

# THE ELEPAIO

Journal of the  
Hawaii Audubon Society



For the Better Protection  
of Wildlife in Hawaii

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MARCH 1960

## A FEW BIRD NOTES FROM JAPAN

By Grenville Hatch

Fall in Japan is a very beautiful season, cool and dry, with glorious autumn coloring on hills and mountains, and magnificent chrysanthemum displays everywhere. From a birder's point of view it is not the best time of year as most of the migratory birds that go to warmer climates have left and those coming from colder regions have not yet arrived. Despite this, my stay in Japan from October 12 to November 24th was a perfect, unflawed experience. The beauty of the country, the great kindness of the people, foremost of whom were Mr. and Mrs. Keisuke Kobayashi, whose name is familiar to readers of the Elepaio, cannot be adequately described.

Birding here, as elsewhere, is attended by difficulties. Vegetation is dense and the birds have the same facility in hiding behind leaves as do those on Poamoho Trail. I rarely found a vantage point from which to look down upon the treetops. Despite this, I saw a total of 49 species of which five only were already familiar to me. Perhaps that statement is not wholly correct for included in the five is the elusive Bush Warbler, whose notes only have been familiar. It is elusive in Japan also, and while I caught glimpses of it in many places, I saw clearly only one chilled little specimen in the Japanese Alps on a frosty morning and then could not believe my luck.

The first bird in Japan to be unmistakably identified was the Japanese Tree Sparrow which is very similar, both in appearance and voice, to our House Sparrow and occupies much the same position, although less bold. It is seen and heard everywhere in the cities and also in great flocks over the rice fields, where the harvested rice was hung over long racks to dry. Long metallic ribbons stretched over the racks, scarecrows and other devices were being used to scare away the Sparrows and the Carrion Crows, which also frequented the farm lands.

Another very common bird was the Brown-eared Bulbul, as maddening a creature as one can imagine. It is a large, active, noisy bird whose squeaky calls sound from all around. It was feeding on the fruit of the camphor trees and moved so fast that it was weeks before I had a satisfactory look at it.

The parks and beautifully landscaped gardens of Tokyo afforded many pleasant hours. The majority of water birds listed were seen in the ornamental lakes of these parks. Among other birds observed was the Japanese Blue Magpie, fairly common in Tokyo, but which I did not find elsewhere. Parenthetically, thanks to Mr. Kobayashi who told me just where to look, I saw several Korean Magpies near Saga, on Kyushu, where they are localized.

At the higher elevations which I visited there was good birding at Nikko, the Hakone district, and Karuizawa. Of these Karuizawa was the best, perhaps in part because I had guidance there. I had gone to the Hoshino Hotel, a charming Japanese inn, which in itself was a delightful experience because the owner, Mr. Hoshino, a well-known orni-



thologist, has recorded many bird songs. Mr. Hoshino was away while I was there but his son, who modestly disclaims expert knowledge, though he knows the birds very well, told me where to go, played his father's records for me and was very helpful.

The most beautiful perching bird which I saw at all these higher elevations was the Narcissus Flycatcher, boldly patterned in golden-yellow and black. It is a migrant which, luckily for me, had delayed its flight.

There are many different varieties of Tits in Japan, all of which are charming. I was lucky enough to see most of them. The Great Tit, which belies its name, is found everywhere but the rest are mostly at higher elevations. I looked a long time for the Varied Tit. It is not common and I saw it only a few times, except in cages. On one street in Tokyo the air was full of its notes as nearly every house had a Varied Tit in a small wooden cage hanging outside the door. The Willow-Tit sounds exactly like our Chickadee, and I wished I had a Peterson for the U.S. to make comparisons.

The best day of birding was at Atami, near Osaka. Here Mr. Kobayashi led the way through the beautiful countryside and pointed out 18 species, including a spectacular congregation of Little Egrets with some Plumed Egrets among them. The whole day, ending with sukiyaki at the Kobayashi home, remains a perfect experience and one of the high points in the many kindnesses of Mr. and Mrs. Kobayashi, who had taken me sight-seeing, met me at an ungodly hour, invited me to their home, and helped to make my trip memorable.

The "Changte," which plies between Japan and Australia, stopped for three days in Hongkong. I spent the time sight-seeing; saw some birds, but unfortunately there is no book on the birds of Hongkong in print, so identification was impossible.

As far as birds of the ocean are concerned, the copy of Alexander is somewhat dog-eared, but how I wished that Joe King and/or Bob Pyle were there to tell me what I was looking at! The "Changte" is a small ship, the passengers all very friendly, and somehow it became known that I am interested in birds. Soon a cry went up whenever one was sighted, but all too often I could not be sure of the species.

