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A VISIT TO MOTA TABU, CHRISTMAS ISLAND By Michael Gallagher

On 4th April 1959 I was a member of a party which visited Mota Tabu. This is an islet about a quarter of a mile long, less than a 100 yards wide, and only two or three feet above sea level, lying in the main lagoon of Christmas Island some half hour's boat journey from Port London.

The bird life upon this islet is abundant due to its isolated position and thick vegetation. There are several large buka trees, much tree-heliotrope and a thick covering of bunch grass and scrub.

The weather on Christmas Island usually varies very little, and though on this afternoon it was partly overcast with a threat of rain it was warm with a pleasant Easterly breeze.

On approaching Mota Tabu at about 3:30 pm the number of birds flying around was a wonderful sight. The most abundant bird flying was the Phoenix Petrel and these were circling and gliding at tree-top height, occasionally swooping over their nesting site or chasing one another in pairs and giving their chuckling call. On the ground we found many resting birds. Several were still on one egg under the dwarf scrub although most birds present in January had already laid, and their fat offspring were now numerous. I later stood behind one parent as it fed a youngster sitting in its shallow nest.

As we landed we flushed a number of Common Noddies which were sitting each on its one egg near small bushes. They are very timid and they would not return to their eggs whilst we were near, though they are also somewhat pugnacious and several flew low at us. Others were standing on the beach or perched on the bare branches of a dead bush.

In the buka trees and in many bushes, some of them dead and without foliage, we saw large numbers of White-capped Noddies. These are of a different sub-species from the Hawaiian White-capped Noddy. Many were nesting, sitting close upon their one brownish egg on the flat nests of Messerschmidia leaves; there were also several chicks, for the present breeding season began here in February.

But before we began our exploration we heard the loud crooning of a shearwater and there, amongst the scrub, were the burrows of the Wedge-tailed Shearwater. Many birds were sitting singly or in pairs in their burrows, their finely coloured brown-grey face and throat and their long bills distinguishing them from the smaller, browner Christmas Shearwater of which we saw some resting singly or in pairs, a few flying and few chicks.

Carefully threading our way through the undergrowth we came upon three chicks of the White Tern upon the limbs of different bushes. They were still in brownish dress and they "froze", with their large black beak tilted upwards, their long claws gripping

the branch. Several adult birds flew around our heads as we progressed.

Our next find was a large downy chick of the Red-tailed Tropic Bird at the base of a large Messerschmidia bush. Under another bush we later found an adult bird, its pinkish sheen quite noticeable in its white plumage; its elongated red tail feathers were propped against some low branches. We moved this bird, but there was no egg. Later still, four birds flew around noisily overhead, their black feet plainly visible, and their two long tail feathers carried first on one side then the other as they balanced themselves in their aerobatics.

Other birds seen on the islet this afternoon were Blue-grey Noddies and one Great Frigate Bird. Flying overhead we heard and saw a scattered group of Sooty Terns, whose offspring are now becoming fully fledged on the mainland. And on our return trip at 6 pm we spotted one Brown Booby and a Crested Tern resting on buoys.

MAUI FIELD NOTES
By Robert W. Carpenter

On April 28 I observed 18 Hawaiian terns at the Black Sands Beach area near Hana. There is a small rock island about 75 feet off shore where the terns were perching, or roosting, whichever terns do when they are resting. I could see no evidence of nesting activities.

They did not appear to be the least bit concerned about my presence across the narrow strip of water that separated their little island sanctuary from my viewpoint. I could see, very clearly, their sleek black bodies, light gray caps and relatively broad webbed feet.

When a big swell splashed over the rock, the terns automatically, but seemingly indignantly, flew off just before the water hit. They soared gracefully and almost effortlessly waiting for their favorite landing spot to dry off. Some of them flew within just a few feet of me giving their shrill cry as though complaining to me of their troubles. Eventually, most of them landed on a smaller rock island a little further off.

Along the road to Hana I heard, in several different places, what sounded like Chinese thrushes. Only one did I see, very briefly, as it flew down into some thick undergrowth. I was not able to identify it positively, except that it looked and acted thrush-like. All the others that I heard were in thick wooded areas.

Incidentally, coots have nested and hatched at the Kanaha Waterfowl Sanctuary. As of this writing (May 11) the young ones are probably nearly a month old and becoming more and more independent, as evidenced by their mothers' anxiety in trying to keep them together.

