

# THE ELEPAIO

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*For the Better Protection  
of Wildlife in Hawaii*

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## CONSERVATION CONFERENCE: "LET'S KEEP HAWAII" By Margaret Titcomb

The Third Annual State Conservation Conference was held on May 2nd, at the Reef Hotel, Mr. Robert L. Brown, Chairman. Due to the kindness of nature, the day, the sun, the breeze, the view of the blue sea were all a pleasant backdrop. Due to old and new acquaintances, everyone seemed delighted to meet friends. Due to the excellent planning of the Chairman and his committee, all parts of the machinery ran smoothly. And lastly, due to the keen interest of all participants, there seemed to be great eagerness to tackle questions efficiently.

For the first time, we invited youngsters to participate. This forward-looking idea came from the Chairman. About one hundred came, seemed to take interest, spoke up very well, and one of them brought down the house at luncheon by asking, with the jaded air of one who has been to too many meetings, whether the result of this meeting would be a pile of papers lying on someone's desk!

A detailed report of the proceedings was promised by the Chairman. Herein is a mere bird's eye view by one participant.

Governor Burns opened the conference, and briefly gave us this thought: be rational. An expanded meaning of that word some of us took to be: don't try for more than is possible or sensible.

Mr. Taylor Pryor of Sea Life Park, gave the opening address. He told of The Oceanics Foundation, companion-piece of his Sea Life Park, an institute for study of the sea. It should develop fast and be as great a success as his Sea Life Park. Study is necessary for many reasons, partly to prepare the living exhibits successfully. But as for protection of nature, his urgent message was to undertake conservation of shores and the sea itself. We have been thinking of land only; land and water should have equal attention, related as they are. Hawaii should be a sanctuary. At present there is indiscriminate plunder of beaches, reefs and shore waters. The heedless participants are doubtless innocent of harmful intent. Mr. Pryor had no laws to propose, but some of us envisioned licensing skin-divers as well as hunters. There should be a curb on present destruction, because of loss, as well as disruption of habitat and therefore further destruction. We are losing marine fauna and flora fast. Long range concepts should be made.

Dr. James Shoemaker, luncheon speaker, gave a talk that was a companion-piece. Hawaii is in an ideal position, in the Pacific, to be headquarters for the tremendous expansion of oceanographic studies that have been begun. The whole Pacific will be the sphere of interest on account of the importance of the sea in future supplies of food, chemicals, and - some day - water itself. When salt is removed, sea water will transform areas from arid to fertile. Dr. Shoemaker said that, "Officials concerned with the program have estimated that during the next ten years as much as \$10 billion will be allocated by the Federal government to oceanic research." This immense sum

will back a series of projects which will affect our lives directly, in many ways, but have far-reaching effects for the rest of America and the whole world. It behooves us to put our house in order as soon as we can, look to our personal marine treasure, and guard it better.

Dr. Shoemaker also dwelt on the difficulties of planning. Even the great companies that spend much time and money on making thoughtful plans, are sure to find that they overlap or collide with other thoughtful plans. More cooperation, knowledge of what the other fellow is doing, is evidently needed to avoid this waste and delay.

The workshops on Land, Water, Plants, and Animals had one fault; no one could divide himself into four equal parts! To be sure of getting definite results, the Chairman prepared ahead of time a "Charge" for each workshop. A sample is that for Land: "Your responsibility is to explore the land resources of Hawaii and relate these to the other major resources - water, plants and animals. You should consider the amount and kinds of land resources available and the capability of each kind for a specific use as well as multiple uses that can be made of different kinds of land. How can we use our limited land area and keep it productive for the greatest number of people?" Six items were suggested as definite points of discussion. All four workshops had similar outlines. The "Proceedings" will doubtless give an idea of how much could be covered; the summaries by the chairmen of the workshops gave us a preview of results. Dr. Roland Force was successful, at the conference, in the almost impossible task of summarizing the conference.

