

THE ELEPAIO

Journal of the
Hawaii Audubon Society



For the Better Protection
of Wildlife in Hawaii

VOLUME 20, NUMBER 6

DECEMBER 1959

KE KUA'AINA FROM OCTOBER 1, 1958 TO SEPTEMBER 30, 1959
By George C. Munro

Governor William Quinn in an executive order on March 6, 1958 set apart 9.474 acres of land on the west side of Diamond Head for a Territorial park under the name "Na Laau Hawaii Arboretum". This included the small area of the northwest corner where my nephew, Hector G. Munro, and myself have been laying a foundation for a "living museum" of the xerophytic or dryland plants of these islands. We called it Na Laau Hawaii, which means plants belonging to Hawaii. As we think it is necessary for its success to keep this living museum as a separate project from the arboretum part we changed its name to Ke Kua'aina which is literally "the back land", as it is really the back land of the park. It would be very difficult to eradicate the foreign plants from the whole park except at enormous expense, but it is quite possible and I consider it very necessary for the living museum part, if it is to accomplish what it is planned to do. That is, to save from extinction as many of our endemic dryland plants as possible.

In dealing with these plants we count the yearly cycle of growth and rest from the beginning of October when we expect the first heavy rains of the wet season. These bring on an excessive growth which may last to the end of March when the dry season commences and the deciduous plants shed their leaves and begin their summer rest, just as those of colder climates take theirs in the winter. So this report will cover the period generally from October 1, 1958 to September 30, 1959.

There are of course showers in the dry season sometimes heavy enough to germinate seed in the ground. These generally dry up and die but evergreens sometimes benefit from these showers. There was rain on August 1 & 7, 1958 totaling about two inches. In October there was more rain but November and December were as dry as dry season months. January and February 1959 were fairly moist but there were no heavy soaking rains and March was dry. So we entered the dry season with the soil dry instead of soaked as expected. Dry conditions continued till August 6 when hurricane "Dot" brought over four inches of rain which all went into the ground but there were no showers to follow and the benefit was mostly to the deeper rooted species.

In the early 1900s on Lanai I collected a purplish flowered climber on the borders of the rain forest, a pink one on or near the coastline and one with the flower nearly pure white on the grassy upland below Lanai City. I was given the name for all as Canavalia galeata but now I have information from Drs. Otto and Isa Degener that the shoreline one is Canavalia lanaiensis Rock. Dr. Rock collected it at Manele, Lanai, in 1910 and named it the Lanai jack bean Canavalia lanaiensis.

Drs. Otto and Isa Degener made a collecting trip to Lanai in 1957 and obtained specimens of C. lanaiensis on the northwest coast and specimens of the white flowered variety at the Kanepuu dry forest on the northwest part of the Lanai uplands where I

had taken seed of it from the now pineapple covered lands and so probably saved it from extinction. It no doubt was widespread over the Lanai uplands but grazing of sheep for 35 years reduced it almost to the vanishing point. In 20 years roaming over the lands of Lanai these two or three plants growing together were all I ever saw of it in nature. Though only a variety of a species, I am pleased to have been instrumental in saving it and proud to have my name attached to it.

I told of this plant in my last article and the difficulty we had in growing it to maturity, in that if we watered it during the dry season it died when the winter rains came. The three plants that were flowering when I wrote were never watered and continued to flower from May 3 to August 3, 1958 and furnished a fine lot of seed, the last of which was gathered October 25. All was saved except some taken by rats, probably the native species which abound in the vicinity (perhaps they recognized a food of their ancestors). Some of the seed was planted over Ke Kua'aina and some distributed to other planting institutions. The vines lived through the dry season of 1958 and had a few flowers and small bean pods in 1959. The vines were green till the rain of August 6 when they apparently died. However there is plenty of seed in the ground and there are some young vines looking fresh and green, but the three old vines which produced so well in 1958 are dead as far as we know. A different species with a smooth leaf which we thought might be the one with the purplish flower and which normally grows nearer the rain forest than the others may not succeed at Ke Kua'aina.

The tree form of Hibiscus brackenridgii which flowered for four months in 1957 and three months in 1958 had flowers for only one month in 1959. Its habit is to carry small leaves in the dry season. These freshened up and a new growth started after the rain of August but came to a standstill when the surface soil dried. The wiliwili on the other hand have grown a fine crop of leaves but some were getting yellow by the end of September. The habit of this fine tree is to shed its leaves completely in the beginning of the dry season but to respond with new buds after every little shower. These young leaves dry up and fall off if there is no following rain. The rain of August this year soaked the ground so well that now at the end of September the trees are well covered with leaves beginning to turn yellow. We had hoped that the trees would flower this year but the prospect is not so good now unless they shed the present crop of leaves and flower after the November rains. The wiliwili generally flowers before the leaves develop.