Shoveler ducks are still present in large numbers, but the pintails appear to be all gone on their northward migration. Up on Haleakala there are still a few golden plover to be seen but most of them have left for their Arctic nesting grounds.

Several clutches of young pheasants have been seen along the Haleakala Road. Some of them are nearly a month old now (May 11). Young chuckar partridges were seen in the crater during the first week in May by the park work crew.

A WEEK-END OF BIRDING ON KAUAI
By Myrna Campbell

In response to Grenville Hatch's pleadings for information about the birds on Kauai, even though on a very amateur basis, Thelma Hensley and I devoted Saturday and Sunday (April 25 and 26) to a search for birds between Kapaa and Haena. Armed with our field glasses and the wonderful new booklet, "Hawaiian Birds", we first explored around Mahelona Hospital in Kapaa. Most prominent there are the meadow larks in the pasture. We didn't count them but we heard and saw them constantly. They are, of course, found in all the pasture land on Kauai.

Feeding together was a lovely group of six turnstones and 3 or 4 plover. Wandering on, we heard many Chinese thrush and had the joy of seeing one, in a field of wild grass, perched atop a bare stick slightly above the surrounding grass, and singing with might and main. Many North American cardinals were about, especially in the fields of Haole Koa. White-eyes and barred doves were numerous and there were occasional spotted doves. One group of ricebirds was seen.

As we drove to Hanalei, we stopped, as always, at the lookout to see what birds there might be found in the valley. We found two ducks splashing in a small stream, a couple of coot walking in the grass, and six Hawaiian stilt. An owl was flying slowly about. We could hear white-eyes and Chinese thrush singing. Farther on, at Wainiha, we stopped to look for driftwood and saw a night heron standing in the shallow pond.

We returned to Kilauea to have dinner and spend the night with Miss Helen Hetrick. After dinner, we went to the lighthouse and although it was after visiting hours, we drove in anyway and proceeded to study the birds on Bird Rock. It took us some time, by comparing the birds with the descriptions in the booklet, to figure out which birds were which. We had just concluded that the highest group of large birds circling about were frigate birds, the next lower group of white birds with black wing tips were booby birds, and the rest, flying nearer the cliffs, were shearwaters, when a young coast guardsman came to see what we were doing. He confirmed our identifications and asked where he could get one of the booklets. He said he had seen white birds with long spiky red tails flying over the little island off Niihau and wanted to know what we thought they were. We supposed they were the red-tailed tropic birds. Neither of us is very good at estimating numbers of birds but we hazarded a guess of perhaps 50 frigate birds, a hundred booby birds and 150 shearwater. We stayed until after dark to watch the shearwater come in to the burrows on the lighthouse cliff, one or two coming to burrows right under our feet. We heard them start their moaning and then we left because the breeze was becoming chilly.

Early Sunday morning we went to look for shells on a beach near Koolau school. Then Helen Hetrick led us to another nearby beach that was new to us. Fine steps had been made on the path that led down the cliff to the beach and there was considerable growth of shrubs and Hau trees. Suddenly a black Shama thrush with white rump patch flew across the path and into the Hau trees. He stayed out of sight then but we heard him singing his lovely clear song with its soft gentle quality. We sat down and looked about for birds and heard cardinals and Chinese thrush and saw white-eyes, mynahs and one pheasant. Some white-tailed tropic birds were flying about the cliff.

In the afternoon we drove to Haena and at various points we saw plover, 3 coot, 6 wandering tattlers, ricebirds, house finches, sparrows, mynahs, white-eyes, cardinals.

We found this week-end so completely enjoyable that we plan to go soon to Kokee to see the birds there.

A REPORT ON THE BARN OWLS, from Alan Thistle, Director, Division of Entomology and Marketing, Board of Agriculture and Forestry.

You will be interested in learning that we received a shipment of twenty-seven (27) mature BARN OWLS, Tyto alba pratincola on April 26, 1959 through Mr. Paul Breese from Mr. Fred Stark of the San Antonio Zoo (Texas).

Twenty-one (21) of the birds, after examination and a precautionary treatment for ectoparasites, were taken to Kukuiahaele, Hawaii and released in the same area as the previous shipments.

