

# THE ELEPAIO

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*For the Better Protection  
of Wildlife in Hawaii*

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REPORT OF CARL W. BUCHHEISTER, PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY,  
ON A VISIT TO MIDWAY ISLAND, JANUARY 15 to JANUARY 21, 1964,  
TO ADMIRAL PETER CORRADI, CHIEF, BUREAU OF YARDS AND DOCKS, NAVY DEPT., WASHINGTON, D.C.

The undersigned received an invitation from Mr. Ross Leonard, Manager, Fish and Wildlife Management Branch, Bureau of Yards and Docks, United States Navy, Washington, D.C., to view at first hand the aircraft-bird-strike problem caused by large numbers of albatrosses on Sand Island at Midway and to observe the operation of the current reduction of albatrosses, both Laysan and Black-footed, from prescribed areas adjacent to the aircraft runways.

Members of the visiting part also included Dr. Ira N. Gabrielson, President, Wildlife Management Institute; Mr. Ross Leonard, and Commander Charles F. Zirzow, USN. Captain H. N. Wallin, CEC, USN, was also with the party for two days.

En route to Midway from Honolulu, the Navy plane flew low over Laysan Island, Lisianski Island, and Pearl and Hermes Reef in order to provide an opportunity to observe and estimate the numbers of the Laysan and Black-footed Albatrosses nesting thereon. Particularly appreciated was the opportunity to confer with the Flight Commander with regard to his experiences with bird strikes and learn how such strikes could damage aircraft and lead to fatal accidents.

Arriving at Midway Naval Air Station, we were met and welcomed by Captain George Washington Davis, IV, his executive, and other officers. During the entire stay at Midway, we were accorded all courtesies and every opportunity desired to observe and learn at first hand the nature of the problem, and were also taken to visit Eastern and Kure Islands. The undersigned was most grateful for all that was done by the personnel involved to help him become well-acquainted with every phase of the problem.

On behalf of the National Audubon Society, one of the largest and oldest conservation organizations in the United States, one which has consistently manifested its concern for the welfare of the populations of both species of albatrosses, I submit the following observations and recommendations:

## 1. Need for Control

The Society recognizes the hazard to human life and to aircraft resulting from the presence of so large a number of both species of albatrosses on Sand Island during the long breeding season of these two species. While the Society has concern for human life and the aircraft equipment involved, it also has a concern for the welfare of the two species of birds. We wish to point out that while the Laysan Albatross nests only on islands owned by the United States, the bird belongs to the whole world since it roams over the vast expanses of the Pacific Ocean north of the equator. It would, therefore, be unthinkable for the Navy, acting for the United States, not to make every effort to ensure the continued existence of these birds.

From personal observation and other sources, the Society is aware that the Navy, while its first obligation is to reduce the hazard to human life and aircraft, also holds a genuine concern for the welfare of the birds involved.

## 2. The Current Reduction Program

Having been given ample opportunity to observe the implementation of the 1964 control program, it is felt that the methods and activities involved are humane. While it has been said that the number of birds (perhaps up to 20,000) to be eliminated is only a small percentage of the total populations of both species, the Society feels that even this number can effect a dangerous reduction of the total population.

## 3. Continuing Research

While there has been research done by a number of scientists, all of this research has not been directed towards the reduction or elimination of the bird-strike hazard problem. Mr. Chandler Robbins' research we recognize as having been pursued for that purpose but feel that much more needs to be done. We strongly recommend that a co-ordinated program of research be continued for a minimum of four or five years.

## 4. Staff Ornithologist

It is of paramount importance that the Navy make provision for a resident ornithologist at Midway who can coordinate and extend studies and provide professional advice to the commanding officer and his staff. This is particularly important in view of the frequent change of personnel at this installation. All new commanding officers should be fully briefed by such a resident ornithologist, and the personnel stationed on Eastern Island and Kure Island need similar briefing.

## 5. Eastern Island

On Eastern Island I learned from the Naval personnel that an average of 100 albatrosses of both species are killed each week during the time the birds are there. This is a very high death rate and we strongly recommend that studies be made to determine how the birds can be deterred from striking the guy wires and other radio communications structures. A preliminary suggestion is that the guy wires between the 5-foot and 50-foot level be flagged somehow (see, also, No. 6, below).

## 6. Regional Conservation

Because continuing expansion of activities and personnel at Sand Island will continue to crowd the albatross from this island, it is important that the Navy accept the responsibility of compensating for these losses by improving albatross habitat elsewhere.

