

# THE ELEPAIO

*Journal of the  
Hawaii Audubon Society*



*For the Better Protection  
of Wildlife in Hawaii*

VOLUME 20, NUMBER 10

APRIL 1960

## NOTES FROM AUSTRALIA By Grenville Hatch

On December 15th, 1959, I disembarked from the "Changte," which had brought me from Japan, at the little port of Townsville, Queensland, Australia. Queensland is in the northeastern part of Australia, a beautiful state, very tropical, and at this season of the year, very hot. The vegetation is familiar - plumeria, shower trees, papaya (here called pawpaw), mangoes, and so on. Large areas are given over to the growing of sugar cane, which is cultivated by individual farmers, who send the cane to a central mill.

Townsville is a charming little place, with one very long main street, reminiscent of the frontier towns of our own west. Aborigines, often in brightly colored clothes were noticeable in the street and in the little park which fronted on the sea. I remained in Townsville only over night, just long enough to catch the air conditioned train which left on the 17th for Gladstone, the point of departure for several islands. All these small Queensland towns have something of a frontier flavor. Their architecture is hardly worthy of the name, but what is lacking in that respect is more than compensated for by the great friendliness and charm of the people.

I went first to Heron Island, a true coral bay on the Great Barrier Reef, lying 45 miles out from Gladstone, and reached by a launch which takes guests and supplies twice a week. The island is roughly circular in shape, and about 50 acres in area. It is covered with *Pisonia* trees, enormous in girth, but so brittle that they can bear but little weight; *Casuarina*, *Pandanus* and *Scaevola*. At low tide a great expanse of coral reef is uncovered, giving opportunity to walk out for a mile or more, to see the variously colored and different varieties of coral, and to hunt for shells, if so inclined.

A large colony of many thousand White-capped Noddy Terns nests in one section of the island. I could not guess at the number of nests which are crowded together in the trees, as close together as possible. The nests are made of fallen *Pisonia* leaves and some seaweed, cemented together with excrement, to form a platform, perhaps five or six inches in diameter, and several inches deep. A White-breasted Sea Eagle, and several Reef Herons also nested in the area, but the Noddies captured the eye, and the ear.

The ground all over the island is so honey-combed by the nests of the Wedge-tailed Shearwater that a step off the beaten path is apt to plunge one knee deep in a burrow. The Shearwater is locally called "Mutton-bird" and it is estimated that a half million young are offered for sale in the markets annually, and are considered a delicacy. The Shearwaters of Heron Island are protected, however, and face no greater danger than that of some human crashing down on them. You can well imagine the great crescendo of sound that went up after darkness fell. Shearwaters beneath the cabin windows, in the distance - a beautiful chorus to one who enjoys it.



Reef Herons, in two color phases, white and slate-grey, made a beautiful picture as they stalked their prey on the rocks near the shore. Ruddy Turnstone and Golden Plover lent familiarity to the scene; Black and Pied Oyster-catchers, with heavy red bills, and several other shore birds added interest.

The waters about these islands are inhabited by many turtles. At this season the green turtle comes ashore to lay her eggs. The enormous creatures, four feet or more across, drag themselves up the beach at night, leaving a track as distinctive, and almost as large, as a tractor. This is not easy - the beach slopes steeply, and often rough areas of rock have to be traversed. When the turtle thinks she has reached a safe spot some distance from the beach, she digs a hole with her front flippers large enough to contain her body. Then with the back flippers she digs a shaft for the eggs, using the flippers in a marvellous fashion, like hands, alternately, and carefully pressing the wall of the shaft so it will not collapse. All this takes about an hour and a half, during which time the turtle often stops to rest, sighing heavily. When the "nest" is complete, the eggs are laid, 150-200 of them, about the size of golf balls. Then the sand is carefully packed about the eggs, sand is thrown to hide the place, and the turtle, evidently exhausted, still sighing, goes back into the sea. The little turtles emerge after about ten weeks, and head straight for the water. Enemies await them on every side, gulls, and ghost crabs, and others once the ocean is entered. Usually the hatching takes place at night, which lessens their dangers, but even so it is estimated that only about 2% survive.

