

# THE ELEPAIO

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## PROFESSOR CURRY ON BIRDS IN HAWAII

By Hubert Frings

Professor and Mrs. Haskell Curry, from State College, Pennsylvania, visited Honolulu in February, 1962. Professor Curry had long been an avid birder in Pennsylvania, indeed in most parts of the mainland. He was, therefore, eager to see new birds here. While he later had the opportunity to visit Hawaii, Maui, and Kauai, and to see native birds, he was interested in the fact that a mainlander who could only see birds near the hotels in Waikiki could add some interesting species to his avian finds.

The following report presents his experiences as a birder with only a few hours in Waikiki and near the Airport. In all, he found eleven species, of which at least seven would certainly be new to the average mainland visitor. But the pleasure would not only come from finding new species. Their actions and voices are also a source of wonder and pleasure -- the brassy cautiousness of the Mynahs; the burbling of the little doves and the Ehako calls of the big doves from the palm-tops after a colorful sunrise; the nocturnal lawn-prowling of the Plovers; the shameless begging of doves and sparrows at some Waikiki outdoor restaurants; the gaudy arrogance of the Brazilian Cardinals in Kapiolani Park.

We who live in Hawaii may grudgingly take these imports for granted -- although I, for one, find them continually fascinating, and the voices of the little doves hauntingly beautiful -- but, for a visitor, they are a touch of the far-away.

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## NOTES ON BIRDS OF WAIKIKI AND VICINITY

By Haskell B. Curry

The Pennsylvania State University

The purpose of these notes is to describe some of the birds which may be seen within walking distance of the hotels at Waikiki. These are not native Hawaiian birds--practically all of them have been imported into the islands from various parts of the world. But since most of them do not occur in North America, they will be new to visitors from that area. I shall comment on these birds in the order in which they came to our attention during our first short visit to Honolulu on February 4-7, 1962.

The first of these birds one notices is the Indian Mynah (Acridotheres tristis). On our first morning in Hawaii we found these birds immediately outside of our hotel window. They are natives of India, where they are the most common of several related species.

The next bird to be seen--also from our hotel window--was the House Sparrow (Passer domesticus), about which little needs to be said. It has spread all over the

world, except that in the Philippines, and in Southeast Asia generally, the related Tree Sparrow (Passer montanus) takes its place.

Next were the doves. There are two species of doves: a larger one, called in Hawaii the Spotted Dove (Streptopelia chinensis), and a smaller, the Barred Dove (Geopelia striata). Both of these doves are oriental--I saw both of them later in the Orient where they are called by a variety of other names--this is one reason why I give the scientific names. The Spotted Dove has also been imported into Southern California, where I have seen it at Long Beach. Both species were abundant about the hotel, and were seen from our hotel window.

The next bird is the Golden Plover (Pluvialis dominica). In February this bird is extremely abundant all over the islands, as if the entire output of Alaska were concentrated in these small islands. Our first ones were in Kapiolani Park, but later we saw one in a grass plot immediately adjacent to our hotel.

The next bird to be seen was the Red Cardinal (Richmondia cardinalis) which is an abundant bird throughout most of eastern North America. This is common, but we saw it first near the University of Hawaii campus. The more spectacular Brazilian Crested Cardinal (Paroaria cucullata) we also saw for the first time on the campus of the University of Hawaii; but later I saw it in the immediate vicinity of the hotel and near the zoo. On a brief stop between planes on February 14 I wandered from the airport into a group of houses nearby and found one of these birds on a lawn. Apparently it is common in Honolulu, and a visitor should expect to find it if he does a little looking.

The next bird on my list was the Ricebird (Munia nitoria)--a small brown finch which I found to be known in various parts of the Orient as the Spice Finch. I found a flock of about 30 of them at the foot of Diamond Head, and saw various individuals in other places.