A change in the design of communications towers on Eastern Island is necessary to eliminate the destructive potential of the maze of guy wires that now kill 100 birds per week there. When this hazard has been substantially reduced, the old airstrip should be broken up further. On Kure, also, which the Navy promised to develop for these birds in 1959, but where rather little has been done to date, there are excellent opportunities. The first step is to minimize the interference of man's activities by carefully regulating the activities of the U.S. Coast Guard Station on Kure. Following additional field studies, there should probably be an extension of the earlier brush-clearing program, not with any aim of devegetating this island, but to make more of it accessible to albatrosses, all in keeping with the needs of other resident species.

Finally, as the dominant federal service in this isolated region, the Navy must help in ensuring the inviolate character of the islands in the Hawaiian National Wildlife Refuge system--Laysan, Lisianski, French Frigate Shoals, and Pearl and Hermes Reef--since these are the essential anchors of any long-range conservation program on behalf

of the sea birds that use them. The National Audubon Society will request a rededication of this refuge system to call public attention to its importance, and we respectfully invite the U.S. Navy's whole-hearted support. A first step in this direction should be that of marking the refuge on USC&GS charts as a "Prohibited Area," just as Midway and other military installations are at present.

Carl W. Buchheister

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Field Trip to Kahuku, February 9, 1964.

After meeting at the library, a group of seven observers began the February field trip by going up the Pali, stopping at the small ponds along the "Old Pali Road." At the first pond we were fortunate in finding a pair of Gallinules with four young, probably no older than a week, feeding at the water's edge just a short distance from the road. Another Gallinule was seen at the far end of this same pond in addition to about a dozen Coots. The other pond produced only additional Coots so we continued our journey to Kahuku.

Arriving there at about 10:30 a.m., the old pond that used to be an exceptional birding area was rather dry except for the far side. In this marshy portion, there were at least 25 Shoveler ducks, 4 Golden Plover, 4 Stilts and a few Turnstones and Sanderlings. By their reaction when we stopped, it appeared as though people might have been shooting at them from parked cars because they were off before most of us had a chance to get our binoculars out. Visiting the marshy area alongside the old runway at Kahuku, we found several Black-crowned Night Herons, more Shovelers and about half a dozen Pintails. There were two Stilts in this same area in company with ten Ruddy Turnstones.

Returning to Honolulu, we came via Waipio (West Loch) and saw the usual large flocks of Black-headed Mannikins which are resident in that location. Several Strawberry Finches were seen as we walked through the sugar cane fields. The only ducks that were seen here were approximately 30 Shovelers and 8 Green-winged Teals, one drake possibly being a European Green-winged Teal in that it lacked the vertical white mark on the side, and appeared otherwise to be in full plumage. Being in constant company with other Green-winged Teals it was quite easy to make a comparison. Due to it being low tide, very few shore birds were observed. Throughout the entire day it was extremely windy.

W. Michael Ord

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REPORT FROM NIIHAU

The following extract was taken from a letter from Mr. Aylmer F. Robinson on Kauai to Mr. Alfred L. Castle:

"Hawaiian Stilt and Coot were in great numbers as our ponds were drying up. Two ponds had between 300 and 400 Stilt on each of them, and of course there were numbers of smaller ponds which had Stilt on them in addition to other smaller birds. The Bristle-thighed Curlew is also common and has never been scarce on Niihau. Golden Plover, Turnstone and Sanderling are also common as are native and migratory duck, Black-crowned Night Heron and others."

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TRIP TO AFRICA

Stan Picher of Marin Audubon Society has organized a birding trip to Africa for the coming summer. The trip was planned and will be led by John G. Williams, the outstanding ornithologist of the region. Forty days will be spent in Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika. Visits will be made to eight game parks and a wide variety of bird habitats so that around 600 species of birds should be seen; and a great deal of game such as lion, rhino, elephant, hippo, buffalo, etc. For a brochure and further information, write Stan Picher, P.O. Box 917, Belvedere, California.

## MINUTES OF THE GENERAL MEETING, January 20, 1964

The meeting was called to order by the President, W. M. Ord.

Mr. Ord gave a report on the 1963 Christmas Count.

Mr. Bill Carney reported on the January Field Trip on the Poamoho Trail where members saw Apapane, Amakihi, Elepaio, Leiostrix, Iiwi and White-eye. Due to rain we were shooed down the mountain and saw what possibly may have been a snipe in the pineapple fields at the bottom of the trail. We then proceeded to Waipio Peninsula where we saw Mannikins and a few shore birds.