Quoin Island, to which I went next, is a continental island, formed by the sinking of the land. It lies about six miles from Gladstone. It is much larger than Heron, and rises to an elevation of 170 feet. Gum and wattle trees dominate the vegetation, with many of the curious grass trees, whose trunks provide one of the ingredients for explosives.

Goannas, looking like four foot lizards race through the underbrush, wild kangaroos stand up to secure a good view of the intruder, and koalas sit almost motionless in the trees, holding on with their little hands. It is not known how the koalas came to the island, but the kangaroos swam from a larger island a couple of miles away to escape an extensive fire some years ago.

Shore birds frequented the rocks, among them the Grey Tattler, distinguishable from the Wandering, to me, only by the call, similar, yet different. Whimbrels and Beach Curlews called noisily. Pelicans, with more black in their plumage than has the American White Pelican were off-shore. The morning after I left, the beach was covered with an estimated 100 Black Swans, whose organ notes aroused the sleepers.

I found over 30 species of perching birds, each one exciting. Perhaps the strangest were the brightly colored Rosellas, a small parrot, and doubtless the most famous, the Kookaburra, in this section, the Blue-winged.

It is difficult, for me, at least, to identify all of these birds, and some remain unidentified, although Dr. A. Keast of the Australian Museum in Sydney has been most kind in helping me. Through his courtesy I was able to attend a meeting of the Ornithological Section of the Royal Australian Zoological Society. This was extremely interesting, for I met a number of the members. Mr. Ellis McNamara showed magnificent slides of Australian birds calculated to make one go on and on hunting for more species.

Australia is so large, and its bird-life so varied, that a life-time of study would scarcely be sufficient to know the birds here. I am glad to have the opportunity to see a few - their gorgeous colors and strange calls are enchanting.



EXTRACT FROM A LETTER FROM GRENVILLE HATCH - February 11, 1960.

"On Monday (February 8) I came up to Sherbrooke (in Victoria) to stay a week, and am in love with it. This is the haunt of the lyre bird; all the forest is a reserve, and great care is exercised to protect the birds ... As you might guess, I've been out morning, noon and night, and have been fortunate enough to see families consisting of the male, female and the fully grown young of last year. It is almost time to start the next family. They lay only one egg a year, but the courtships have not started. However, I've seen the male dance and throw his gorgeous plumes over his body and head, had have listened to, and watched, others. They are great mimics and have a very fine voice.

There are many other birds in the forest, too, not as spectacular, but still interesting. The loveliest of these, to my mind, is the little Rufus fan-tail, a tiny mite, who confidently runs just before you on the path, spreading his bright little fan. And, of course, it is still staggering to see gaily colored parrots flying through the trees."

\*\*\*\*\*

# CONSERVATION IS NOT ENOUGH

By Joseph Wood Krutch

from "Wyoming Wildlife"

Wyoming Game & Fish Commission Publication

November, 1959 Issue

Moralists often blame races and nations because they have never learned how to live and let live. But it is not only members of his own kind that man seems to want to push off the earth. When he moves in, nearly everything else that lives suffers -- sometimes because he wants the space it occupies and the food it eats, but often because he sees a creature not of his kind or his race, his first impulse is "kill it."

Albert Schweitzer remarks that we owe kindness even to an insect, when we can afford to show it, just because we ought to do something to make up for all the cruelties, necessary as well as unnecessary, which we have inflicted upon almost the whole of animate creation.

Probably not one man in ten is capable of understanding such moral and aesthetic considerations. But perhaps twice as many are beginning to realize that the reckless devastation of the earth has practical consequences. They are beginning to hear at least about "conservation," even though they are not even dimly aware of any connection between it and a large morality and are very unlikely to suppose that it does or could mean anything more than looking after their own behavior.