One of the most discussed items that spread over more than one workshop was the possible expansion of hunting territory for the axis deer. Some of us wished that an ecologist who was in Hawaii not long ago were still here. He gave the definite statement that no grazing animal should be introduced to an island; the harm it does is far beyond any value it can give. Cattlemen dread its effects on cattle in the way of spreading disease, such as tuberculosis; botanists regret the loss of plant life, the change in forest cover; ornithologists regret the changes in bird habitat. Hunters are the only ones who are happy to see more targets. Underlying the arguments were the old, old instincts for and against hunting; some abhor the needless taking of life; some feel that man is the only one to consider, and the recreation value of hunting, and its accompanying value of being out in the open is topmost. The majority opinion will have to be the deciding factor. Who is open to argument?

A great many items were discussed. It seems no exaggeration to say that the Third Conference has been the best, partly because of good work in preparation, partly because all of us know that time is shorter and shorter for protecting land, water, plants, animals so that our descendants may have a true idea of what Hawaii was like before man forgot how important nature is to him.

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A SPECIAL BULLETIN TO AUDUBON LEADERS FROM NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY, NEW YORK:

"GOOD NEWS! HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE CLEARS WILDERNESS BILL, June 2, 1964.

"The House Public Lands Subcommittee voted today to report a wilderness bill to the full committee on Interior and Insular Affairs. The draft approved was basically the Saylor bill, H.R. 9070, although there were several minor changes and one bad amendment was adopted. Language from the Dingell bill, H.R. 9162, was substituted in some sections.

"The bad amendment would keep the wilderness areas in the National Forests open to prospecting and mining as they are now, under the General Mining Law, for 25 years. This amendment was not unexpected. Conservationists will undertake to get it removed or modified on the floor of the House or, after House passage, in Conference Committee.

"H.R. 9070 as amended and approved by the Subcommittee may be considered by the full Committee as early as June 10....See page 104 of the March-April 1964 issue of AUDUBON MAGAZINE for a list of [the committee members]."

Charles H. Callison

FIELD NOTES by W. M. Ord

## MONGOOSE ATTACKS YOUNG RED-FOOTED BOOBY AT NEST

On Sunday, May 24th, Paul Breese, Andy Berger and the writer took Ian MacPhail of the World Wildlife Fund out to Ulupau Head to observe the Red-footed Booby colony. Whilst inspecting several nests which had been built extremely close to the ground, an unusual alarm call was heard coming from the far side of the colony.

A closer look produced one of the most astounding sights that a field observer could ever witness - a predator actually killing its prey. In this instance it was a mongoose attacking a young Red-footed Booby in the nest. The booby must have been about three weeks old judging by its size and was putting up a vigorous fight against its attacker. Unfortunately the mongoose had a good grip on the nape of the booby's neck and wasn't about to let go. After watching for several minutes we decided to interfere. The young booby had bled considerably though otherwise seemed in fairly good condition. The consensus was to leave the bird and let nature take its course.

Returning to the point where we had first observed the attack we soon saw that the mongoose had returned and was again continuing its dastardly deed. The amazing thing about the entire incident was that it took the mongoose at least ten to fifteen minutes to kill the bird after which it began to feed on the breast of its victim. During the fight the young booby disgorged a fish of about 9 inches in length which the mongoose ate.

An examination of scats in the area showed that for the most part the mongoose feeds primarily on roaches etc., and there were little signs of booby predation. However, to ensure that such predation does not become prevalent in the area, Paul Breese has carried out a poisoning program with the consent of the Marines in the hopes of eliminating this potential hazard. The report to date indicates that this program is meeting with the desired results.

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## HAWAIIAN STILTS BREEDING AT THE MARINE BASE, KANEOHE

On Sunday, May 3rd, Paul Breese, Andy Berger and the writer visited the Marine Base to determine the breeding status of the Hawaiian Stilt in their last stronghold on this island. On approaching the ponds there were definite signs of Stilts being paired off and within their own territory. After a short search one nest was found which had three eggs in it. Little or no nesting material was used - the nest was on dry mud above the water mark with a few twigs as a lining. The fourth egg was laid on the following day which completed the full clutch.

