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BIRDS OF HAWAII  
and  
Adventures in Bird Study

An Ocean Cruise  
By George C. Munro  
No. 7 contd.

We have seen what Captain Brookes had to say about Laysan in 1859; the condition in which we had found the island in 1891; and Schauinsland's opinion of it as a bird paradise some years after. William Alanson Bryan gives a different description and warning. He writes in "Expedition to Laysan in 1911" page 25 "The slaughter of tens of thousands of birds by the party of feather and wing hunters and the depredations now being wrought by the rabbits and guinea pigs that have been introduced to the island make it important if this colony is to be saved from extermination, that every effort to this end be made by the Federal Government and the Territory of Hawaii."

Page 27 "Over a large part of the island, in some sections 100 or more in a place, that ten years ago were thickly inhabited by albatrosses, not a single bird remains...."

Page 28 "The Laysan canary, Miller bird, Laysan honeyeater and the Laysan rail without doubt are doomed to extermination on the isolated island where they have maintained themselves long enough to develop into distinct species, unless something is done to preserve for them the source of their food supply.... Rabbits now swarm over the island in thousands.... Unless some drastic measures are resorted to within a very short time not a bush or a spear of grass will be alive." This advice went unheeded till 1923, twelve years after.

Dr. Alexander Wetmore said in 1923 in an article written for the National Geographic Magazine page 103. "On every hand extended a barren waste of sand. Two coconut palms, a stunted hau tree and an ironwood or two planted by former inhabitants were the only bits of green that greeted the eye. Other vegetation had vanished. The desolateness of the scene was so depressing that unconsciously we talked in undertones. From all appearances, Laysan might have been some desert, with the gleaming lake below merely a mirage ..... a few dozen finches still sang their sprightly songs about the buildings or hopped among the rock near the lagoon. Three individuals alone of the little honeyeater remained on our arrival; these perished in a three day gale that enveloped everything in a cloud of swirling sand. The Miller bird had disappeared entirely, and of the Laysan rail but two remained." This is surely a sad picture. "Gone with the Wind" might well express it; enough to make Theodore Roosevelt turn in his grave. Dr. Wetmore's party exterminated the remaining rabbits and by latest reports the island is recovering some of its vegetation but it will never again be the paradise it was with its five land birds. Two of the small birds have gone for good. Few of the 25 species of plants that Captain Brookes collected will



return and fewer still in the luxuriance of the past. Foreign trees and buildings were still in evidence when Dr. Wetmore visited the island in 1923. These are a hazard to the seabirds, which collide with them when alighting. The Deputy Reservation Protectors have no way of visiting the islands to inspect and report. So far as I know there is nothing to prevent collectors from going there and perhaps finally exterminating some of the rare birds. From what I can ascertain the Reservation is as badly neglected now as it was from 1909 to 1923. It is to be hoped that before long a patrol can be instituted for certain islands of the Reservation and for islands off the coast of Oahu.

If it is not possible to protect these birds as a matter of sentiment perhaps it can be done by commercializing them. Just as the seal of the Pribiloff Islands have increased under protection, notwithstanding that thousands are killed every year for their skins so might these birds increase if given similar treatment. Could not protection of some kind be devised by which the millinery trade could be supplied with feathers from certain other islands and keep the sanctuaries inviolate. It would be much better to have fewer islands in the reservation and take proper care of them than have a larger number receiving no care. The frigate bird in some cases should be kept down in numbers to favor other birds that it harries to death. We have evidence of this on the coast of Oahu, several boobies have come ashore in good plumage but so thin that they could not get on the wing. It would seem that the frigate birds have become so numerous on Moku Manu that they rob the other birds to the point of starvation. The revenue from such collections of feathers could be used for the maintenance of the sanctuaries.

Jan. 9, 1942

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With reference to the paragraph above concerning the use of wild birds' plumage for millinery purposes, Mr. John H. Baker, Executive Director of the National Audubon Society, has a note in the last issue of the Audubon Magazine (Vol. XLIV No. 2, page 117). "For almost forty years, we have bent the best efforts of this organization to the protection of birds, and above all we have opposed the destruction of bird life for the sale of its plumage. The passage of the Desmond amendment to the new 1941 plumage law in New York State was contrary to our recommendation; we want to tell our friends that we never yielded to any compromise proposals. We have only to back down on the principle of no commercialization, at any time, to obtain a truce. But to do so would have been to accept defeat with our colors lowered and dishonored. We preferred to go down, if at all, with our flags flying.

Where does the whole question of the exploitation of wild-bird plumage, then, stand now? It stands this way, that the feather industries (and its customers, the women of America) have, by agreement and by law in New York State, accepted an ending of commercialization of wild-bird feathers for their purposes - chiefly millinery and other ornamentation. This much of the law is still in effect, and very proud we are of having won that battle. But the fishermen can buy wild-bird plumage for their flies.

It is a matter of fact that, after decades of effort, water-tight legislation was obtained; yet a hole has immediately been breached in the law, one that will make possible the destruction of American and foreign wild birds for commercial profit. Until that hole is plugged, we shall not rest. "



## Checklist of Hawaiian birds - E. H. Bryan Jr - 31

Family FRINGILLIDAE, grosbeaks, finches, sparrows, buntings.

Subfamily RICHMONDENINAE, cardinals and allies.

Genus *Richmondia* Mathews & Iredale (1918)

225. *Richmondia cardinalis* (Linnaeus) Cardinal. Introduced since 1929 and liberated on Kauai, Oahu and Hawaii. Native of eastern United States.  
(*Loxia cardinalis* Linnaeus, 1758)

Genus *Paroaria* Bonaparte (1832)

226. *Paroaria cucullata* (Latham) Brazilian crested cardinal. Introduced since 1928 to Oahu. Native of Brazil, Argentina and Bolivia.  
(*Loxia cucullata* Latham, 1790)
227. *Paroaria larvata* (Boddaert) Pope cardinal. Introduced to Oahu, 1931. Native of Brazil.  
(*Fringilla larvata* Boddaert, 1783)

Genus *Passerina* Vieillot (1816)

228. *Passerina ciris* (Linnaeus) Painted or nonpareil bunting, butterfly finch. Introduced, escaped. Native of south-central United States and Central America to Panama.
229. *Passerina cyanea* (Linnaeus) Indigo bunting. Imported, 1934, from San Francisco. Not known to be established. Native of U.S. and southern Canada, wintering in Central America and Cuba.

Subfamily CARDUELINAE, purple finches, goldfinches, etc.

Genus *Serinus* Koch (1816)

230. *Serinus serinus canaria* (Linnaeus) Canary, manu mele. Introduced as a cage bird; escaped; not established on main islands but abundant on Midway Is. Native of Azores, Madeira, Canary Is.  
(*Fringilla canaria* Linnaeus, 1758)

Genus *Carpodacus* Kaup (1829)

231. *Carpodacus mexicanus frontalis* House finch, "linnet", 'ai-mika'na, papaya bird. Introduced before 1870 and escaped from cages; established on Oahu, Kauai, Maui, Lanai and Hawaii; not common. Native of western United States.  
(*Fringilla frontalis* Say, 1824)