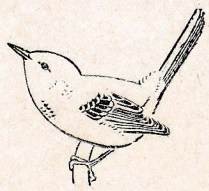
The Elepaio

Official Organ of THE HONOLULU AUDUBON SOCIETY
Honolulu, Hawaii, U.S.A.
For the Better Protection of Wild Life in Hawaii



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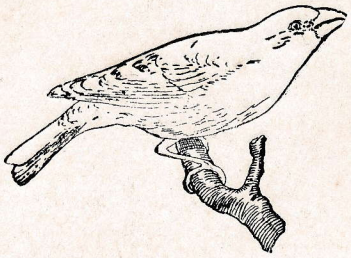
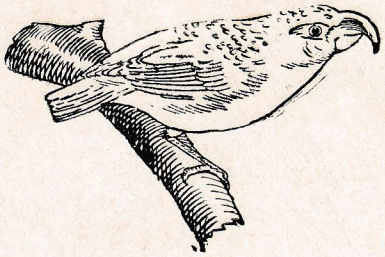


Orange Koa Finch
Rhodacanthis palmeri
See page 22.



Parrot-billed Koa Finch
Pseudonestor xanthophrys
See page 47.

BIRDS OF HAWAII
Parrot-billed Koa Finch
By George C. Munro

Pseudonestor xanthophrys called by Henshaw Parrot-billed Koa Finch is another species of the Drepanid Family whose existence was unknown till Palmer discovered it on August 1, 1892 at about 4000 to 5000 feet elevation on the northwest slope of Haleakala, Maui. Perkins and Henshaw afterwards collected it in the same place between 1894 and 1904. But I failed to find it there after a careful search in November 1927.

This bird is one of the most extraordinary adaptations of the Drepanid family, Perkins considers it most closely allied to the Nukupuu (Heterorhynchus) which it resembles in many respects. He says "It differs from that genus chiefly in the enormous development of the beak, which is of great size and compressed form affording a large surface for the attachment of the large muscles of the jaw which are necessary in performing its work; and further in the loss of the typical tubular character of the tongue." It also has characteristics like the Ou (Psittacirostra) and Perkins is of the opinion that it is intermediate between the two forms, the passage between the extremely slender beak in the nukupuu and the thick bill of Pseudonestor having come to pass through another less exaggerated form now extinct.

The Parrot-billed Koa Finch is about 5½ inches long with a robust body and short tail like the nukupuu. In color it is olive green above with a broad superciliary stripe from the nostrils to the back of the ear and a few feathers just above the base of the bill golden yellow. Wing and tail feathers dark brown. Under parts partly white and partly yellow. It frequents the koa and gets its food almost entirely from that tree. Its food consists to a great extent of the larvae of a beetle (Haytarli) which burrows in the twigs of the koa. In obtaining these the bird assumes many curious attitudes. It hangs by its feet to the twig

and raising its head over it catches it between its strong mandibles and with the strength of its jaw splits these hard dry twigs and obtains the larva from its burrow in the twig.

There is little difference between the sexes, the female being slightly smaller than the male. Both sing and the song is something like that of the nukupuu, Perkins says: "only a simple, but very distinct whistled note repeated several times in quick succession." Occasionally one sings when on the wing flying from one tree to another. They frequently stop feeding to sing their little song. Perkins said it also had a "keewit" call. Rothschild has its call "Howit" to a loud "Hoo-ah" and its song a clear warble of several notes. Henshaw found it silent except one male flying emitted a "very faint pea" like the call of the nukupuu.

Perkins, Palmer and Henshaw found this bird very tame and one of the easiest to observe closely in its pursuits. Henshaw found it rare a few not more than two in a long day's trip and less than ten altogether in the time he was in the locality. Its feathers have the strong odor of the other drepanids. Henshaw saw it in June feeding its young on caterpillars to get which it descended into the shrubbery almost to the ground. The young bird in juvenile dress is colored much like the adult but is pale yellowish undreneath. Perkins saw what he was sure was a nest of this bird, he says: "It was built in the fork formed by a branch and the main trunk about 25 feet from the ground. The tree was covered with grey lichens and the nest was well concealed being itself covered with the same. It was of simple cup-like form resembling in this respect the usual Drepanine nest."