I am completing this very inadequate account on Quoin Island, off the Queensland coast. Yesterday I saw my first wild parrots - but perhaps more about these strange creatures later.

- Japanese Jungle Crow (*Corvus leuillanti japonensis*) Unzen
- Eastern Carrion Crow (*Corvus corone orientalis*) Farm areas
- Japanese Blue Magpie (*Cyanopica cyanus japonica*) Tokyo
- Korean Magpie (*Pica pica japonica*) Saga, Kyushu Island
- Japanese Jay (*Garrulus glandarius japonicus*)
- Japanese Tree Sparrow (*Passer montanus saturatus*)
- Japanese Grosbeak (*Eophona personata personata*)
- Small Japanese Greenfinch (*Chloris sinica minor*) Atami - flocks
- Japanese Bunting (*Emberiza spodocephala personata*) Unzen, Atami
- Japanese Meadow Bunting (*Emberiza cioides ciopsis*) Nikko, Unzen, Atami
- Grey-headed Bunting (*Emberiza fucata fucata*) Atami
- Kamchatkan Rustic Bunting (*Emberiza rustica latifascia*) Atami, bare branch, ting
- Japanese Skylark (*Alauda arvensis japonica*) Like English crest
- Japanese Water Pipit (*Anthus spinoletta japonicus*) Atami
- Japanese Pied Wagtail (*Motacilla alba lugens*)
- Japanese Wagtail (*Motacilla grandis*)
- Eastern Grey Wagtail (*Motacilla cinerea caspica*) Why grey?
- \* Japanese White-eye (*Zosterops palpebrosa japonica*) Not until Miyajima, except for
- Hondo Nuthatch (*Sitta europaea hondoensis*) Nikko, Kami kochi one or two
- Japanese Great Tit (*Parus major minor*)
- \* Varied Tit (*Parus various varius*) Saw but few, except in cages, in streets of Tokyo



- Japanese Willow-tit (*Parus atricapillus restrictus*) Chickadee  
 Japanese Coal-tit (*Parus ater insularis*) Little crest  
 Japanese Long-tailed Tit (*Aegithalos caudatus trivirgatus*) Karuizawa, not many  
 Japanese Goldcrest (*Regulus regulus japonensis*) Miyajima elsewhere  
 Bull-headed Shrike (*Lanius bucephalus bucephalus*) Common, noisy  
 Brown-eared Bulbul (*Ixos amaurotis amaurotis*)  
 Narcissus Flycatcher (*Muscicapula narcissina narcissina*) Karuizawa, Nikko, Lake  
 Hakone area
- \* Japanese Bush-warbler (*Horeites cantans cantans*) Kami kochi, common in many places  
 Japanese Brown-thrush (*Turdus chrysolaus chrysolaus*) Like a robin  
 Japanese Wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes fumigatus*) Like our marsh wren; slips  
 Pale Pallas's Dipper (*Cinclus pallasii hondoensis*) through shrubbery  
 Japanese Pied Kingfisher (*Ceryle lugubris lugubris*)  
 Japanese Green Woodpecker (*Picus awokera awokera*) Miyajima  
 Japanese White-backed Woodpecker (*Dryobates leucotos*) Karuizawa  
 Hondo Pigmy Woodpecker (*Dryobates kizuki nippon*) Karuizawa, Kami kochi, Miyajima  
 Japanese Buzzard (*Buteo buteo burmanicus*) Karuizawa  
 Black-eared Kite (*Milvus migrans lineatus*) Common  
 Plumed Egret (*Egretta intermedia intermedia*) Late, but some still here. Yellow  
 bill, similar to American.  
 Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta garzetta*) Yellow feet, black bill, very like our  
 snowy egret; flocks at Atami.
- \* Black-crowned Night-heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax nycticorax*) Here nocturnal  
 Eastern Spot-billed Duck (*Anas poecilorhyncha zonorhyncha*)  
 Mandarin Duck (*Aix galericulata*)  
 Chinese Little Grebe (*Podiceps ruficollis poggei*)  
 Eastern Turtledove (*Streptopelia orientalis orientalis*)  
 Vega Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus vegae*)  
 Asiatic Common Gull (*Larus canus kamtschatschensis*)  
 Black-tailed Gull (*Larus crassirostris*)
- \* Ring-necked Pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*)

\* 5 old friends

44 New friends

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DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
 Office of the Chief of Naval Operations  
 Washington 25, D. C.