There are a large number of small greenish birds which one sees in the trees, even right around the hotel. They have very conspicuous white eye rings. These belong to a group called "White-eyes". In due time I found them extremely abundant all over the islands; and they have relatives over most of the Southwest Pacific and Southeast Asia. The Hawaiian one (Zosterops palpirobosus) is said to come from Japan; but I found it less common there than in the islands.

The one remaining bird which I saw in Honolulu proper is the House Finch (Carpodacus mexicanus). I did not see this at first, but it was in the immediate vicinity of the hotel. It is familiar to all who have done birding on the Pacific Coast of North America. The Hawaiian ones tend to be more yellowish than those on the mainland.

Finally there is the Shama Thrush (Kittacincla macroura) an Indian thrush which we found singing on Tantalus. This, by a slight stretch perhaps, can be considered within walking distance of Waikiki.

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#### OUR ENDANGERED WILDLIFE

An urgent article, "Our Endangered Wildlife," in the April-May, 1964, NATIONAL WILDLIFE uses as the leading illustration a black and white picture of the Nene as painted by Stanley Stearns for the 1964 Federal Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp.

This article states that extinction is a normal, natural part of life, but "man--Nature's most efficient and bloodthirsty killer--has a history of taking natural laws into his own hands, hastening the departure of some species, and deciding in his wisdom that others should--or might as well--be eliminated."

It lists the following reasons for killing some species:

- (1) They are a good source of food and hides.
- (2) They compete with him.
- (3) They are dangerous to him, his domestic animals, or his crops.
- (4) Their presence is annoying to him.
- (5) They are vulnerable, and man enjoys the sport.
- (6) They are accidentally eliminated by sprays and poison baits.

It goes on and says that man unintentionally endangered an entire species (1) by his destruction of the animals' homes: by cutting down forests, plowing up the prairies, draining swamps, and polluting streams and oceans, (2) by his best-intentioned tampering with nature: by introducing a predator to control one undesirable species or a foreign species which he thinks desirable and upsetting the ecological balance, and (3) by his presence, because some species can't adapt themselves when man moves into or changes their homes.

It further says that the creature is doomed if (1) its population is small and its production rate is low, (2) its habitat is limited and is desirable to man, (3) its ability to move and its adaptability are low, and (4) its death is desirable to man for any reason. But it asks, "Or is it? Isn't there some way that man can reverse this terrible effect, or help his neighbor creatures survive?" The answer is "YES " The solution is to recognize the danger in time, recognize the responsibility, and ACT.

In closing, the article includes the Nene among the most endangered species (with the Everglades kite, whooping crane, California condor, and ivory-billed woodpecker) and says, "Though saved as species, their numbers are so few that one good storm or one good spraying could wipe them out....Will we act in time to save them? The answer is in your hands."

Unoyo Kojima

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PETERSON URGES PESTICIDE CONTROLS  
Audubon Leader's Conservation Guide  
Volume 5, Number 9  
May 1, 1964

DR. ROGER TORY PETERSON has warned that not only the bald eagle but the widely-admired osprey and other fish-eating birds are seriously threatened because insecticide poisoning is destroying their ability to reproduce.

The noted ornithologist and conservationist told the investigating subcommittee headed by Senator Abraham Ribicoff that a colony of ospreys at the mouth of the Connecticut River has declined from 150 breeding pairs in 1954 to only 15 pairs in 1964. "Projecting this decline," he asserted, "we should see the last nest in Connecticut in 1970 or '71--in only five or six years!"

Analysis of osprey eggs that failed to hatch disclosed significant amounts of DDT, DDE and other derivatives of DDT. Thirty samples of fish taken from the nests all contained these poisons.

Dr. Peterson described how the long-lasting pesticides build up in food chains to blast the animal at the top of the pyramid.

"Traces of poisons ingested by little fish upriver--either in the runoff or through poisoned insects--make them easier prey for larger fish. Numbers of affected fingerlings compound their poisons in the predators, and it is the large fish that is wobbly, swimming near the surface, that is most likely to be caught by the osprey, which transfers the accumulated poisons to its own tissues. Natural selection becomes

unnatural selection."

