

# THE ELEPAIO

Journal of the  
Hawaii Audubon Society



For the Better Protection  
of Wildlife in Hawaii

VOLUME 22, NUMBER 11

MAY 1962

## A PROJECT FOR A NENE PARK IN HAWAII\* By Peter Scott

The Nene or Hawaiian Goose (Branta sandvicensis) in the wild state is now confined to a very small part of the island of Hawaii. Less than 100 wild individuals are believed to exist; there are a further 200 in captivity. Formerly the species was widespread on the Big Island of Hawaii and it occurred on other Hawaiian Islands, notably Maui. A captive stock has been built up at Pohakuloa in Hawaii, from which the wild population has recently been strengthened. A further captive stock, representing about half the estimated world population of 292, is in Europe (descended from 3 birds sent to the Wildfowl Trust, England in 1950 and 1951). From this stock new feral populations in Hawaii could be established. From 1962 some twenty young birds will be available annually for shipment to the Hawaiian Islands from England.

For passing captive-reared Nene into the wild state, it is proposed that one or more "Nene Parks" be established adjacent to current or potential natural range. For each Park an area of about 30 acres would be required which must be surrounded with a cat-dog-and-pig-proof fence to a height of 8 feet. The possibility of making it mongoose-proof should also be considered. Within the high perimeter the area would be subdivided by 4 foot high fences into 10 - 15 small enclosures of about half an acre apiece, each to accommodate a breeding pair of Nene, permanently pinioned so that they can never fly out of their enclosures.

The first clutches of eggs laid by these 10 - 15 permanent pairs would be raised under foster-parents or in brooders, and released, with the primaries of one wing cut, into the remaining 20 acre enclosure, where they would be artificially fed.

Fifteen pairs might produce some 20-30 first brood goslings, which would remain grounded in the enclosure for 12 months. The second brood goslings - probably about the same number or slightly less - would stay with their parents in the side pens to begin with but when half grown they could if necessary be allowed out with their parents into the big enclosure. Although able to fly they would be unlikely to stray far from their parents, for the family bond is very strong in all geese.

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\*This proposal by Peter Scott of The Wildfowl Trust, England, was sent to Clarence Cottam, Director, Welder Wildlife Foundation, who forwarded it to the Hawaii Audubon Society. A copy was sent by us to Mr. T. R. Woodworth, Division of Fish and Game, Department of Agriculture and Conservation, for his comments. Mr. Woodworth states that he has nothing to report at this time other than that he has written to Peter Scott and has had no reply as yet. We hope we shall have something to report on this proposal at a later date.

The Editors

At a year old these 40-60 young would all be able to fly, but would know the Nene Park as their home, a haven from predators and a certain source of food. Nevertheless as the numbers increased there would inevitably be some small flocks of the Nene wandering out into the proposed wild range, and the numbers would be perpetually reinforced by the annual crop raised in the Park.

Nene are by nature extremely tame, and a part of the scheme would be to encourage visitors to the Park, whether tourists or parties from schools or other interested groups. An opportunity to see Hawaii's State Bird at close quarters in natural and attractive surroundings would be widely welcomed and meet with considerable response.

If necessary the whole project could almost certainly be financed on this basis.

The Park would have to be sited in or at the edge of an area in which the geese could confidently be expected to establish themselves but would have to be easily accessible to the visitors, who for many reasons are an integral part of the scheme. It is essential that the visitors should be able to enter the main enclosure and walk among the geese, though not the side-pens where the birds will breed.

Sufficient top soil is necessary to ensure the growth of some grass or other vegetation to supply the basic green-food requirements of the diet. Water supplies must be adequate for small pools for drinking and washing (though unlike other goose species, the Nene does not need to be swimming for successful copulation). If enough water is available the Koloa or Hawaiian Duck (Anas platyrhynchos wyvilliana) could also be propagated there, as Koloas and Nenes do not interfere with each other in any way.

A resident warden is likely to be essential.