Residents of the area have reported numerous sight observations of three (3) owls, from the former releases, hunting in sugar cane approximately six months old. The area is about one mile from the release point. Two of these birds are believed to be nesting or roosting in a cave near the top of a thirty-foot "cut" on a plantation road. An inspection of this cave was not possible on my recent visit because of inaccessibility; however, the cave will be examined in the immediate future and any regurgitated pellets found will be used to determine the birds' diet.

The other six birds in the latest shipment are at the Honolulu Zoo.

FIELD NOTES:

Field Trip, April 12, 1959, Heleman Trail.

Sixteen persons started the bird walk on Sunday, 12 April. The weather varied from clear sunny to cloudy. Kam Hiway afforded the usual panoramic views of both the Waianae and the Koolau Ranges, with banks of red bougainvillea, and jacaranda, tulip trees, silk oak scattering color about. At Wheeler Field we heard the first skylark, and on stopping were treated to a curtain-riser of melody. Unoyo Kojima as usual communicating her sense of exhilaration with nature, kept the bird count and had 17 ricebirds, one cardinal and one skylark in this area. Continuing on our way to the Heleman Comm. Center, we checked in at the gate, where we saw a tiger claw tree in perfect bloom.

Heleman Trail is through the abandoned HSPA arboretum which also shows signs of military activity. A good deal of the enchantment of this walk was due to the spring atmosphere, the lovely greens on the hills and through the gulches; the scatterings of flowers and the bird calls; the fragrance about us; otherwise nature's own silence, infinitely restful. In the first 200 yards of our walk we saw eight birds' nests, large bushy rough looking affairs, but as one of the walkers remarked, "The birds didn't stay home so their homes could be identified." Before we quit the area Blaine Greenwell had counted 16 nests. Here we found many paper bark trees in neat rows vertical with a trail bordered with much uluhe - false staghorn fern. Part of the group stayed behind in an attempt to identify a garrulax while the rest continued the walk.

The birds were disappointingly few but we enjoyed the vegetation; passed many huge traveller palms and a white bird of paradise; pukiawe, vanilla vine, and the lasiandra or princess flower which has proved such a pest on the island of Hawaii. At the bamboo thicket we heard a bush warbler and after some patience saw the greeny brown wings and off-white breast of a dapper little bird. Farther along the trail we heard and saw his cousin. We identified blooming true sandalwood. About here the trail branched at some cordova bushes with their occasional golden-red leaves; and across the gulch, breaking through the eucalyptus groves we saw the orderly light green march of many sau trees. (Albizia moleccana)

The trail descended a long, rather slippery incline, with lehua in bloom; the first elepaio was heard in the hills and, flowing unseen, the sound of the Helemano Stream accompanied us. Down we went until we came to a secluded little dell inclosing a small but noisy waterfall fed from a tunnel, which was for us the end of the trail. Unoyo's count yielded 10 leiiothrix with their distinguishing red and yellow; 11 linnets which as children we called wild canaries; 1 garrulax, 7 elepaio, 7 fleet little ricebirds; 8 amakihi, two bush warblers, and one unidentified bird which may have been a garrulax. To the listening ear their songs would be a gentle sermon preached to "that little member" the tongue: Wild words, like wild birds, once loose, are beyond recall.

Returning, we rested by a rain gauge where it was voted to continue the walk via the Aiea Trail in quest of a more satisfactory number of birds. On the way back, at Wheeler, the skylarks were once more heard and seen. New-turned pineapple fields contained many golden brown plover moving along in their mincing quick-step runs and stops; 16 were counted. At Aiea we saw a cashew nut in bloom, and on arrival at the public park we left the cars and started up the rather steep grade. At the water storage tank we heard the high trill of the amakihi, then the clear "name-sake" whistle of an elepaio, and saw three white-eyes. Koa and lehua had started to bloom and eucalyptus citriodora was so fragrant we stopped in our tracks. Along this pleasant trail Unoyo turned in a count of 3 linnets, 2 leiiothrix, 4 amakihi, 4 North American cardinals, 6 elepaio, 5 ricebirds and one apapane. At the end of our trail we sat along the bank and watched the progress of mossy-green velvet amakihi so like the white-eyes that were also feeding, and the elepaio with his cocky tail, having dinner from sap at a koa tree. Whether they were the same birds repeating or different ones could not be determined. We also saw sandalwood in bloom in this area and an amakihi; and some mahogany trees along the trail. We returned to the cars in a sudden flash of rain, but agreed it was a satisfying ending to a pleasant day.