"Nor are the ospreys the only birds that are disappearing in Connecticut. We no longer hear the bitterns booming and the colonies of night herons have disappeared. We have not seen a single kingfisher this year. It is a sad thing to see a beautiful river become devoid of life."

Other predators besides the fish-eaters are being caught in the fatal trap. Dr. Peterson pointed out that since 1950 the peregrine falcon, "the finest and fastest bird that flies," has disappeared from the whole of the northeastern states as a breeding bird. "We cannot say for certain that pesticides did it, but the peregrines went through the same suspicious pattern as the osprey. Many of them sat on eggs that did not hatch."

Dr. Peterson told Senator Ribicoff that aldrin, endrin, dieldrin and all compounds of the chlorinated hydrocarbon complex should be banned. "Permits to manufacture them should be withdrawn ... (because) it is impossible to keep these poisons from contaminating our entire environment so long as winds blow, waters flow and fishes swim."

He endorsed a recommendation made by Rachel Carson a year ago that Congress should create a Federal Control Board and vest it with enough powers to regulate the distribution and use of chemical pesticides. He also urged passage of the Dingell-Neuberger bill (H.H. 4487 or S. 1251) that would give the Fish and Wildlife Service added authority to investigate pesticides and require warnings on the labels if packaged pesticides are potentially dangerous to wildlife.

Dr. Peterson, who served many years as a staff member, director or officer of the National Audubon Society and whose FIELD GUIDES are the "bibles" of bird students in Europe as well as in North America, testified before the Ribicoff subcommittee in Washington April 22.

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Field Trip to Poamoho Trail, April 12, 1964.

Meeting at seven o'clock, our four cars were soon on the way to our favorite trail in the Koolau.

A deeply rutted and eroded section of the jeep road forced us to park two miles from the beginning of the trail. Wending our leisurely way, we were serenaded on every side by Leiostrix but, as usual, very few of these birds were seen. Some Ohia were in bloom and a few Apapane and one or two Iiwi were heard or seen. Amakihi were in evidence, as were Elepaio and Mejiro. Three Bush Warblers were heard.

By the time we reached the beginning of the trail the weather had turned showery, so we retraced our steps to the cars.

Next we went to Waipio peninsula, where we saw a few Cattle Egrets, Golden Plovers, Black-headed Mannikins, Strawberry Finches, Ricebirds and one or two each of Sanderlings, Tattlers, Turnstones and Stilts. We also saw one Pintail and two Shoveller ducks.

Al Labrecque



ALOHA to our new members:

Dorothy Greeley, P.O. Box 421, Honolulu, Hawaii, 96809  
 A. Louise Hinkley, 514 Analu Street, Honolulu, Hawaii, 96817  
 Mrs. Melville King, 5767 Haleola Street, Honolulu, Hawaii, 96821  
 C. R. Long, 1710 Makiki Street, Apt 1006, Honolulu, Hawaii, 96822

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WANTED: (1) An editor for THE ELEPAIO  
 Please call Mr. Mike Ord, telephone 587-328 for details.

(2) Materials for THE ELEPAIO  
 (a) Field notes  
 (b) Scientific papers  
 (c) Interesting conservation or wildlife experiences  
 (d) Interesting publications  
 Please mail articles to the editor, P.O. Box 5032, Honolulu, Hawaii, 96814

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#### JUNE ACTIVITIES:

June 8 - Board meeting at the Honolulu Aquarium Auditorium at 7:30 p.m.  
 Members are always welcome.

June 14 - Field trip - We will make another attempt to visit Rabbit Island to  
 study sea birds in the breeding colonies.  
 Trip will be limited to Society members  
 Meet at the Library of Hawaii at 8:00 a.m.  
 Leader: Mike Ord, telephone 587-328 for reservations

June 15 - General meeting at the Honolulu Aquarium Auditorium at 7:30 p.m.  
 Program for the night: Slide show of Hawaiian birds by the Audubon  
 members.

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