Dr. W. H. Elder recommended a rather simpler version of this scheme in his paper, A Report on the Nene to the Board of Agriculture and Forestry, July 1958; and an account of a comparable technique is described in Leaflet No. 15 of the Branch of Wildlife Refuges of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service dated February 4, 1958, under the title "The Restoration of Breeding Canada Goose Populations on National Wildlife Refuges."

I submit that the rehabilitation of the State Bird in the Hawaiian Islands is an objective which would handsomely repay the time, trouble and comparatively small capital outlay required to establish a Nene Park.

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#### OBSERVATIONS ON THE "YELLOW-LEGS" ON MAUI

The following letter was received by E. H. Bryan, Jr., Bishop Museum, from Professor Haskell B. Curry, professor of mathematics at Pennsylvania State College, University Park, Pa., written from the Coco Palms Hotel, Lihue, Kauai, February 15, 1962, regarding the Lesser Yellowlegs, Totanus flavipes (Gmelin) Scolopacidae, 86B in Bryan's checklist.

"As I telephoned to Miss Titcomb, I found a bird which I identified as a Lesser Yellowlegs on Maui. The purpose of this letter is to give you a few particulars about this bird, which seemed to be news to her.

"The bird was in a bit of marsh near the junction of highways 36 and 38, in fact in the northeast quadrant formed by these two highways.... Other birds present in the same marsh were Stilt, Golden Plover, Black-crowned Night Heron (1), Ruddy Turnstone (about 10), Sanderling (about 20), Pectoral Sandpiper (1), Wandering Tattler (3 or more).

"As compared to the Wandering Tattler, of course, the outstanding mark was the white at the base of the tail. I also noted that it was approximately the same size, but was more slender, in particular the bill was much more slender. It was also paler. The W.T.(Wandering Tattler) is quite dark on the breast, but this bird was nearly white,

and was particularly pale about the head. The wings were darker than the foreparts, and had that speckled appearance which I associate with a Yellowlegs. The legs were bright yellow, with a tendency toward orange, rather than green - this was true for the W.T. too - I did not observe any difference in this respect. Also it teetered like the Spotted Sandpiper, Stilt and some other birds.

"I must say that when I first saw the bird it seemed unusually pale to me. The thin bill suggested a Wilson's Phalarope. But the few Wilson's Phalaropes which I have seen were much more plain gray above. Besides, the Wilson's Phalarope does not occur on your check list at all; and since it is even rare on the Pacific Coast of North America, it would indeed be an extraordinary bird to find here. There might be some stray from Siberia that I do not know anything about, but certainly there is no other kind on your check list that fits the description. I did not hear it call distinctly since there were so many other things yelling. This is in character with the Lesser Yellowlegs, which is comparatively silent.

"The bird was there when I first visited the area on February 12. After looking the matter up and finding that the bird seems to be a rarity, I went back to the marsh, which is quite close to Kahului, yesterday morning (Feb. 14) to make sure. I found the bird after some searching. The experience taught me a lot about the Wandering Tattler, which is a bird I had seen on the California coast, but am not familiar with.

"Incidentally, all the pictures of the Iiwi show a pronounced white spot on the wing; but the description says nothing of it. When I finally found a pair of Iiwi - they were feeding a juvenile - they showed no such spot. I did not get a real good look at them in flight, but if there had been such a spot I believe I would have noticed it. How do you explain this?\*

"If you wish to reply, you can reach me through Prof. Frings. My next address will be, care of Prof. H.G. Farder, University of Auckland, Auckland, N.Z.

"I have had 33 species in the islands so far, but only 5 native land birds - Apapane, Amakihi, Iiwi, Elepaio, and Hawaiian Thrush.

"On February 7 I saw a Noddy on the Hamakua coast. I would say from its appearance it was a Black Noddy (A. tenuirostris); but the conditions were such that it would be impossible to be sure. It was nesting in, or at least going to and from the cliffs. Would not that be the most likely species there?"

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\*There is no pronounced white spot on the wing of the Iiwi, but some silvery gray feathers give whitish reflections near the base of the secondaries.

E.H. Bryan, Jr.