In Reply Refer to  
 Op-442E1/nk  
 Ser 3164P44  
 4 Dec 1959

Gentlemen:

This is in reply to your telegram to the President expressing concern over the albatrosses on Sand Island, Midway.

Enclosed is a fact sheet giving details of this problem. I trust that this information will provide a better perspective of this serious situation and clarify the Navy's intentions regarding it.

Board of Trustees  
 Hawaii Audubon Society  
 P.O. Box 5032  
 Honolulu

Sincerely yours,  
 /s/ J. L. Chew  
 J L CHEW  
 RADM, USN  
 Director Shore Establishment  
 Development and Maintenance  
 By direction

Encl:  
 (1) Fact sheet



### ALBATROSS PROBLEM AT SAND ISLAND, MIDWAY

The problem results from the many albatrosses, principally Laysan, which for approximately nine months of the year, during daylight hours, continuously soar over the runways and approaches colliding with aircraft during the most critical periods of their flight, the landing and take-off.

This problem has been of major and ever-increasing concern to the Navy for many years, and has been aggravated during the past few years due to the increased air operations occasioned by the establishment of the Early Warning Barrier.

Midway is an important link in the carrying out of the overall mission of the Navy. Not the least of its functions is to support the far-ranging planes which form the Pacific arm of the Continental Defense Barrier. These planes, each of which has more than twenty highly-trained personnel on board, depart Midway on long overwater flights lasting from twelve to fifteen hours. The lives of the Navy airmen, plus the multi-million dollar value of the plane and its equipment, demand that every possible measure to insure their safety be adopted.

Statistics compiled at Midway Atoll during the 1957-58 season (October - April) show that collisions between albatrosses and aircraft were experienced during 40 percent of all daylight landings and take-offs in the peak month of November and at an average rate of 17 percent. Despite this high collision incidence and the serious damage which has, in some cases, resulted, we have so far been most fortunate that no Navy airmen have died nor have any aircraft been lost. However, the damage has forced aborted missions, lost airplane time and seriously interfered with Barrier operations. During the past year resultant costs have approximated \$156,000.

In an attempt to find a solution to the problem, much research and study has been undertaken. Since 1955, at the request of the Navy, the Fish and Wildlife Service of the Department of the Interior has conducted exhaustive studies. In 1958, under Navy sponsorship, experts from Pennsylvania State University spent nearly three months on Midway making observations. All possible solutions have been carefully considered.

Two recommendations resulting from these surveys appear to be promising:

a. Improve Green Island, Kure, as a habitat for the albatross. This project has recently been completed.

b. Perform certain contour modifications on Sand Island, Midway, to drastically reduce the number of birds soaring over the runways. The Navy has provided \$110,000 for this project and the work will be completed as rapidly as possible.

Until the effectiveness of these two projects can be determined, the Navy will take no action to eliminate any birds except to the degree necessary to insure safety of flight.

The Navy is in complete sympathy with the desire to conserve our wildlife. It is our hope that the Sand Island project will safeguard our flight operations and that Green Island will become a major sanctuary for the albatrosses.

Enclosure (1) to CNO Ser 3164 P44 of  
4 Dec 1959



The following is a report of my recent trip to Midway Island, December 28 - Jan. 4.

First of all I would like to say that the Navy as a whole and the men I met personally treated me with much courtesy.

I went down to Midway on a chartered DC - 6 belonging to Hawaiian Airlines, arriving there on the evening of December 28.

As soon as I got off the plane I was met by several nesting Laysan Albatross which had taken up quarters right by the terminal building.

The next day I contacted CCDR Wilson who is the fish and wildlife officer for Midway. He took me in a pickup and showed me around the island. After we returned, he arranged the loan of a bicycle for me. (They call them horses.) Everyone owns one as there really isn't enough room for a car to go anywhere and yet walking would be rather time consuming.

In the days that followed I took several hundred feet of moving pictures (16 mm) and a couple of hundred Kodachrome slides. I will be showing these to the Society at some future date.