On May 27th, three eggs had hatched during the morning, and the young plus one unhatched egg remained in the nest. The young were moving about but did not wander far from the nest. On the 28th, the fourth egg hatched, and shortly after, all young birds left the nest. From these dates it would appear that incubation began after the third egg was laid and not after the clutch was complete, the incubation period lasting twenty-four days.

On Sunday, May 24th, another Stilt's nest was found which contained four eggs in a similar nesting site with no more nesting material used. These eggs all successfully hatched between June 1st and 3rd. On the evening of the 3rd several young Stilts were observed in the vicinity of this nest.

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## FAIRY TERNS RETURN TO KOKO HEAD, JUNE 7, 1964

On Sunday morning, June 7th, Warren King of the Smithsonian Institution and I visited the area where in previous years, 1961-63, the Fairy Terns had nested. Climbing down into the wooded crater we saw no signs of the Terns and began to think that we were either too early or that this year they would not return.



After seeing many Barred Doves, White-eyes and House Finches in the Keawe trees we were surprised to see a small greenish yellow bird which had a much brighter plumage than the White-eye. A closer look showed that it was a Green Singing Finch (*Serinus mozambicus* - West Africa) in immaculate plumage. Obviously an escapee from somebody's aviary, the bird seemed to be thriving well.

Whilst watching the Green Singing Finch, three Fairy Terns flew overhead, one peeled off from the trio and disappeared into the Keawe trees on the far side of the crater. A thorough search of the area and the nearby cliffs over the ocean produced six Fairy Terns in all. All sightings were of the birds in the air in what appeared to be courtship display flights. At times these displays brought the birds within a few feet of us standing on the cliffs.

One Red-tailed Tropicbird was observed as it flew by over the ocean.

Returning via Kuapa Pond, we were surprised to see a flock of 32 Cattle Egret feeding on the mudflats. Several Stilt were observed feeding, but no nesting activity was seen. One Ruddy Turnstone, possibly a straggler migrant which will spend the entire summer here, flew over the pond, while we watched the Egret.

To the best of our knowledge this is the first sighting of the Cattle Egret at Kuapa Pond. Several adults were in full breeding plumage, and a number of immature were extremely young in that they still had black bills.

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#### FIELD NOTES by Grenville Hatch

After an absence from the Islands for two years, I looked forward eagerly to a field trip -- to see our native birds, and the beauties of the mountains once more. Unfortunately I was on Hawaii the day of the regular Audubon field trip, but on May 3rd Unoyo Kojima and I set out for Aiea trail.

What a delight to be on that beautiful, familiar trail, with a congenial companion! The day was somewhat overcast, the trail muddy from the rain of the previous night, but the going was cool and pleasant.

It was a surprise to find that the extension of the picnic area had eliminated the steep part of the walk; however, a Shama calling in the Norfolk Island pines lured us into the usual path. Amakihi were heard almost at once, and continued to be the most numerous of the native species. There was very little bloom, so we did not see Apapane until we reached the upper portion of the trail.

Elepaio came close, busily hunting insects, calling, and generally making themselves heard and seen. We speculated upon the reason why both Amakihi and Elepaio are usually found in numbers in the grove, where, several years ago, the exuding sap from a broken Koa branch attracted many. In this same grove we were delighted to observe two of our rarest (on Oahu) native birds -- Creepers.

On the return to town, we paused at a point overlooking the Sumida farm, and were rewarded by the sight of eight Cattle Egret.

I digress from Aiea to say that at Kalalau lookout on Kauai, I saw one of the most brilliant Iiwi it has ever been my fortune to look upon -- one of those unforgettable sights that come all too seldom.

Our count for Aiea trail was as follows:

Brazilian Cardinal	4	Shama	2
N. A. Cardinal	7	White-eye	9
Spotted Dove	2		
House Finch	4	Amakihi	16
Leiostrix	9	Apapane	3
Mynah	1	Creeper	2
Ricebird	9	Elepaio	9

Field Trip to Chinaman's Hat, May 10, 1964.