Laura Walther

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Field Trip, May 10, 1959, Poamoho Trail.

Six members and 7 visitors departed the Library of Hawaii shortly after 7 a.m. and headed toward Wahiawa. As some of the visitors in my car wished to see the Golden Plover and Wandering Tattler, and since it was approaching low tide, we stopped off for a few minutes at East Loch, Pearl Harbor. Luck was with us for there on the mangrove-bordered mud flat were 2 Golden Plover, still in winter plumage, 1 Wandering Tattler and 1 Black-crowned Night Heron. We suspect that the plover and maybe also the tattler were young birds which had not yet felt the urge to migrate to the northern nesting grounds.

As we passed Wheeler Field we could plainly hear the song of skylarks in the distance. Along the plantation roads, on the approach to Poamoho Trail, there were many freshly plowed fields that would soon be planted in pineapple. Two months ago these fields would have been dotted with plover and there might also have been a few small flocks of Ruddy Turnstone. Today the fields were vacant, the migrants having departed for their nesting grounds.

Despite the rains of the night before we were able to drive to the end of the jeep road and to the start of the trail. The road itself usually affords good birding, and from our cars we saw numerous Spotted Dove, a few Barred Dove, small flocks of Ricebirds, several House Finch and a few N.A. Cardinal. The tall eucalyptus and koa trees along the road were not in flower, however, so we did not spend much time looking for native forest birds until we left the cars and started up the trail.

We were immediately greeted with a shower of rain, a cold wind was blowing and the sky had a forbidding look. The weather improved though, and along with a few light

showers during the morning there were occasional patches of sunshine and the cool temperature was delightful. After lunch on our return trip we faced a very warm sun so we were then grateful for the morning coolness. Some ohia was in flower along the trail but the koa was well past its blooming period. We did not attempt to keep a record of all birds sighted or heard - such conscientious birding interferes too much with the enjoyment of the trip - but we can state that Apapane were abundant. Rarely were they out of our sight or hearing. The majority were in brilliant adult plumage but a few immatures were sighted which were gray-brown and with no sign of the blood-red color to develop later. Amakihi were frequently heard and seen; I recorded 13. No Iiwi were sighted, possibly because there were few trees in flower. Fewer Elepaio were observed than might be expected; I recorded 6 and some of these were by voice only.

Of the introduced birds the White-eye were numerous, as were also the Red-billed leiothrix. The highlight of the trip was to hear Unoyo Kojima call up the mysterious Garrulax, which is one of the oriental Laughing Thrushes. The Garrulax is an excellent mimic - and Unoyo did an excellent job of mimicking the bird - so that at times it was hard to distinguish the human from the bird. I was very glad at last to have heard this will-o-the-wisp. We didn't see the bird, however, but thought that we heard at least two.

It was a fine trip, enjoyed by all.

Joseph E. King

NEW MEMBERS:

We welcome the following new members:

Mr. and Mrs. A. O. Marrack, 4728 Aukai Ave, Honolulu 15, Hawaii
Major Mercedes M. Ormston, APO 938, San Francisco, California

JUNE ACTIVITIES:

FIELD TRIPS: GRENVILLE HATCH WILL LEAD THE TRIPS THIS MONTH.

- June 14 - To Judd trail. This is the trip that some of you have been asking for -- a short stroll on Sunday afternoon. The trail is only a mile long, accessible, level. We can't promise how many birds you will see, but it is a short, pleasant outing, and if we are lucky, the Shama may show himself. Meet at the Library of Haw. at 2:00pm.
- June 28 - To Hapapa trail. This is a new one for us, lying just across from Kalena, which is so productive of good bird-life. We don't know what we may find -- come and see. Meet at the Library of Hawaii at 7:00 a.m.

MEETING: June 1 - At the Honolulu Aquarium auditorium at 7:30 p.m. NOTE
THE CHANGE IN DATE. Dr. Booth will show his film on the Seabirds of the Pacific Northwest, and lecture on the bird life of that area.

This will be our only meeting in the month of June.

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