Birds observed on Sand Island, which is the main island of the Midway group, were the following:

- (1) Laysan Albatross - More than half already nesting; I would estimate about 6 thousand nests.
- (2) Black-footed Albatross - Well on the way in incubation of eggs; probably about 1000 - 2000 nests.
- (3) Fairy Terns - No eggs observed but mating activity seen; several hundred in ironwood trees.
- (4) Hawaiian Terns - Nesting in ironwoods; no eggs seen but birds building nests and sitting on nests; much gathering of nesting material on ground; several hundred birds seen.
- (5) Common Noddy - A few birds seen; no nesting activity or mating observed as yet although some seemed to be in pairs.
- (6) Bonin Island Petrel - Several seen after dark on lawns and beach; some mating activity observed.
- (7) Golden Plover - Several seen.
- (8) Ruddy Turnstone - Several seen.
- (9) Sanderling - 17 seen.
- (10) Bristle-thighed Curlew - 40 seen; tried pictures but unable to get close enough.
- (11) Frigate Birds - 3 seen flying over.
- (12) Red-tailed Tropic Birds - 1 young seen on ground almost ready to fly; 15 seen flying, all adults.
- (13) Wandering Tattler - Several seen.
- (14) Pigeons and Canaries - apparently once domesticated.

Birds observed on Eastern Island, approximately 2 miles from Sand Island.

- (1) Laysan Albatross - Most numerous species here; 8 - 10 thousand nests.
- (2) Black-footed Albatross - A few nests here; probably less than 1000.
- (3) Red-tailed Tropic Birds - 10 - 12 flying.
- (4) Fairy Terns - Several in Ironwoods.
- (5) Hawaiian Tern - Several
- (6) Common Noddy - Several
- (7) Golden Plover - More than on Sand Island.
- (8) Ruddy Turnstone - More than on Sand Island.
- (9) Bristle-thighed Curlew - 7 seen; got some pictures this time.



- (10) Frigate Birds - Many flying; got pictures of one immature sitting on scaveola.
- (11) Wandering Tattler - A few seen.
- (12) Pintail Duck - 1 female seen; unable to get pictures.

As many of you know the Navy has two current projects under way with which they hope to alleviate the problem of birds over the runways which has resulted in much damage to planes so far. Just a few weeks ago one Albatross strike caused severe damage to a radar cone on an aircraft.

Recently much bulldozing was done on Kure Island which is 60 miles from Midway. It is hoped that now many of the birds here will take up abode there because runways have been provided through the scaveola. Mr. Wilson told me that when he flew over a couple of weeks ago that there apparently were no birds there as yet. It will probably take several years to cause a shift. This is my opinion only. It might happen sooner or they might never shift unless the ultimate course is chosen of destroying all birds on Midway.

At present the second project is under way here on Midway. It was felt that the sand dunes on the southeast side were creating updrafts on which the birds liked to soar directly over the runway. These dunes are now being leveled.

This is an area approximately 3500 feet long and 400 feet wide adjacent to one runway. Many birds which nested on this area are now rather frustrated and displaced, gathering in little groups and not seeming to know what to make of it. In my opinion, there is still too much dune left and this will still cause up-drafts, but this remains to be seen. The Navy is putting thousands of dollars into the project and they are desperately trying everything short of elimination of the birds.

In my observation concerning the attitude of the population of the Island I noted the following:

1. Some harassment of nesting birds by children and dogs. I did not see any actual killing.
2. Some birds killed by Navy vehicles but apparently not maliciously. The speed of vehicles is rigidly controlled.
3. In one spot I counted about 60 dead Black-footed Albatross, apparently killed by some individual or individuals. This was in an isolated spot. In another place I found about 25 dead birds of the same species. Mr. Wilson told me that fines and time in the brig have been given to offenders, but of course all are not caught. All in all I would say a very small percentage are killed in this manner.

On Eastern Island I saw a hundred or more dead of both species. Probably the reason for these were the many radio wires on this island. The birds will fly right into them and break their wings, thus bringing on death by starvation.

My general reaction is that the Navy, meaning all personnel on Midway, are living admirably well with the problem.

My only hope is that some solution can be reached which will allow operation of aircraft and "operation Gooney." Possibly some of the preceding ideas mentioned will work.

One thing I noticed was that birds did not nest on runways or surfaced areas. Perhaps this is a possible control. It might be feasible to cover nesting area with some type of surface such as oil, etc. Possibly this has been given some thought although I have not heard it mentioned before.

I would like to thank the Navy for their courtesy and permission in visiting Midway. It is my hope that soon birds and man with his machines will be able to live compatibly with one another.

Charles Hanson



## FIELD NOTES:

Field Trip, January 10, 1960, Shore birding.

Four hardy members, a visitor from Michigan and comebackers Margaret and "Pete" Holt, whom many will remember, braved the threat of leaden skies and forecast rains to meet for the first scheduled field trip of 1960. However the planned trip to Aiea Trail was abandoned without much protest due to inclement weather.