Though the wet season of 1958-59 was an unfavorable one for many plants it favored the ilima (Sida fallax) and mao (Abutilon incanum) the pili and emoloa grasses and Doryopteris decora fern. I told last year of the ilima which came up about 1954 and flourished till 1957 when the plants about four feet high began to die and a crop of young plants was coming up in 1958. Now the last of the old plants are about dead and the first young ones are about two feet high and flowered beautifully for a short time after the August rain. I have never seen the mao so luxuriant as it has been this season at Ke Kau'aina. Blight held it back and threatened it this year but the dry weather probably stopped that. The pili and emoloa grasses and the fern were exceedingly luxuriant. The nene (Lipochaeta lobata var. albesens) flowered beautifully after every rainy spell in the wet season but responded little in leafage after the August fall. A Kokia, lone survivor of the many plants raised in the home nursery and set out in 1951, recovered well after a long rest and the August rain and grew some nice leaves, and one is still green and fresh. The puakala (native poppy) was dormant this year. It had flowered beautifully for seven months in 1957 and eight months in 1958 but had only two or three weak flowers this year and the three feet high stems have died down to the ground and there are only weak shoots. Its seed has been planted widely in the area and in a few years we hope patches of it will be flowering. Such is the habit of many of these dryland plants, luxuriant for a few years and disappearing for another period. A young vine of Sicyos hispidus, a relation of the cucumbers, seems the least affected by the drought and has grown vigorously through the dry spells. It is one of three species that grew on Lanai and I am hoping to get seed of the other two.

There are now 13 plants endemic to Hawaii and 8 indigenous ones growing at Ke Kua'aina. Seeds of about 70 other species have been planted, a number of them endemic. They are waiting to be given more sunlight and a wet season of heavy and continuous rain like that of 1950-51.

To anyone used to usual gardening methods our system may seem peculiar but it fits the case. The greatest success I have known with our dryland plants was when in extremely remote places on Lanai I found rare plants seeding. Seed was gathered into my saddle bag and later when riding along the borders of the Kanepuu dryland forest the seed was spread from the saddle. There were few foreign plants there at that time and as the years passed the seed germinated and the plants took hold. The situation then is somewhat different today.

We are fortunate at this time to have two good teams of helpers gathering seed for the undertaking: Mr. and Mrs. Adolph Desha of Lanai, and Mr. and Mrs. Robert Baldwin of Hilo. They sent a good supply of freshly ripened seed. Seed in this condition germinates at once if moisture conditions in the soil are right, but in this case the rains did not favor us. Drs. Otto and Isa Degener returned from a botanizing expedition to Maui and brought some good seeds.

Game hunting is becoming more and more popular and the dry lands are apt to be stocked with other species of browsing animals and the endemic species face greater hazards.

October 9, 1959

DARK-RUMPED PETREL IN HALEAKALA CRATER

By Robert W. Carpenter
Park Naturalist

Haleakala Section, Hawaii National Park

On October 26, Margaret Titcomb, Edith Chappell and I hiked down the Sliding Sands Trail into Haleakala Crater and stayed overnight in Kapalaoa Cabin. The weather was cool and comfortable with only a gentle breeze, and nice and clear. Birds must have been hiding that day. We saw numerous tracks of chukar partridge and pheasants, but no birds.

While crossing the crater the next day we saw a bird flapping its wings while standing on a rock about 150 yards away from us. Because of the size of the bird, my first thought was that it was an owl. I had seen an owl about a month earlier near Paliku Cabin.

I was able to approach within about 10 feet of the bird and could see that it had webbed feet and a hooked beak. Its feathers were ruffled, probably due to molting rather than from an antagonistic attitude. The bird glared at me for a few seconds and then started exercising its wings again.

Thinking that the bird was injured and would stay on the rock, I failed to make careful observations as to its color, and overall grayish. Its body size, head shape and webbed feet suggested that it was probably a dark-rumped petrel. They are known to nest in holes in the crater cliffs and can be heard when they are active at night during the summertime. They are seldom seen in the daytime.

While I was getting ready to take its picture, the petrel suddenly flew off with slow, steady wingbeats. It flew just a few feet above the rough aa lava flow, circled around a clump of mamani trees and disappeared behind a cinder cone. In general, the birding was poor for a crater hike, but just seeing the petrel made up for the lack of other birds.

From near Holua Cabin we saw a herd of about a dozen goats starting up Leleiwi Pali from Holua meadow. Hiking out of the crater on the Halemau Trail the next day we saw 2 coveys of chukar partridge and heard a pheasant, a skylark and a couple of white-eyes. From near the top of the trail, we saw a herd of goats on the crater rim silhouetted against the sky.