It is hoped that this remarkable species still survives in the large forest between Kaupo gap and Keanae valley. I have information that a bird answering its description was seen to come to a grove of trees in the crater of Haleakala near the Kaupo Gap. A survey party was camped in the grove and some of the members used to be entertained by the actions of these "boring birds" which seemed to come from the main forest to this grove in the evenings.
September 13, 1941

Birds of Hawaii
and
Adventures in Bird Study

An Ocean Cruise
By George C. Munro

May 23, 1891. Here we were out at sea in a frail boat, seven white men and three Hawaiians, set upon an adventure well knowing it to be hazardous. What motivates men to risk such peril? It is possible only to conjecture the reasons these men would embark on such a foolhardy voyage. The captain had had his barque "Wandering Minstrel" wrecked under him at Midway three years before, had probably cached belongings so was bound back to repossess them; Palmer, because he was anxious to make a name for himself as a collector of specimens for the world famou bird collection at Tring, England. For my part the urge to study birds, add to my collection and the spirit of adventure were the lures that drew me on. As for the crew they were of the company of men who 'go down to the sea in boats' from time immemorial.

Off Nihoa, May 26 and 27. Circling round this little island, and in its vicinity were bewildering thousands of sea birds representing about 15 species, most of them new to us. There were also many young in their immature and changing plumage. By careful observation we were abl to classify those seen on those two days as - Black-footed Albatross, Laysan Albatross, Wedge-tailed Shearwater, Christmas Island Shearwater, Red-tailed Tropic Bird, Red-footed Booby, Brown Booby, Blue-faced Boob Frigate Bird, Bridled Tern, Sooty Tern, Little Grey Tern, Noddy, Hawai Tern, White Tern, 15 species in all. The little grey tern was so tame that we expected it ant minute to settle on the ship. Three of the red-footed boobies in succession actually alighted on the bowsprit of the vessel and stayed there till Palmer climbed out and captured them, thu providing us with the first specimens of the trip. One settled on the bowsprit beside him as he sat there. It was an immature bird, a variety

or form with wings that were mottled brown above. It is my belief that this color variation is not that of immature birds, but a variety which on some islands that I have visited is worthy of the rank of subspecies However, this is too long a subject for present discussion and further investigation on it is desirable. Later I shall give my experience concerning it from Lisiansky Island to Hawaii and from Hawaii to the Equatorial and Phoenix Islands. My belief is that, contrary to accepted opinion, this species on islands surrounding Hawaii goes through the immature phase quickly, as do the other two boobys on our list, and that this is a color phase of the mature bird. On Moku Manu, off the coast of Oahu, both the red-footed and the brown booby breed on the southern slope of the western island. I have banded adults and young o both species there and found it extremely difficult to tell which was which in their first plumage. The mottled-back phase of the red-foote booby is very rare on Moku Manu. But to resume our observations at Nihoa. Two red-tailed tropic birds were sporting in the air. Flying backwards and forwards "in passing would turn the two red feathers sideways" towards each other. At times I have seen these birds double the two long red tail feathers under them. It seemed to me that this was done not by turning the whole tail but only the two feathers. It seemed incredible that they could accomplish this. Two small flocks of akekeke were seen. They were no doubt working their way by easy stages to Ocean Island, from there to take their long flight to their nesting places in the north. On May 27, after leaving Nihoa the wind was light and the sea smooth. We were getting our sea legs, forgetting sea sickness and taking a keener interest in the incidents of the cruise. Birds were not so numerous as on the 26th. The sooty tern was the most common a flock of these could be seen following a shoal of small fish. Tropic birds and a few petrel were in sight and albatrosses resting on the

