

# THE ELEPAIO

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## BUDGERIGARS, COMMONLY KNOWN AS PARAKEETS By Arthur Stanton

These interesting little birds are a real joy to anyone who keeps birds for pleasure or for profit. A great many books have been written in regard to these very delightful birds.

To the ordinary person who enjoys their delightful chatter and comic exhibitions, these birds bring countless hours of happiness to young and aged alike. Though they have been kept in captivity for almost a hundred years it was not until the last twenty-five years or so that they have gained so much popularity as a cage bird. The colors most frequently seen in the pet shops and the aviaries of the novice bird keeper are the greens, blues and the pastel shades of blue-white, and the popular yellowish green. However, there are a great number of other colors that are kept in the aviaries of the more advanced fancier. I would like to tell you more about these other varieties at another time.

Among cage birds where the male and female are identical in color and general appearance, the budgerigar is one of the few birds that is easy to sex. The male has a bright blue cere (skin across the bridge of the nose) while the female has a tan or brown colored one.

It was a common belief not too many years ago, that these birds were almost impossible to breed if only one pair was kept. However, this was disproved quite some time ago. Today it is the practice of the advanced fancier to have his pairs set up in single breeding cages, so better records can be kept of his birds, and a system of pedigrees set up for future breeding.

The idea of colonial breeding is still held by a great many bird fanciers here in the Territory and in the United States, as well as in other parts of the world. The system of colonial breeding is to have as many pairs as one's aviary will allow, and have the nest boxes placed up against the shelter of the aviary. As the birds get into breeding condition, they will select their own nest boxes, and breeding will take place. Usually it will take from ten to fifteen days before the first egg is laid. The incubation period is eighteen days. After hatching, it will take another six or seven weeks before the young leave the nest. During this time the young birds are still dependent on the parent bird for food. However, it is also the perfect time to take the young away from the parents, if they are to be made into finger trained pets. I have mentioned the fact that they will still depend upon the parents to feed them. However, if given a lot of seed near them at all times they are quite capable of caring for themselves.

I hope that I haven't bored you good people with my little dissertation on the parakeet. But if you are able to stand this first installment, then I shall be very



happy to go into the finer points of breeding this very popular bird, as there are many mutations right here in Honolulu. These birds are kept by the novice, as well as the advanced fancier. Birds from the aviaries of Honolulu have made great progress in the exhibition circles in the United States, taking top honors in the different competitive shows in the western and mid-western states.

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# NOTES FROM CHRISTMAS ISLAND 1/

Red-footed Booby (*Sula sula rubripes*). The young birds, in December, were still noticeable for their almost completely brown plumage, the wings somewhat darker, the beak grey and eyes hazel (instead of the blue of the adult), the feet grey (instead of red). They were very tame. During January and February their plumage became more white, until in March they are distinguishable from the adults only by a trace of brown on head and tail, the bill is still greyish but with a darker tip, there is no colour to the naked skin of face, but the feet are a pale red.

The adults on this Island are small and appear always to have light brown wings and backs (though some have white scapulars), and the skin of the face and neck is red.

On 8 February some were seen standing on old nests, and fresh material (*Boerhaavia diffusa*) was found on one nest indicating that they were being rebuilt for the new nesting season. This was confirmed in other areas. The birds were timid and had very bright blue beaks.

Shoveller (*Spatula clypeata*). These were first seen in November when the drakes were in eclipse. During January the drakes were showing chestnut colouring on their flanks. The bills of the females had an orange tinge, which we thought unusual but confirmed by repeated observation.

They associated with Pintail and the Scaup, and were seen:-

- on 2 Jan: fifteen (including six males with bright green speculum and chestnut flanks.
- 18 Jan: fifteen plus, with Pintail and Scaup.
- 30 Jan: two male, with colourings clearer.
- 31 Jan: two male, two female.
- 15 Feb: five plus, seen flying high. (Last sighting)

Pacific Golden Plover (*Pluvialis dominica fulva*). Abundant during November, December and January, all in winter dress, they frequented the edge of all water patches and dry and wet mud flats but only infrequently the beaches. They were the first to give the alarm on someone's approach.

