also want to mention once again that the "Birds of Washington" gift from the Society has been a wonderful bible for us here. It is of course the definitive work on distribution here and we are constantly referring to it, being reminded each time of the very thoughtful and generous folks in the Hawaii Audubon group.

"... Billie joins me in sending very best wishes to you and all our friends over there.

Sincerely,

Bob"

FIELD NOTES:

Field Trip to Popoia Island, August 18, 1956

Saturday afternoon, August 18th, seventeen Audubon members and their guests gathered at Kailua Park for their annual trip to Popoia island. The weather was perfect, and the moon, although not quite full, was bright. To all of us, searching for the fluffy baby shearwaters hiding in their coral burrows, watching the parent birds gracefully gliding round and round, as they came in at night fall, and later, listening to their weird moaning and wailing, is an ever exciting experience.

When we arrived on the island we were dismayed to discover that three young boys had taken five young shearwaters and a baby petrel from their burrows and were planning to take them ashore for pets. They were given a stern lecture and prevailed upon to return the birds to their burrows, but we fear the boys were not properly impressed with the seriousness of their offence nor are we sure the birds got back to their proper burrows. We also found that the sign posting the island has become almost illegible. Both this incident and the condition of the sign has since been reported to the Board of Agriculture and Forestry.

This year we found fewer young birds than in previous years and fewer adults came in at dusk. On other occasions we have been fortunate enough to find one or two Bulwer's petrels nesting, but this year we were not so lucky. Several turnstone and a few plover were seen circling the island, and one or two frigate birds were spotted flying high above us.

Although the number of birds seen on the island was disappointing, the outing was, as always, a treat for all.

Blanche A. Pedley

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Field Trip to Aiea Trail, September 9, 1956

Aiea trail is one of the best birding areas near town. The trail is well cleared and is not as wet as Tantalus nor as steep as Woodlawn. The birds are plentiful and there are variety of vegetation to accommodate different species of birds.

In spite of the rain clouds hanging heavily over the Koolau and the down pour just about 7:15, there were 12 individuals willing to take a chance on the trail. The early arrivals at the Library were being entertained by the mynahs and English sparrows, when suddenly, a gentle chirping of the Brazilian cardinal was heard. There were few visitors from the Mainland, so when the chirping became more audible, and when the two male birds with their brilliant red crest came flying down to the grass, we completely forgot about the rain and enthusiastically headed for Aiea.

We stopped at the Damon ponds, and behold, we counted 7 stilts. We were able to find them quickly, because as soon as the car stopped, they started to give the alarm call and waded away toward the center of the pond. Oh, those long-pink legs and the beautifully outlined black and white feathers. We were very happy when a couple of them took to the air, because, then, they were so graceful and the awkwardness of the long legs in the water was completely forgotten.

We looked for the gallinule, but we found only a coot, so we headed for the Salt Lake. Unfortunately, the mocking bird area was being cleared and a fence was put up, so we decided the birds were not there, but to our delight, those ahead of us were able to see 7 of them, so the mockers are still maintaining their territorial rights.

When we reached the picnic area, it was nearing 9:00 and the occasional shower was changing into a continuous rain, but none of us was able to sit in the cars and remain dry, so we stood under the Norfolk Island pines and tried to keep ourselves from

getting completely wet. While we were waiting for the rain to stop, we saw Kentucky cardinals and white-eyes.

As soon as there was a sign of let-up, we started to walk, but the rain did not stop for long. Even with the rain, evidences of bird life were everywhere. The doves were cooing, elepaio was calling, Kentucky cardinals were singing, and ricebirds were chirping and flying from the grass to the trees.

After about an hour of waiting for the sun to come out a family of 3 decided to turn back, but the remaining 9 of us wanted to make the loop. The sun was playing hide and seek with the clouds, but finally around 10:45 it stayed out long enough to thaw us.

Happily, everyone of us became very familiar with our first native bird we saw, the elepaio. They were very numerous and friendly. We saw the immature as well as the adult male and female. They called and sang and put on an excellent show.

The amakihi was plentiful too. They were feeding on the paper bark and the lehua blossoms. By the number of amakihi in the area, we expected more apapane, but we were disappointed, we saw only few immature and adult birds.