Shore birding was indicated and the first stop was Salt Lake where we counted at least four hundred Coots. Kentucky Cardinals were seen and heard along with several Brazilians. Doves of both species were numerous. Only one Plover was observed. We were treated to the sight of three ducks flying in and after they settled on the water they were identified as Pintails. Two Shovelers were also observed.

The second stop was Haleiwa Pond where we were greatly disturbed to find that a great many of the reeds had been cleared away to make room for fishing. People were in the area where Galinules are usually seen. Nothing but the domestic fowl were seen.

On Kahuku Ponds (?). Much plowing and grading has been done in this area with the ponds drained away. One Night Heron flew away at our approach. The main item of interest was a Tern observed flying and diving for food along the canals that are the remaining waterways in the area. Much discussion was held as to the type of Tern. The description was later given to our President who decided it was a Common Tern. No Stilts were seen although Plover were plentiful along with a few Turnstones. The Cattle Egret, seen previously, were not found.

At Kahana Bay only a few Coots were seen. The day was enjoyed especially by the tourist who had not been around the Island and was leaving the next day. Our Kamaaina visitors and future members always enjoy their outings. Added pleasure for the day was a stop at Pat's Place (the coconut tarts are delicious) where we were told to "shut up" by a sassy India Mynah.

Frank L. Stephenson

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Field Trip, January 24, 1960, Aiea Trail.

We were quite surprised that so few met at the Library for the Aiea Bird Walk. We later learned that both of the newspapers mentioned the gathering place as Iolani Palace Grounds. We sincerely hope we did not overlook anybody.

The day was gorgeous, the trail dry and the air crisp. Amakihi and Elepaio were busy with love making, the former were very friendly, permitting the group to study them and make a comprehensive identification as to markings, coloring and bills. The Elepaio, however, were most elusive - no amount of persuasion brought them near. At one time our president said (he was trying for a photo of an Elepaio) "I am all kissed out" - they simply could not be bothered with humans.

Apapane were few though the Ohia-lehua was coming into blossom, and the Koa also. Amakihi were enjoying the Sandalwood blossoms.

Both Mr. Hanson and Mr. Marrack saw the Creeper. Leiothrix, American Cardinal and both kinds of doves (Chinese and Barred) were heard all along the trail.

Ruth R. Rockafellow

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Robert W. Carpenter, Park Naturalist at Haleakala, reported in February:

"I saw seven Ruddy Turnstones at about the 5,000 foot elevation near the Haleakala Road in the Haleakala Ranch. There was no mistaking them when they flew as a group, displaying their prominent white wing patches. Ranger Jimmie Lindsay saw Turnstones in about the same area in the fall. Are there any records of observations of these normally low elevation birds at such high elevations?"



Miss Grenville Hatch,  
Editor in Chief,  
P.O. Box 5032,  
Honolulu 14, Hawaii.

Hamilton Naturalists' Club  
Main Post Office, Box 384  
Hamilton - Ontario  
January 8, 1960

Dear Miss Hatch:

The Hamilton Naturalists' Club is sponsoring an International Exhibition of Nature Photography in April 1960. One of the purposes of this venture is to bring to the attention of the public the need of saving our few remaining natural beauty areas. We hope to have photography from many parts of the world.

Would you be kind enough to mention this exhibition in the "Elepaio" in the hope that your readers will enter their photography. Please mention that entry forms may be had by writing to - Mr. John Giles, Exhibition Chairman,  
International Exhibition of Nature Photography,  
Hamilton Naturalists' Club,  
Main Post Office, Box 384,  
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada.

Many thanks.

Yours respectfully,  
/s/ ROBERT O. ELSTONE  
Robert O. Elstone,  
President.

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NEW MEMBERS: We welcome the following new members:

Life Member: Mrs. Whitney H. Eastman, 7000 Valley View Rd., Minneapolis 24, Minn.  
Regular : Mrs. Marshall Fauhl, c/o Dr. Dingus, Mound, Kansas.  
Mr. & Mrs. Ernest G. Holt, 2212-H Aloha Drive, Honolulu 15, Hawaii

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MARCH ACTIVITIES:

Field Trips: Frank Stephenson will lead both trips.

March 13 - (Trails taken will be governed by the weather conditions)  
March 27 - (and transportation available.)

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

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Meeting: Board - March 14, at the Hawaiian Mission Academy, 1415 Makiki Street,  
at 7:30 p.m. Members are always welcome.

General - March 21, at the Honolulu Aquarium Auditorium at 7:30 p.m.  
Dr. Alfred O. Gross, retired Ornithologist from the  
faculty of Bowdoin College, Brunswick, Maine, will  
give a talk on his trip to Africa, illustrated by  
slides.

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