water. The latter in flight depend very greatly on wind currents and in the absence of these, as in calms, they tire of flight and spend a good deal of time sitting on the water. Some did not take flight even when the boat drifted past close to them. We passed a flock of wedge-tailed shearwaters. Most of these were sitting on the water deliberately picking up some form of marine life, probably squid. This appeared to be about an inch long. We could not detect for certain what they were getti and were unable to snare any of the birds to make an examination, though some were very near to the boat. We saw the bridled or grey-backed tern and blue-faced booby, two species of which we were not sure we had seen on the 26th. On the night of the 27th it had come on to blow and we made good headway and sighted Necker Island, 350 miles out, at daybreak. We passed it on the southern quarter about three miles distant. The sea was running high and the island rose precipitously from the water. It seemed impossible to land, in fact we were told no landing had ever been made on it. (Several have been made since then.) We lost the opportunity of being the first to find relics of former habitation and the very interesting artifacts, found by a later expedition. No vegetation of any size as to be seen on the rock which, however, was covered with birds. They were about the same as at Nihoa, though we were farther out and so saw fewer at close quarters. The frigate birds were tamest, some of them almost alighting on the ship.

Necker Island is about 150 miles from Nihoa. According to the "North Pacific Pilot", it is half a mile long and 380 feet high, (very narrow) with a submerged bank extending about 50 miles to the southward, indicating that it was a much larger island in the past. Mr. Edward L. Caum who visited it with the Whitney expedition in 1923 gave me its area as 41 acres.

November 21, 1941

A REPORT OF ORNITHOLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS MADE ON KAUAI

by Walter Donaghho

The writer has returned from a three week visit to the island of Kauai, during which time he made two ventures into the forests of the western side of the island. Areas visited were the Kokee area and the area around the head of the Kalalau Valley, and the area above the Robinson mountain house, Kaholuamanu.

Birds were found rather sparse in the Kokee region, almost nil in the Kalemanu area, and, though abundant above Kaholuamanu, they are not as numerous as they were in 1936, on the writer's last visit there.

Eleven species were noted, and one more, the O-o-a-a, was reported seen in 1940 by Mr. Eric Knudsen. The Apapane, Elepaio, as usual, are holding up well, as is also the Anauanii. Not rare in the Kaholuamanu region are the Iiwi, Akikiki, and the Kamau. The latter two were not noted in the Kokee region. Several O-u Holowai, found mostly in small companies of from five to a dozen, were noted at Kaholuamanu, seen far in the Alakai swamp, as well as around the Ranger's cabin. A small company was also noted along the Kaunuohoa Ridge trail. Only one Amakihi was noted, this along the Waialeale Trail.

Of worthy note are a pair of O-u, seen October 6th, in the upper Waialae Valley. Seen on the same date, along the trail farther down, was an Akialoa.

Two of the smaller Kauai thrush, the Puaiohi, were seen in the Alakai Swamp above Kaholuamanu, on both the Waialae and the Waialeale Trails. Only unknown is the Nukupuu. However it is quite probable that it is not extinct.

Of great interest was theobserving of breeding colonies of the Wedge-tailed shearwater on the mainland at Kilauea hill, and about the Kilauea lighthouse. Half grown young were found in burrows and holes in the cliffs and banks.

Mokuaeae Island, off Kilauea Point, was found to be the home of a small colony of Frigate birds. Two Red-footed boobies were noted, in among the Frigate birds. The ground was honeycombed with shearwater (? burrows.

Interesting note among the Exotic list is the great increase of Mejiros since 1936, when only one was heard by the writer. They have literally overrun the island, ranging everywhere, excepting in the Alakai Swamp, into which they seemingly haven't penetrated. Chinese thrush are common, especially around Lihue and on Kilohana crater. Three Peko thrush were seen along the stream in the upper Waialae Valley and, though none were seen by the writer, the Shama thrush is reported doing well. Meadow larks are established about the Grove Farm pastures on Kilohana Crater.

oOo

Paul H. Baldwin of the Hawaii National Park Service is planning an interpretive book on birds. It will present as much information as possible on how the old Hawaiians used birds in their economy, social customs and religion; give briefly the story of the origins of the Hawaiian bird fauna; relate interesting details of the life history work being done now; and tell where the different birds are to be found today in the national park forests.