During January some flocks were seen. On 3 Jan a flock of seven called at a pond for a brief moment; but when they took off they were not joined by the birds already there. On 7 Jan a large flock of over 80 were seen circling and gliding clockwise in a North westerly direction from the SE corner. On 12 Jan a flock of five flew in from the sea, going in the same direction. By February their numbers at the familiar ponds had diminished markedly and during this month many small groups were noted amongst the dwarf scrub of the dry flats, sometimes in association with Turnstone or Curlew. On 26 Feb the first bird with a blackish belly was seen and on 1 March one was seen on the mud flats near Mota Upua in very nearly full summer plumage.

Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres interpres*). On 21 Dec five were seen in summer dress giving a courtship display on a wet mud flat. (R. Stafford).

Eight were seen shortly after this in the same area, some of which had winter plumage. Twenty were seen on 28 Dec on a roadway in winter plumage. (G. Payne).



On 7 Feb sixteen were seen feeding on a mud flat near Main Camp; they were in winter plumage, but on 26 Feb in the same place five were seen in very bright full summer dress. (MDG).

On 4 March a small flock flew over Main Camp and out to sea at early dawn.

Warbler (*Conopodera aequinoctialis aequinoctialis*). These delightful little birds are very sociable and can often be found in the bushes in pairs and sometimes in groups of up to six, hunting for insects.

On 23 Dec one pair were seen courting, also another pair in early January one of which had nesting materials in its beak. (L.T. Rose). Despite much searching no new nests were found until 1 Feb when two were seen in a bush on Benson's Point. (R. Stafford). A newly re-built nest was seen on 15 Feb in a group of *Messerschmidia* trees on the North coast edge but it appears deserted; the remains of several old nests are in these trees but none have yet been found in other trees in that area.

On 8 March one entirely new nest was found on a small islet separated from the mainland by a stretch of tidal water 20 yards wide. The islet was inhabited by a large colony of courting Frigate birds and their last year's off-spring. The nest was deeply cupped, about  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches in exterior length,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches interior depth and  $2\frac{1}{4}$  inches wide at the mouth. It was, as usual, constructed in and around the three forked upright stem of the *Messerschmidia argentea*. It was very close to the bunch of leaves at the end of each stem and was made of grass and old down from Frigate birds. Inside the nest was one very small egg, dull white with many blackish specks, and a very small, dark brown, naked chick. This is the first report we have had of warblers on an islet.

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1/ These notes are reprinted from the Bulletin of the Christmas Island Natural History Society, Bulletin No. 8, 18 March 1959, with the kind permission of the Secretary, Major M. D. Gallagher.

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BIRDS OF HALEAKALA  
By Robert W. Carpenter 2/

As part of my work at the Haleakala Section of Hawaii National Park I drive almost daily from Park Headquarters, at the 7,000 foot elevation, to the Crater Observatory, at nearly 10,000 feet above sea level. The most common birds seen on this drive are the golden plovers, which will probably be leaving soon for their northern migration. They may be seen singly or in varied groups of twos, threes, fours, etc. It may be of interest to note that on October 26, 1958, a group of 14 plovers were seen flying together near the Haleakala Road at about the 8,000 foot elevation. On February 27, 1959, Assistant Superintendent Whitcraft observed a flock of about 30 plovers in the crater near Holua Cabin.

Probably the next most common birds regularly seen are the ring-necked pheasants. Right now the males are decked out in their finest, most brilliant Easter plumage with bright red cheek patches and conspicuous horn-like tufts of feathers on the backs of their heads. Several males and a dozen or more females may be seen most every day along the park road up to about the 8500 foot elevation.

During October, November and December, coveys of 8 to 12 chukkar partridge were common along the road above the 7500 foot elevation. In the last two months they have apparently been spending more time housekeeping and are seen now mostly singly or in pairs.

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2/ Mr. Carpenter is Park Naturalist, Hawaii National Park, Haleakala Section.