Mr. Ord shook his head. "No, there would be no thousand sooty terns today; not even a hundred, not even one."

It was shortly after 8:00 on the morning of May 10. Even along Punchbowl Street the wind blew stiffly; we could well imagine what it was like at Rabbit Island. No, there could be no boat trip today.

But there were other islands closer to shore: Chinaman's Hat (Mokulii) for instance. Soon we were whizzing over the Pali with that in mind. The water was cold, but after a few hundred yards of wading, the four of us stood upon a small islet beach, carefully removing our camera equipment from only somewhat effective protective bags.

Finding all to be in relatively dry condition, we began to explore the island. An excursion to the "Hat's" summit turned up several interesting plants, a beautiful view, and a rainstorm which sent us quickly down the leeward side.

But the birds, where were the birds? Despite the varied vegetation, we observed no passerines, and thus far the sea birds had completely eluded us.

We, therefore, made our way to the rim of the island and initiated a diligent search for the Wedge-tailed Shearwaters. Soon we ran across several burrows, and in a few minutes our seeking eyes landed upon a pair of large tube-nosed sea birds. With the ice thus broken we discovered scores of the charcoal-grey birds nesting about the entire lower slope of the island. Some were in burrows, while others were in simply-fashioned tunnels beneath the thick plant growth, and the birds exhibited the tameness typical of nesting sea birds.

Another tube-nose, the Bulwer's Petrel, was absent. The many rock crevices which would seem to offer such suitable nesting sites for this species were filled instead with defiant-looking rock crabs. A Frigatebird floated buoyantly by, as we searched through the crevices.

Shortly before leaving the island a fast-winged Wandering Tattler announced his arrival in shrill, eerie notes. It was also at this time that three long-tailed snowflakes drifted into sight. They were White-tailed Tropicbirds--wheeling, veering, cutting distinct patterns upon the half-blue, half-white sky--and what kind of patterns upon our minds?

The water was still cold, but now the tide was in. We waded, we swam; and we did something that was neither wading nor swimming. And now we glanced back at Chinaman's Hat with its still circling trio of Tropicbirds, then jumped into the car and headed for home.

Two more interesting observations were made during the day. First, we observed a Short-eared Owl and a Golden Plover (plus numerous common passerines) flying over the mainland area near the Chinaman's Hat. Second, on our return trip over the Pali, we saw several Coots and a few Gallinules on the reservoirs along the Nuuanu Pali Road.

Bill Carney

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#### READERS' NOTES:

AMERICAN FORESTS, April, 1964, page 40:

"The remaining California Condors are being threatened by a proposed public use road to touch upon the border of their sanctuary in the Los Padres National Forest; the Forest Service is being criticized for allowing the road to go through."

Some livestock owners in the West are asking to kill the Golden Eagles from airplanes.

Since the Antarctic Whale kills are exceeding the mammal's ability to reproduce itself, unless the kills are regulated, the Antarctic Whale may become extinct.

Page 42: Trumpeter Swan makes comeback. Last year's 300 young raised the number in existence to 800. (Another several hundred may exist in Alaska.)

AUDUBON MAGAZINE, May-June, 1964, page 150:

The WORLD WILDLIFE NEWS from London reports that Canadian biologists "have reduced

the number of corn-borer moths in a cornfield by half, by broadcasting sounds beyond the range of human hearing (500,000 cycles per second)...a dozen species of insects, once pests, were reduced to either minor or negligible problems by using biological controls."

HONOLULU STAR-BULLETIN, April 29, 1964, page 16: Cattle Egrets under Scrutiny

The article said that the State Department of Agriculture has announced that as part of a solution to control Hawaii's cattle insect pests, a team of specialists is studying the possibility of transferring some of the cattle egret from Oahu to the other islands.

Although they were imported from Florida in 1959 and released on Oahu, Kauai, Hawaii, and Molokai, the only known rookeries are in West Loch, Pearl Harbor, and more than 700 of them inhabit this area. Cattle egrets feed on flies, lice, ticks, and other pests, normally associated with cattle, horses, and buffaloes.