Aside from the crater trip, it might be interesting to note that a park visitor saw a large flock of Japanese Hill Robins at the summit of Haleakala on October 29. During the rest of the year these birds are seen at lower elevations in the park, but have never been reported near the summit except in October and November. Some years, several are found dead in the old abandoned army buildings at the summit. Does anyone have any ideas as to why they should appear suddenly at this elevation, stay a short time and then disappear again?

October 31, 1959

FIELD NOTES:

Field Trip, October 25, 1959, Report on shore bird walk.

Members and guests made East Loch their first stop where the antics of two Pacific Golden Plover caught our eyes. We soon decided we were not spying on their private life, but rather witnessing a battle for the right of possession of a certain territory. It was a most unusual performance insofar as the group was concerned.

The tide was coming in and rather high so birding was not good at that particular spot. We moved on to Haleiwa and there we located two gallinules and several coots.

The seascapes enroute to Kahuku were breath-taking in their beauty and the spray and spume were a delight to watch as the incoming waves unrolled themselves.

Unfortunately the dry weather has lessened the swamp areas greatly at Kahuku, but we were able to see several species of birds there.

Turnstones (called "turnovers" by a guest) were in great concentration and sanderlings were in lesser numbers. A few tattlers were also seen and many Hawaiian stilts filled the air with their protests as we made our way about the swamp. Also we saw many shoveler and pintail ducks.

To our great delight we sighted cattle egrets ON COWS. One visitor in the group asked, when we explained why we were so pleased, "I wonder what the cow thinks?". All were happy that the egrets had made contact with their kau kau line. We only saw three and the group is greatly concerned for the missing one. Four were sighted in this area on September 27, 1959. We hope they have set up housekeeping.

Mynahs in great numbers were in conference and ricebirds also were to be seen in flocks. We had seen the plovers on ever so many green lawns and in open spaces during our ride to the Windward side so we were not surprised to find a smaller number than last month at Kahuku. The plover has spread to all of its usual areas, we decided. No curlew was to be seen.

The group feels that our shore birding should be done as early after the return of the migratory birds as possible because the hunting season no doubt has much to do with the scattering and decrease in numbers of the returning migrants.

We made a supervisory stop at Kapaa to investigate the swamp area there. Reports have come to us of many ducks using this area. However, here again the drought has played havoc with the swamp. We saw a black-crowned night heron, an American cardinal,

heard many leiothrix and Chinese thrush.

This stop should be included in our trip whenever possible.

Ruth R. Rockafellow

Letter from Grenville Hatch, then staying at the Park Shiba Hotel, Tokyo, dated Oct. 14, 1959.

"I love every bit of this - the little gardens and the plants, perhaps most of all - but even the tofu man gives me a thrill, and just the signs, and everything so very different.

"I'm not doing too well with birds - the Japanese tree sparrow is as common as our house sparrow, so that is impossible to miss. Crows, but which kind? The grey tit, and fleeting glimpses of the brown-eared bulbul and green magpie. I spent most of the morning in the grounds of the Meiji Shrine, taking time out to admire the beautiful buildings and decorations of the shrine.

"The weather is beautiful, on the chilly side which is nice after our long hot summer.

"I'm now booked on a small vessel leaving Japan Nov. 23rd, and if anyone feels moved to send me a letter about Christmas time %Thomas Cook & Sons, Sydney, -- it would be wonderful. Pass the word."

Reprint from Star Bulletin, Oct. 29, 1959.

Cape May, N.J. (AP) - A team of naturalists wants to study a new type of New Jersey commuter - a bird from North Africa that suddenly turned up here.

The bird is the cattle egret, a type that forsakes water for the company of cattle. It feeds on insects stirred up by the cattle. Bird watchers say they would like to find out how the cattle egrets got this far north.

NEW MEMBERS: A hearty welcome to the following new members of our Society:
Edgar B. Kincaid, Jr., Life Member, 702 Park Place, Austin 5, Texas.
Chandler S. Robbins, 1409 Brooklyn Bridge Road, Laurel, Maryland.

DECEMBER ACTIVITIES:

MEETING: Board - December 14, at the Hawaiian Mission Academy, 1415 Makiki St., at 7:30 p.m. Members are always welcome.

General - December 21, at the Honolulu Aquarium Auditorium at 7:30 p.m. This will be the Annual Meeting and election of Trustees.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT - December 27, meeting place and time to be set by each group. The four areas to be covered are:

1. Moku Manu, Ulupau Head, Bellows Field.
2. Manoa Falls, Kuliouou Beach Park, Kuapa Pond
3. Tantalus Trail, Upper Nuuanu Valley, Punchbowl Cemetery.
4. Aiea Trail, Sand Island, Damon Pond, Salt Lake.

All members, or visitors, who would like to participate in the count are asked to come to the December meeting for further information, or to call Mrs. Rockafellow, 999523. Help is especially needed this year for drivers, recorders and birders.

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