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#### BIRD PARK

My visit to the Bird Park in the Volcano National Park, Hawaii, in June 1960 was one of my most rewarding bird watching ventures while living on the islands. I arrived about 6:30 AM and it was raining. Undecided as to whether to venture out in the weather, the song of the Apapane assured me the birds were out - so out of the car I got. I have never seen so many birds in such a small area.

The flowering Ohia trees were alive with Apapane and I saw my first Iiwi. There were fewer of the latter as compared to the Apapane. All the Lehua blossoms were redder that morning. I think there must have been hundreds of these birds. I saw a few Hawaiian Creeper and even two Ricebirds which seemed out of place in this high elevation and densely wooded area. There were many Amakihi, and even more White-eye. I saw one

Elepaio. There were many, many Leiothrix in the thick shrubbery. The Leiothrix seemed less shy and I got some close looks.

I took the path to the giant Koa tree and to my surprise saw a Pheasant in the clearing around this magnificent tree. He was as startled as I for I had not expected to see such a large bird.

I was the only one in the park that rainy morning. You can't imagine the air so full of song. My only problem - it was hard to use field glasses in the rain. But what a worthwhile morning it was! This will remain as one of my treasured memories of my two and a half years residence on these lovely islands.

Mildred Mench

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#### LETTER TO GRENVILLE HATCH REPORTING TWO ITEMS OF INTEREST TO HAWAII BIRDERS

The first was a delayed reporting of the sighting of two flocks of Sanderlings of approximately fifty (50) each. These were observed by me and several others from the S.S. Orsova about 11 am on the 31st of January 1959. We sailed from Honolulu at Midnight on the 30th, so that placed them about 250 miles at sea, heading on course with us for Vancouver B.C. They were flying close to the sea in dense flocks; flying strongly and as if Stroke Paddle up front were timing the rhythm of their wings. They had to buck a wind so we slowly left them behind with our superior 23 knots. I realize it takes two Birders to make an identification legal, but I plead that I had recently been on the Shore Bird count with you good people after Xmas and I had taken particular interest in the Sanderling as to identification. He does not migrate on the inside of Vancouver Island where we live. Note:- The temperature was 64 deg.F. and we were heading into two storms up ahead.

The second item is more recent and concerns the sighting of a pair of hawks from the 3,400 ft. Lookout on the edge of Waimea Canyon on Kauai at approximately 10 o'clock Monday morning the 22nd of January 1962. The first to catch my eye was ranging below me, just like Io. I had observed Io on the Big Island in the open range cattle country west of Kilauea. The bird I now saw only very occasionally soared and then only briefly. I was delighted when he wheeled and a few moments later was joined by his mate. Io was not supposed to be on Kauai?

Elated I hurried to the Bishop Museum to report my find.

"Came the Dawn":- When I went to the Aquarium to renew my acquaintance with Mr. Spencer Tinker, he introduced me to his "Best Ornithologist", Mr. John Bowles. The result:- "In all probability" I had seen an off beat Short-eared Owl that had taken to daylight hunting from scarcity of food and lack of competition. Also Marsh Hawks occasionally show up.

In retrospect and after much thumbing through bird books I am still puzzled by the very light, almost white appearance of the pair as seen from above. They were about 500 ft. below me and I was looking Easterly but I doubt that sheen had anything to do with it.

Later on I'm almost certain I saw an Iiwi; no white abdomen but did not see colour of bill. At 4,000 ft. there were a flock of Apapanes for certain.

In conclusion, thanks nui nui for the two copies of The Elepaio I have received so far. I feel highly honoured to have my name appear in Vol. 22 No. 9 of March. Like MacArthur, "I'LL BE BACK", and when I do I hope someone will help me to find Elepaio in the feathered flesh so that I can die happy.

To you good people of the Society, Aloha nui oe.

Douglas M. Goudie



## LETTER FROM ROBERT I. BALDWIN

Many times when travelers come to the island (of Hawaii) from Oahu, members of our society mention my wife Helen's name to them but they never yet have mentioned my name to them.