Of course, the white-eyes were intermingling with the amakihi to make identification more challenging.

We were leisurely walking along the trail, when suddenly, Mr. Hanson half believing his eyes called, "Tit? Yes, it's a tit!!!" Everyone quickly focused his glasses toward the approaching bird, but without a sound this bird came close enough, so that we were able to watch it without the glasses. Interesting enough, as the bird was flying away from us, it uttered a single call note very similar to the single "ki" note that we always labeled as amakihi's. Now, we were completely perplexed. Whenever we heard the single "ki" call note, we looked at each other with a questioning expression, "Is it a tit? or an amakihi?" Experiences like this make field trips so much more interesting, and we become more humble to realize that there is so much around us that is unknown. After we had a good look at the tit, no one said a word, but all of us showed contentment and radiated with happiness. We felt a harmonious unison with the environment - a wonderfully delightful and peaceful experience.

As we approached the trail leading to the summit, we saw about a dozen leiothrix feeding on the black fruits of the naupaka and the strawberry guavas. At this point we decided to have lunch before another down pour, so we found a place where we were able to watch the birds while we ate. The white-eyes, amakihi, elepaio, and Kentucky cardinals were on hand to keep us company.

About 11:45 we headed back. The trail was much drier on this side (Halawa) of the loop, but bird life was quite scarce. By now the sun was out and the light was excellent for watching birds, so we had a very good look at the apapane. Even an artist would have had a difficult time painting the impressive image of the red and black bird undulating back and forth against the blue sky and the white clouds.

We came back to the cars before 2:00 and reluctantly ended a delightful bird walk.

Unoyo Kojima

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Shore bird trip, September 23, 1956

The monthly trip for shore birds, as usual, took us around the island. The weather was clear, very warm, with light to moderate trade winds.

The first stop at West Loch, Waipahu, was chiefly notable for the large number of stilt, estimated at 150. We were also delighted to be able to observe closely a black-

bellied plover, the white tail showing more clearly than many of us had seen before. At the second stop at Kahuku, we also found two or three black-bellied plover, and here we were able to see plainly the pattern of white on the wings.

At the fish ponds, near Kahana Bay, we found a coot, with four chicks, still showing much red on the heads, as well as other individual coot, several gallinule, and a tattler, who pose in a most photogenic manner on a rock.

Kahuku was good birding. We estimated close to a hundred coot, about seventy-five ducks, of which some certainly were pintails, five sanderling, perhaps fifty stilt, and two or three tattlers, one of which gave us a fine close view. The fields were full of plover and turnstone, in addition to those about the margin of the pond, so that we were unable to estimate their numbers.

Some little time was spent in attempting to get into the old air strip area, on the Kahuku side of the radio station, but without success. Are we barred from this completely, or does some one know a way to enter?

Grenville Hatch

HAWAIIAN BIRD TOUR

The Alii Tour Company is promoting a trip to Hawaii, designed particularly for people interested in birds. Those taking the tour will be in Honolulu from December 23 to December 29, during which time members of the Hawaii Audubon Society have promised to lead trips to see shore birds and forest birds. Another four day trip to the Island of Hawaii is optional, and it is expected that many will avail themselves of the opportunity to see that island also.

NOVEMBER ACTIVITIES:

FIELD TRIPS: November 11 - To Poamoho. If the weather permits, this is one of the best forest bird trails. We hope to hear the garrulax and the bush warblers. Meet at the Library of Hawaii at 8:00 a.m.

November 25 - Meet at the Library of Hawaii at 8:00 a.m. for our monthly shore bird trip. Destination uncertain, except that it will depend on the tides.

MEETING: November 19 - At the Aquarium auditorium at 7:30 p.m. Will each member please bring twelve of his favorite slides to show?

HAWAII AUDUBON SOCIETY OFFICERS:

President: Mr. Charles Hanson
Vice-Pres: Miss Grace Gossard
Mr. Al Labrecque
Secretary: Miss Margaret Newman
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DUES: Regular - \$2.00 per annum
Junior (18 years and under) - \$1.00 per annum
Life - \$50.00