Mr. Ord gave a report on his trip to Midway Island on January 15 through 17 with Mr. Carl W. Buchheister, President of the National Audubon Society, and Mr. Ira N. Gabrielson, President of the Wildlife Management Institute. He outlined the Albatross elimination program plans and pointed out that only 20,000 birds were to be eliminated. Total Albatross population on Sand Island is approximately 80,000 and around 100,000 on neighboring Eastern Island.

Mr. Holt, Chairman of the Nominating Committee, submitted the following names of proposed officers and trustees for the year 1964:

|                                 |                          |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Trustee and President:          | Mr. W. Michael Ord       |
| Trustee and 1st Vice President: | Mr. Maurice V. King, Jr. |
| Trustee and 2nd Vice President: | Miss Margaret Titcomb    |
| Secretary:                      | Mrs. Meredith A. Ord     |
| Treasurer:                      | Miss Hannah T. Richards  |
| Trustees:                       | Dr. Hubert Frings        |
|                                 | Mr. Ronald L. Walker     |

Mr. Holt put a motion to the floor to vote in the slate of officers as proposed. Motion was seconded and carried.

Mrs. Blanche A. Pedley gave the Treasurer's report for 1963.

Mr. Ord gave a status report on the rewriting of the society's book, "Hawaiian Birds."

Dr. Dexter Hinkley, with the Bishop Museum gave a talk on the "Wildlife of Fiji" supplemented by color slides.

Mr. Ord adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,  
Meredith A. Ord  
Secretary

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## SPECIAL MEETING, January 23, 1964

A special meeting was held at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. W. Michael Ord on January 23rd 1964 at 8:30 p.m. Members present were: Misses Titcomb and Johnson, Mrs. Pedley, Mr. Walker, Dr. and Mrs. Frings, Carl Frings and guest Mr. Carl W. Buchheister, President of the National Audubon Society.

Mr. Buchheister gave us a full report on the present method being used to try and reduce the number of airplane strikes of Albatross on Midway Island. He suggested that the Hawaii Audubon Society and other interested organizations give the Navy their full support on the Albatross problem. He pointed out the fact that the change of Commanders on the island can change the whole scope of the problem with the Albatross.



Mr. Buchheister reminded us that the Audubon Society's chief work is to create public interest and educate the public. As individuals we should write to our President, Senators and Congressmen stating our beliefs and desires.

It was pointed out that Man has messed up the wildlife situation real good. Also that Conservation is a culture. More appreciation of the natural world is needed. The practical need led to Conservation.

In closing Mr. Buchheister said the Albatross does not belong to the United States but is a bird of the sea and belongs to many Nations.

Respectfully submitted,  
Meredith A. Ord  
Secretary

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ALOHA to our new members:

From Regular to Life: Miss Thelma Hensley, Kealia, Kauai  
Mrs. George C. Munro, 3029 Hibiscus Drive, Honolulu, Hawaii  
Junior: David Gillett, 2640 Dole St, Unit A-12, Honolulu, Hawaii

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MARCH ACTIVITIES:

- March 8 - Field trip to Ulupau Head, KMCAS to see Red-footed Booby colony and other sea birds on Moku Manu with the aid of a scope. Meet at the Library of Hawaii at 8:00 a.m. Leader: Mike Ord, 587-328.
- March 9 - Board meeting at the Auditorium of the Honolulu Aquarium at 7:30 p.m. Members are always welcome.
- March 16 - General meeting at the Auditorium of the Honolulu Aquarium at 7:30 p.m. Program for the night: Dr. A. Berger will give a talk on the Life History of the Kirklands Warbler--to be supplemented with 35mm slides. Dr. Berger has written several books on ornithology and is known internationally.

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HAWAII AUDUBON SOCIETY EXECUTIVE BOARD:

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| President:       | W. Michael Ord                                |
| Vice Presidents: | Maurice V. King, Jr.<br>Miss Margaret Titcomb |
| Secretary:       | Mrs. Meredith A. Ord                          |
| Treasurer:       | Miss Hannah Richards                          |
| Board Members:   | Dr. Hubert Frings<br>Ronald L. Walker         |

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DUES: Regular - \$3.00 per annum  
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DUES FOR 1964 ARE NOW PAYABLE