Hardly two generations ago, Americans first woke up to the fact that their land was not inexhaustible. Scientists have studied the problem, public works have been undertaken, laws passed. Yet everybody knows that the using-up still goes on. And there is nowhere that it goes on more nakedly, with a fuller realization of what is happening, than in the desert regions where the margin to be used up is narrower. Soon dust bowls will be where was once a sparse but healthy desert; and man, having unrooted, slaughtered or driven away everything which lived healthily and normally there, will himself either abandon the country or die.

To the question of why men will do or are permitted to do such things, there are many replies. Some speak of population pressures, while others more bluntly discuss unconquerable human greed. Some despair; some hope that more education and public works will, in the long run, prove effective. But is there, perhaps something different, which is indispensable? Is there some missing link in the chain of education, law and public works? Is there something lacking without which none of these is sufficient?



After a lifetime spent in conservation of one kind or another, during which he saw his country slip backward two steps for every one it took forward, Aldo Leopold came up with an unusual answer which many people would dismiss as "sentimental" and be surprised to hear from a "practical" scientific man. Yet the conclusion reached can be simply stated. Something is lacking; and because of that lack, education, law and public works fail to accomplish what they hope to accomplish. Without it, the high-minded impulse to educate, legislate and to manage becomes as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And the thing that is missing is love, some feeling for, as well as some understanding of, the inclusive community of rocks and soils, plants and animals, of which we are a part.

To live healthily and successfully on the land, we must also live with it. We must be part not only of the human community, but of the whole community; we must acknowledge some sort of oneness, not only with our neighbors, our countrymen, and our civilization, but also with the natural as well as the man-made community. Ours is not only "one world" in the sense usually implied, it is also "one earth." And without some acknowledgment of that fact, men can no more live successfully than they can if they refuse to admit the political and economic interdependency of the various sections of the civilized world. It is not a sentimental but a grimly literal fact that unless we do share this globe with creatures other than ourselves, we shall not be able to live on it for long.

You may, if you like, think of this as a moral law. But you cannot escape the fact that it has its factual, scientific aspect which is every day making it clearer that those interdependencies, no matter how remote, are crucial even for us.

Before even the most obvious aspects of the balance of nature had been recognized, a greedy, self-centered mankind naively divided plants into the useful and useless. In the same way it divided animals into those which were either "domestic" or "game," and those which were called "vermin" and ought to be destroyed. Even to this day the idea remains the same for most people. They may know, or may have been told, that what looks like the useless is often essential. They may have heard that when the mountain lion is killed off, the deer multiply, that when the deer multiply the new growth is eaten away; and that when the hills are denuded, a farm or section of grazing land is washed away and made incapable of supporting man or any other of the large animals. They may even have heard how the wonderful new insecticides proved so effective that fish and birds died of starvation; that when you almost completely kill off a destructive pest, you run the risk of starving out everything which preys upon it and thus run the risk that the pest itself will stage an overwhelming comeback because its predators are no more, yet knowing this and much more their dream is still the dream that an earth for the use of man alone can be created if only we learn more and scheme more effectively.

Ultimately man hopes he can beat the game. But the more the ecologist learns the less likely it seems, that man can in the long run do anything of the sort. For every creature there is a paradox at the heart of the necessary "struggle for existence:" neither man nor any other animal can afford to triumph in that struggle too completely. In nature as elsewhere, "to the victor belongs the spoils" -- but for a time only. When there are no more spoils to be consumed, the victor dies.