While on the subject of game birds, California Valley Quail are seen occasionally along the road up to about the 7500 foot elevation. On January 28 I surprised and was in turn startled by the sudden appearance and disappearance of a covey of about 12 of these attractive birds on top of Puu Oili, a cinder cone near Park Headquarters.

Among the small native birds, I have seen, at various times and in various numbers, the apapane, iiwi, and Maui creeper. At two o'clock in the afternoon on March 23 I observed a pueo, Hawaiian short-eared owl, soaring hawklike around Puu Nianiau near the Silversword Inn.

Several mynahs have returned to the horse stable area in back of the Silversword Inn after spending the winter months at lower elevations. The omnipresent, quarrelsome English sparrows are also seen here. Skylarks, linnets and white-eyes are seen frequently. Leiothrix appeared for a few days during November at the Crater Observatory and the Satellite Tracking Station. A pair of mockingbirds have been seen several times at about the 8500 foot elevation near the road.

This will give you an idea of the species of birds that may be seen along the road to the summit of Haleakala. A good birding area is the Hosmer Grove across the road from the Silversword Inn. In the grove there are charcoal burners and picnic tables where visitors may relax while having lunch and listening to the numerous bird songs and the whispering of the winds in the pine trees. A shelter closeby provides protection from occasional rain.

Birding in the crater is, of course, rivalled by the scenic spectacle of the cinder cones and lava flows. Nevertheless, there are birds to be seen and I will report on these at a later date.

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#### FROM THE MAIL BAG:

The following letter was sent to Mr. and Mrs. Whitney Eastman, whose article on their birding experiences in Hawaii was published in the ELEPAIO, Vol. 19, No. 1, July, 1958.

"... We lived in Hawaii from 1929 to 1939 and I believe you saw more species of birds in three weeks than I in ten years. My husband's record was probably much better. However, at that time, we only had two pairs of Reed Bird Glasses. I should like to go back now with my good Zeiss Binoculars.

"It is twenty years since I was there. In that interval the Hawaii Audubon Society has been formed, apparently. Or is that name synonymous with Hui Manu?

"My best bird reference book is A Complete List of the Birds of the Hawaiian Possessions, with notes on their habits, by H. W. Henshaw, 1902. This book includes the native birds which you found.

"Except for the mynah birds, there was a deplorable lack of bird life in Hawaii while we were there and the natives were blamed for the destruction of birds, claimed formerly abundant. Many attempts were made to introduce birds, but it was difficult to find species with good prospects for survival. Migratory birds were ruled out. And when one of our good friends, Dr. Harold Lyon, Director of the Sugar Planters Experiment Station, tried to introduce birds, disaster followed so quickly that it was most discouraging.

"For instance, on one occasion, he placed several birds and eggs which he had brought from the Orient, on a steep path leading to a small substation in upper Manoa Valley in Honolulu. When he came back down the path, he saw only torn feathers and broken egg shells. The mongoose had made quick work of his birds.



"The introduction of the mongoose into Hawaii is an illustration of the folly of trying to transplant a species whose life history is not known. You probably know that the mongoose was introduced to kill off the rat population. Instead, the rats and mongoose became good friends. The rat was nocturnal and occupied his burrow by day, while the mongoose was diurnal and slept in the rat's burrow at night, so the problem was greatly aggravated. And the mongoose became a serious predator on birds, since 1883.

"I visited all the Islands, from Kauai south, while there. The children and I spent one summer at Kokee, 4000 feet up on the side of Waialeale. So we saw more of the less common flycatchers and honey suckers on Kauai then, especially in the forests along the Napali Cliffs. And I remember seeing more sea birds in Olokele Canyon than anywhere else. We travelled to the crater of Haleakala on horseback, because there was no road up there at that time. We did lots of hiking on Maui, the most memorable trip being to the headwaters of the Kula Pipeline. I regret that I saw least of the Big Island. We made two brief trips there to see volcanoes in action. Bird life was certainly not abundant. It appears that much has been done since that time to protect and increase it.