HONOLULU STAR-BULLETIN, May 22, 1964, page 1-B: 'Alright Critters, Drop Them Carp'

The aukuu, black-crowned night heron, and the mongoose are the fish-nappers at the East-West Center's carp pond.

The staff members claim that the heron and mongoose have taken as many as 25 of the expensive carp, and that "they are going to shoot to kill."

Is shooting the best means of handling this problem? How many herons must be killed before the carp are permanently safe from predators? There must be other means of protecting the carp--Why not cover the pond during the night? Why not have less expensive fish to grace the peaceful ponds to prevent temptation from not only wild birds but also fellow men? Please write to us, if you have any solutions to this problem.

HONOLULU STAR-Bulletin, May 30, 1964, Who's News with Cobey Black, Lowdown on Stilts

Dr. Andrew J. Berger, leading ornithologist and a visiting professor at the University of Hawaii, was the subject for the day. The columnist was treated to a very rare opportunity to witness the hatching of the Hawaiian stilt (*Himantopus himantopus knudseni*) at Kaneohe Bay. The bird was named after Valdemar Knudsen of Kauai who sent the first specimen to the Smithsonian Institution in the 1880's.

When questioned as to how he happened to be the first man to determine the incubation period of a Hawaiian stilt egg, Dr. Berger explained, "...I came across a nest 24 days ago, with only three eggs in it. The next day there were the normal clutch of four eggs. Since the eggs are laid one day apart, we knew when the first was laid. By my reckoning, it should hatch today."

"...We'd arrived at a barren marshland and there in the middle of nowhere, camouflaged by brush, were four little speckled gray eggs. And, mirabile visu, one of them was cracked! Through a tiny hole an even tinier egg tooth was poking its way... Andy scooped up the punctured egg and held it to my ear. I could hear a peep of protest, and recalling the admonitions of my scouting days, asked if the parents would come back to the violated nest. 'Absolutely,' assured Andy.

"Sure enough, the mother stilt was nearby. With drooping wings and crippled gait, she was trying to distract us."

At the interview he said that the emphasis is changing from taxonomy or classification of birds to their behavior. This phase of study started after the war and is a virgin field. He also stated that birds are not intelligent, but they do some remarkable things by instinct, i.e., golden plover flies 2,000 miles over open seas each winter from Alaska to Hawaii. He mentioned that there are 8,000 species in the U.S., 500 in California, and only 125 in Hawaii. Of the 125 species only two dozens are native birds. Of the two native birds he discussed with the columnist he said the Hawaiian stilt has a close affinity to its North American cousin and has probably been here only a couple of thousand years, but the nene's ancestors must have been here millions of years ago, because there's nothing even remotely similar to it on the Mainland. He emphasized the fact that nene project is one of the most successful restoration stories in ornithology. He continued, "In 1949 there were only 13 left

in captivity and 30 in the wild. In the last three years, over 200 have been released, 150 of them raised locally and 50 flown from England where they'd been bred from a male and two females sent from here to the British Wildlife Trust."

Unoyo Kojima

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ALOHA to our new member: Jerry Corn, 3450 Keahi Place, Honolulu, Hawaii, 96822

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- WANTED: (1) An editor for THE ELEPAIO  
Please call Miss Margaret Titcomb, telephone 855-951, 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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#### JULY ACTIVITIES:

- JULY 12 - Field trip to Poamoho Trail.  
Meet at the Library of Hawaii at 8:00 a.m.  
Leader: Maurice V. King, Jr., telephone: 983-248.
- JULY 13 - Board meeting at the Honolulu Aquarium Auditorium at 7:30 p.m.  
Members are always welcome.
- JULY 20 - General meeting at the Honolulu Aquarium Auditorium at 7:30 p.m.  
"Youth Program" is the topic for the night. Members' ideas and participation are requested.

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#### HAWAII AUDUBON SOCIETY EXECUTIVE BOARD:

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