What is commonly called "conservation" will not work in the long run, because it is really not conservation at all, but rather a variation of the old idea of a world for man's use only. But how can man be persuaded to cherish any other ideal unless he can learn to take some interest in the beauty and variety of the world for its own sake, unless he can see some "use" in things not useful? Without some realization that "this curious world" is at least beautiful as well as useful, conservation is doomed. We must live for something besides making a living. If we do not permit the earth to produce beauty and joy, it will in the end not produce food either. And that brings us around to another of Aldo Leopold's ideas:



"Conservation still proceeds at a snail's pace; ... the usual answer is 'more education' ... But is it certain that only the volume of education needs stepping up? Is something lacking in content as well? ... It is inconceivable to me that an ethical relation to land can exist without love, respect and admiration for land, and a high regard for its value. By value, I of course mean something far broader than mere economic value: I mean value in the philosophical sense."

Here in the West, as in the country at large, a war more or less under the guise of a "conflict of interest" rages between the practical conservationist and the defenders of national parks, between cattlemen and lumbermen on one hand and "sentimentalists" on the other. The pressure to allow the hunter, the rancher or the woodcutter to invade the public domain is constant, and the plea is always that we should use what is assumed to be useless unless it is adding material welfare. But unless somebody teaches love, there can be no ultimate protection to what is lusted after.

From the standpoint of nature as a whole, man is both a threat to every other living thing and, therefore, a threat to himself also. If he were not so extravagantly successful, it would be better for nearly everything except man, and therefore possibly better in the longest run for him also. He has become the tyrant of the earth, the waster of its resources, the creator of the most prodigious imbalance in the natural order which has ever existed. From a purely homocentric point of view, this may seem entirely proper. Does not our dream of the future include a final emancipation from any dependence upon a natural balance and the substitution for it of some balance established by ourselves and in our exclusive interest? Most would claim that we have every reason in experience to believe that this final triumph is possible.

Yet the fact remains that to all things there is a limit, that "progress" cannot continue indefinitely in one straight line. The more completely we bring nature under control, the more complicated our methods must become; the more disastrous the chain reaction set up by any failure of wisdom or watchfulness or technique. We are required to know more and more and we are always threatened by the impossibility of achieving adequate knowledge, much less adequate wisdom and virtue. Until we learned to support a population far larger than we would have believed possible a century ago, there was no danger of general starvation. Until we increased the wealth of nations by linking them one with another, we were not exposed to the dangers of a worldwide economic collapse. Until we learned how to "control" the atom, there was no danger that atomic phenomena would actually get out of control, and hence it is not clear whether we are running the machines or they are running us. Thus we now have three tigers by the tail -- the economic, the physical and the biological; and three tigers are three times as dangerous as one. We cannot let any of them go. But it is not certain that we can hang on to all of them indefinitely.

Perhaps nature cannot really be controlled after all. Might it not be that man's success as an organism is genuinely a success so long, but only so long as man is prepared to share the earth with the others? If by any chance that criterion is valid, then either one of two things is likely to happen. Either outraged nature will violently assert herself and some catastrophe will demonstrate the hollowness of man's supposed success; or man himself will learn in time to set a reasonable limit on his ambitions and accept his position as that of the most highly evolved of living creatures but not one entitled to assume that no others have a right to live unless they contribute directly to his material welfare.

Since our age is not inclined to be interested in theological arguments, it is not likely to find in them sufficient reason for accepting gladly the continued existence on this earth of "useless" plants and animals occupying space which man might turn to his own immediate profit. He is more likely to make at least certain concessions, and it is entirely certain that he will not find life pleasanter just because he makes them, unless he can learn to love and to delight in the variety of nature.



## FIELD NOTES:

## CATTLE EGRETS

"Your readers may be interested in learning that on February 11th, I observed nine (9) Cattle Egrets in the cattle "holding" paddocks located makai of Kahua Ranch Company's slaughter house at Honouliuli (Ewa), Oahu.

"The birds were foraging for insects with and on the cattle as they grazed.

"It is believed that these birds are part of the colony released in Kaaawa Valley, Oahu in July 1959."