"Thank you very much for your splendid study of Hawaiian birds. I may visit the Islands before long, and shall use your report."

Sincerely,

Helen S. Chapman

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#### FIELD NOTES:

Field Trip, March 8, 1959, Opaepala.

When kamaainas speak of Opaepala, a certain smile on the lips and a certain gleam in the eye promise something special, so the dozen adults and one boy gathered under the monkeypod tree at the library early in the morning of Sunday, March 8th, scanned the grey skies searchingly. Rain or shine? Wet trail or dry? Should we stick to our schedule and take a chance? We would. The trip turned out to be one of those halcyon days on which our memories will turn many a time.

A few plover were seen lingering with us on the uplands before taking off for the Arctic nesting season, also a few ricebirds swooping above the ripe pili grass before we entered the trees along the trail in Opaepala Gulch. Here, and for all day, we were entertained with the twittering of innumerable white-eyes and house finches, while leiiothrix were at concert pitch. We counted twenty-five, as well as thirteen amakihi, nine elepaio, five apapane, three bush warblers, and there were found the castings of owls, not numerous anywhere on Oahu.

To our astonishment, we found the trail just recently brushed out. Our walk was like a stroll through a beautiful park. Alongside was an irrigation stream of crystal clear water, and far down below at the bottom of the gulch was the boulder-strewn bed of the parent stream whose pools reflected the trees and ferns of its banks, and occasionally the blue of sky or white of cloud. The sunshine filtered through the leaves in shafts of gold, spotlighting a patch of moss or a grey rock richly embroidered with medallions of lichen.

Here we found ohia trees of a height and straightness of trunk seldom met with on Oahu. Strawberry guava trees said it was spring with new leaves of pink and red. Banana plants, ti and dracaena were found in great beauty, their leaves silken and untorn by winds. Tree ferns and bird nest ferns, maidenhair and swordfern, two varieties of Hawaiian mistletoe and Hawaiian heather. Smilax was found in bloom, as was the notable rooster's-tail moss, said to be a primitive growth antedating the ferns. The vines of the Hawaiian, or "famine" potato, draped many a tall tree and were heavy with their



russet fruit. On the opposite slope was spread a gorgeous tapestry in a thousand shades of green, the palest being a grove of kukui trees, spilling down the mountain-side like the dropped scarf of the goddess of spring herself.

A halcyon day indeed!

Margaret Smail

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Field Trip, March 22, 1959, Shore Birds.

How one dreads that early Sunday alarm and the final decision to bird walk or to turn over and fall asleep again in a warm bed!

Six members including Thelma Hensley, our Kauai member, and five visitors made it. We left the Library shortly after seven A.M. for West Loch at Pearl Harbor. I, for one, was disappointed in not going to Kahuku, but the majority seemed to rule as in most groups.

The tide was low at West Loch, and from the bridge we saw an abundance of bird life feeding on the mud flats far out. Al Labrecque and his hiking partner investigated but advised against our walking out for a closer look. The 'scope and the field glasses made it possible to identify and become well acquainted with the Hawaiian Stilt which were very, very plentiful. The Shoveler Ducks were shoveling through the muddy water. The Pintail Ducks were in flight as well as in the water; the plump Sanderlings were feeding. The Golden Plovers were in all degrees and stages of plumage between winter and spring. One Wandering Tattler sang or rather tattled as it flew toward us.

As we walked along the old O.R. & L. tracks we peeped through, over and around the heavy mangrove growth. Joe King set up the 'scope wherever a view was possible. A Black-crowned Night Heron, the Coots, a Black-bellied Plover and Ruddy Turnstones were observed. The Stilts made considerable commotion indicating that perhaps they may have been nesting out of sight beyond the mangroves. Several birds flew overhead in groups as though they were planning to be on their way to the North before too many more of our bird walks. Of course, we saw groups of tettering busy ricebirds. The North American Cardinals are very much interested in each other just now, about this we could have made no mistake. Spotted Doves and Brazilian Cardinals were also seen at West Loch.