Many times they call when she is out and if they knew I was also a member we might be able to be of more service to them.

They are here usually for only hours and time is important.

I don't like to blow my horn, but for the benefit of our visitors will you please announce at your meetings that I would like to have them mention me as I have a car and in some instances, when Helen is out, might be able to help. I am not exactly as dead as the Dodo, you know.

Thank you,  
Robert I. Baldwin

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LETTER FROM GRENVILLE HATCH TO CHARLOTTA HOSKINS AND CLARISSA HALSTEAD

I know this is not very nice of me, but it does seem that all the letters I write are practically carbon copies of each other, so possibly you will not mind too much.

And what shall I write you? I cannot say that I am settled, for all my few little pieces are strike bound, and while I have to buy the main articles of furniture for my room, I do not like to do this until I get what I have, so that the colors will not clash with what I have. From all I read in the papers, you people are on the verge of starvation, and while I take that with considerable salt, I know that there are many things which are in short supply, so while you are really in trouble, I am only in vexation!

The Casa has lent me all the essentials, so I am comfortable, but it is very like a hotel room. Charlotte has lent me her typewriter, for which my friends, as well as myself, should be grateful.

Everyone has been most cordial, taking me hither and thither, giving me tickets to this and that, and taking me out for lunch and for dinner. This is an astonishingly busy and social place. I am going to be much busier with doing things than I ever have been, I foresee. We have already been on a wildflower trip (the wild flowers are perfectly gorgeous this year -- the hills are simply covered with many different varieties), on a trip to the hummingbird refuge, and another wild flower trip to see the desert flowers is planned for the middle of next week.

Everyday I manage to get in one walk along the sea, and watch the gulls. There are not too many shore birds right here -- it is rocky rather than sandy, for the most part, but there are Black Turnstones, occasional Curlews, Godwits, Tattlers, Surf birds, and several more that have me completely nonplussed. There are a number of persons in the Casa who are interested in birds, but so far I have failed to find anyone who knows any more than I do, which is a sad state of affairs. As soon as I can get squared away I will get in touch with the Audubon Society and get myself started.

The food is excellent. Too good, in fact, for I begin to worry already that I am taking on weight. Usually I have breakfast with Charlotte, who is just across the hall, and who has a kitchenette. It is pleasant to walk across in the usual mummuued state, but sometimes we go over to the dining room, which is pleasant also, for we sit and look right out at the ocean. It has been very cool, not to say downright chilly until yesterday, so having to put on clothes has not yet assumed the aspect of "a fate worse than death". As you know, I am always hot, so the longer it stays cold, the better I am

pleased. Today is a gorgeous morning, and I am told that it seldom gets really hot here. I will tell you better about that after a year.

With all best wishes and much love,

Grenville

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#### THE MISSING STILT

According to the Mike Ord Detective Bureau, inquiries have been made of all the travel agencies but have failed to turn up any trace of the whereabouts of the Stilt of Paiko Lagoon and Pearl Harbor. They are gone! Where? The guess is that they have taken off for a secret rendezvous during the nesting period. If so, congratulations to them. We hope no one finds them. But we miss them and hope they will return.

Margaret Titcomb

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#### GREETINGS TO OUR NEW MEMBERS:

Lt. Col. & Mrs. Fred A. Pierce, Jr., 1129 Uluopihi Loop, Kailua, Oahu  
 Junior members: Terri & Trudy Pierce, ditto  
 Thayne Pratt, 3889 Round Top Drive, Honolulu 14, Hawaii

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#### MAY ACTIVITIES:

- May 13 - Field trip to observe shore birds.  
 Meet at the Library of Hawaii at 8:00 a.m.
- May 15 - Board meeting at the Auditorium of the Honolulu Aquarium at 7:30 p.m.  
 Members are always welcome.
- May 21 - General meeting at the Auditorium of the Honolulu Aquarium at 7:30 p.m.  
 Filmshowing-Out of the North-sponsored by American Motors. Some excellent shots of waterfowl and their movement down the flyways. Also a short Audubon shorebird film.

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