(Subfamily CALOENADINAE)

Genus Caloenas G.R.Gray (1840)

129. Caloenas nicobarica (Linnaeus) (Columba nicobarica Linnaeus, 1758) — Nicobar pigeon. Introduced from Australia to Maui (1922) and Kauai (1928); not known to be established. Native of Nicobar Is extending E. through Malay Archipelago to Solomons.

Order PSITTACIFORMES, parrot-like birds.

Family PSITTACIDAE, parrots, parrakeets, macaws.

Subfamily KAKATOINAE, cockatoos.

Genus Kakatoë Cuvier (1800)

130. Kakatoë galerita (Latham) (Psittacus galeritus Latham, 1790) — Sulphur-crested white cockatoo. Escape from captivity on Oahu; probably not established. Native of Australia.

131. Kakatoë roseicapilla (Vieillot) (Cacatua roseicapilla Vieillot, 1817) — Rose-breasted cockatoo. Escaped from captivity; not known to be established. Native of Australia

Subfamily PSITTACINAE, Parrakeets, macaws, etc.

Genus Ara Lacépède (1799)

132. Ara macao (Linnaeus) (Psittacus macao Linnaeus, 1758) — Red and blue macaw. Escaped from captivity on Oahu; not established. Native of tropical America from Mexico to Bolivia and the Amazon valley.

Genus Brotogeris Vigors (1825)

133. Brotogeris jugularis (Müller) (Psittacus jugularis Müller, 1776) — Tovi or Beebee parrakeet. Escaped from captivity; not known to be established. Native of southern Mexico, Central America and Colombi

Genus Psittacula Cuvier (1800)

134. Psittacula krameri (Scopoli) (Psittacus krameri Scopoli, 1769) — Indian green parrakeet. Escaped from captivity; not known to be established. Native of India.

Genus Platycercus Vigors (1825)

135. Platycercus adscitus palliceps Lear (1832) — Pale-headed or "blue-cheeked" parrakeet. Introduced to Maui, 1877; established in the forest on the slopes of Haleakala. Native of southern Australia.

Genus Melopsittacus Gould (1840)

136. Melopsittacus undulatus (Shaw) (Psittacus undulatus Shaw, 1805) — Love bird, shell or grass parrakeet budgerigar. Escaped from captivity; may become established. Native of Australia.

(Other parrot-like birds may have escaped and be at large in Hawaii; the native Hawaiian name for "parrot" is manu aloha.)

Order STRIGIFORMES, owls.

Family STRIGIDAE, typical owls.

Genus Asio Brisson (1766), short-eared owls.

137. Asio flammeus sandwichensis (Bloxam) (Strix sandwichensis Bloxam, 1827) (Asio accipitrinus sandvicensis Bryan, 1901) — Pueo, Hawaiian (short-eared) owl Native on all main islands of the Hawaiian group.

Order CORACIIFORMES, kingfishers, etc.

Suborder ALCEDINES, kingfishers.

Superfamily ALCEDINIDES, kingfishers.

Family ALCEDINIDAE

Genus Ceryle Boie (1828)

138. Ceryle alcyon caurina Grinnell (1910) — Western belted kingfisher. Chance migrant to Hawaii Is. 1901; not established. Native of western North America, wintering from California to northern Mexico.

Order PASSERIFORMES, perching birds.

Suborder OSCINES

Family ALAUDIDAE, larks.

Genus Melanocorypha Boie (1828)

139. Melanocorypha mongolica (Pallas) (Alauda mongolica Pallas, 1776) — Mongolian lark. Introduced to Kauai 1898, 1904?, and 1914; now well established. Native of eastern Siberia and north China.