Alan Thistle, Head  
Division of Entomology and Marketing

+++++

## GULL SIGHTED

"On the 20th of February and again on the 5th of March I observed a seagull riding the updrafts along the seashore just north of the Kahuku golf course. It was an immature bird with the typical nondescript light greyish-brown plumage of the young California Gull or the Western Gull. Positive identification was not possible with the naked eye, but someone with field glasses could do better."

Wm R. Smythe  
Entomology Dept., H.S.P.A.

+++++

Field Trip, February 14, 1960, Shore birding.

Because of the unsettled condition of the weather Mr. Stephenson, our leader, decided it best not to designate in advance the locale of our Bird Walk. That morning truly did not look promising; in fact, it was raining HARD. However, a few optimistic souls appeared and, true to previous experiences, it proved to be a red letter day. The group was augmented by an expert birder, Mr. Paul Schaeffer of the Coast Guard. Paul has been with us before and we are always happy to see him. Incidentally he reported to us that on January 29, 1960, as his ship was coming into West Loch he saw an Osprey and shortly before that he had seen 11 Pomeranian Jaegers and several Black Footed Albatross.

Well, we started toward the only bright spot on the horizon - Ewa way - and it was to be an exploratory trip. We were richly rewarded inasmuch as Frank led us to a new spot on the Ewa side of West Loch and opened a new area to us. We were greeted by a chorus of doves such as none of us had ever heard; we also saw pa and ma dove with wee baby between 'em on a twig - a beautiful sight (barred doves).

Birding here was very good and we were tantalized by the sight of many birds across the Loch; before trying to get closer to them we back-tracked to the alfalfa fields where harvesting operations were in progress and birds of many kinds in great number had flocked, while the Skylarks soared and sang high up in and above the sprays of the huge sprinklers in operation.

Our efforts on the Waipahu side of the Loch were also rewarding though we could not make definite identification of all birds seen.



## Our list for the day:

American Cardinals .....	6
Brazilian Cardinals .....	20 (12 in one flock)
English Sparrows .....	50 plus
Barred Doves .....	25 plus
Spotted Doves .....	25 plus
Mynahs .....	50 plus
Ricebirds .....	- (Too many to count)
Mejiro .....	3
Mockingbird .....	2
Tattlers .....	6
Turnstones .....	- (Too many to count)
Sanderlings .....	13
Black-crowned Night Herons ..	6
Golden Plover .....	15
Black-bellied Plover .....	3
Hawaiian Stilts .....	450
Skylarks .....	4
Pheasant .....	1
Pintail Ducks .....	12
Coot .....	- (No accurate count)
Shoveler .....	1
Unidentified water birds ....	35 - 40

Ruth R. Rockafellow

\*\*\*\*\*

## APRIL ACTIVITIES:

FIELD TRIPS: FRANK STEPHENSON WILL LEAD BOTH TRIPS.

April 10 - (Trails taken will be governed by the weather conditions)  
April 24 - (and transportation available.)

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

MEETING: Board - April 11, at the Hawaiian Mission Academy, 1415 Makiki Street,  
at 7:30 p.m. Members are always welcome.

General - April 18, at the Honolulu Aquarium Auditorium at 7:30 p.m.  
After the business meeting a nature movie, The  
Seasons, will be presented.

\*\*\*\*\*

## HAWAII AUDUBON SOCIETY OFFICERS:

President: Charles Hanson  
Vice Presidents: Miss Margaret Titcomb  
Mrs. Mary Riggs  
Secretary: Mrs. Ruth R. Rockafellow  
Treasurer: Mrs. Blanche A. Pedley

The ELEPAIO: Editors:  
Miss Margaret Newman, Editor  
in Chief  
Miss Charlotta Hoskins  
Miss Euphie G.M. Shields

MAILING ADDRESS: P.O. Box 5032, Honolulu 14, Hawaii

DUES: Regular - \$2.00 per annum  
Junior (18 years and under) - \$1.00 per annum  
Life - \$50.00