After the ride down the "car trail" to the Point, at Salt Lake we were disappointed to find only Coot. But plenty there were, with their white faces readily identifiable, although almost all of them were along the far edge of the lake from the point. There were no Mockingbirds and no keawe trees and we heard not one Skylark where they had previously been known.

At Sand Island we found "plenty" people skiing, fishing and picnicking. At least one Black-footed Albatross was observed on the distant horizon as it soared up from the water and down again, and as it moved from right to left we followed its soaring flights.

A few isolated Plover were seen feeding in the customary manner on the grassy areas between Salt Lake and Sand Island but few, if any, were found on Sand Island which may mean they are starting to congregate for their northern trip. A Ruddy Turnstone flew in for a landing not far from a populated area on Sand Island, but as we drove out we discovered they are so well camouflaged that unless you stop and observe the areas carefully they are very easily overlooked. As our Kauai member says, they don't live up to their name and really turn stones, yet she and all of us love them. They are said to ignore people as long as their feeding is available. Let us hope this is so, for they have such striking markings as they take flight or alight since the Audubon Society can that much more easily perpetuate their existence.

Mary E. Riggs



Field Trip, April 5, 1959, Poamoho Trail.

A report on birds along the Poamoho Trail on a hike with the Hawaiian Trail & Mountain Club, Sunday, April 5.

As we turned off the highway into the pineapple fields numerous plover were seen feeding in a large, newly plowed field. There were also a few spotted and barred doves, along with the usual mynahs.

In spite of the recent rains the road, which has been graded and graveled, was in good condition right up to the beginning of the trail. The trail itself has been kept cleared and, apart from two or three landslides, is in good condition.

At least two garrulax were heard along the trail about a mile and a half from the beginning. Bush warblers were heard all along the trail and were most numerous at higher elevations, especially at the summit.

Ohia was beginning to bloom, particularly the smaller shrubs, and a few apapane were seen and heard. Amakihi and elepaio were also in evidence, one amakihi being seen flying below the cliffs at the summit. Leiothrix were singing everywhere.

Some of us hiked along the Summit Trail towards Waikane past Lake Wilson, which is ten or fifteen minutes' walk from the end of the Poamoho Trail. There was water in the lake, which seems to have been a small crater.

The Poamoho Trail offers the shortest route to the summit, being approximately four miles. It is a graded trail and one of the easiest. The view at the Summit is truly spectacular and the vegetation is most interesting. Here are aspen-like cheiro-dendron, loulu palms, amau ferns and, of course, the varied ohia.

Al Labrecque

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#### CAKCLING GOOSE ON MAUI

Mr. Joseph S. Medeiros, of the Division of Fish and Game, who is in charge of Kanaha Pond, sends us the following interesting note: "On Wednesday afternoon, March 25th, I took a group of Girl Scouts through the Kanaha Pond area, and to my delighted surprise, saw a cackling goose flying overhead. Had an opportunity to view it very closely as it flew overhead, and it was truly a beautiful specimen. Thought you might like this information for your files."

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#### NEW MEMBERS:

We welcome the following new members to our Society:

Robert W. Carpenter, Park Naturalist, Hawaii National Park, Haleakala Section, P.O. Box 456, Wailuku, Maui.

Mr. Carpenter's article, the first of many, we hope, is printed in this issue.

Mrs. Edith Rice Plews (Mrs. John C.), 2026 Ualakaa Street, Honolulu 14, Hawaii.

## MAY ACTIVITIES:

FIELD TRIPS: JOSEPH KING WILL LEAD THE TRIPS THIS MONTH.

May 10 - To Poamoho, with high hopes of good birding, possibly even the Garrulax!

May 24 - To Wahiawa Trail. This is a trail we have visited only once. The scenery is spectacular, and there were numerous birds in the gulches below the trail.

Meet at the Library of Hawaii at 7:00 a.m.  
for each trip.

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MEETING: May 18 - At the Honolulu Aquarium auditorium at 7:30 p.m.

Dr. Ernest S. Booth will give a lecture on the birds of the Pacific Northwest, illustrated with motion pictures.

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