

THE ELEPAIO

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For the Better Protection of Wildlife in Hawaii

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An Ocean Cruise
By George C. Munro
No. 11 contd.

What mysterious stories, many of them never to be told, surround these visits to Midway; the "General Siegal", "Wandering Minstrel", "Norma" and the "Charles G. Wilson"; all connected by a chain of circumstances and all more or less surrounded by mystery. The imagination might carry us great lengths stimulated by the connection of incidents or information that comes to light at various times. The spirit of adventure and urge to see what others have not seen may be to some extent responsible for these visits to out of the way places.

The transformation of Sand Island of Midway from a desolate desert isle to a pleasant little countryside, and from a birdless island to one carrying an extraordinarily large bird population is largely due to the Commercial Pacific Cable Company and Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Morrison. Captain George H. Piltz for many years Master of the cable tender S. S. Dickenson informed me that the Cable Company started operations there in 1907 and till 1940 allowed no dog, cat, rat or even mouse to make a landing on the island. Therefore the birds were unmolested. The young seabirds from other islands soon repopulated it. Mr. Morrison was in charge there for 15 years and Mrs. Morrison was there with him for 9 years. The Morrisons brought several lots of tame canaries and bred them. They released eleven; these at first made their nests in the grass but later took to building them in the trees. It was their habit to come to the house demanding food but Captain Piltz was of the opinion that they fed to some extent on the seeds of the ironwood trees. Mr. Morrison was very proud of them and objected to any being taken from the island. They were free there but would not likely survive in a like way elsewhere. Mrs Morrison has informed me that these canaries were the usual yellow birds when released; some of them had a few dark feathers mostly about the head. According to recent informants these birds breeding in this semi-wild state have changed color. Walter Donaghho in notes kindly given me dated July 15, 1941 says "...most of them have paled considerably in color being nearly pure white". This is an interesting fact showing the evolutionary changes in a comparatively short time from changed conditions.

The Morrisons wished to introduce the Laysan Telespiza generally known as the Laysan finch or Laysan canary, and the Laysan rail to Midway. Captain Piltz at that time made trips to Laysan Island and they asked him to try and procure these birds for Midway. An opportunity arose when Piltz was at Laysan and Captain Niblack of the "S.S. Iroquoise" called in on his way to Midway. Piltz procured the birds and asked Niblack to take them to the Morrisons at Midway. This he did and so started the large numbers of these two species that inhabit Sand Island today. Piltz visited Midway in 1902 and in 1904 or 1905 and is confident that there were none of these birds there before he sent them from Laysan.

The day following our landing on Sand Island Freddie Walker and

the Hawaiians rowed us over to Eastern or Brooke's Island, as it was then called. We camped on the sand beach there for three days and used the old grass houses of Walker's crew in which to do our bird skinning and preserving work. This was an island different to any we had visited. It seemed to be in shelves or ridges with depressions between them. It was the greenest of any and the vegetation, thinning in the depressions gave the island the appearance of a series of hedges. The vegetation was slightly different from that of Laysan. But all the sea birds of Laysan Island were present and the Walker boys released a pair each of the Laysan Telespiza and rail which they had brought from Laysan for that purpose. We saw one of the rails several times and it seemed very much at home. But according to Captain Piltz neither species was able to establish itself on the island from that introduction. Tropic birds were numerous, their harsh notes sounded over our heads all day long and here for the first time we saw the frigates chase them. The little white terns were numerous. They had nested on the cross sticks holding down the thatch on the houses. It was here we saw them carrying several small fish at a time crosswise in their beaks. Mr. T. M. Blackman has kindly given me a beautiful photograph he had taken at Midway of one of these birds with its young one. The old bird has at least nine fishes held crosswise in its beak filling it from tip to base. (See Elepaio, March 1941) I hope to have this picture reproduced in "The Indigenous Birds of the Hawaiian Islands" when it is published. There were some young of both species of albatross. On one occasion we saw a Laysan albatross feeding a young one of the black-footed species. We wanted adult specimens of the black-footed species but secured only two though there were a considerable number of full fledged young birds there. We noticed a peculiar habit of the curlew when standing on the beaches, that of gently kicking out behind with one foot, the reason for which we never discovered. There were several varieties of spiders and some moths; a small blue-bottled fly was very numerous and fewer of the skin-eating beetle as on other islands visited.

On the 17th we were taken back to the schooner, stopping on the way to take water from the well on Sand Island. This well held beautifully clear and cold drinkable water, though only a short distance from the beach. The shipwrecked people had lined it with casks and Walker's crew had only to clean out the sand to get all the water the vessel needed. The Charles G. Wilson also replenished her water casks from the well. We were now ready to start on our homeward voyage.

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Best wishes for the New Year to all our members and friends. We have a note dated December 4th from Lieut. P.D. Steele, U.S.N.R., U.S. Naval Air Station, Barber's Point, Oahu, T.H. "This month's Elepaio was fascinating, can you spare four more copies? I certainly approve of continuing with the same officers for another year." Cheerio, Red, Keep 'Em Flying.

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GUAVA. In Elepaio, March 1942, we asked if there were a third kind of guava here. In Degener's "Plants of Hawaii National Park" page 228 is the answer. Guavas are natives of tropical America, the common guava, *Psidium guajava* L., was introduced probably first on Oahu by Don Marin. The strawberry guava, *Psidium Cattleianum* Sabine, grows at higher elevations than the common guava and the third kind is known as *Psidium Cattleianum* var. *lucidum*. The fruit of the last is yellow and smaller than that of the common guava.

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HONOLULU AUDUBON SOCIETY
Treasurer's Report
for 1942

REVENUE

Balance from 1941	24.01	
Membership dues	31.50	
Subscriptions to "Elepaio"	2.00	
Interest on bank deposits	<u>.16</u>	<u>57.67</u>

EXPENSES

Dues to National Audubon Society	10.00	
Postals	.50	
Expenses of publishing "Elepaio"	14.90	
Expenses of mailing "Elepaio"	<u>13.87</u>	<u>39.27</u>

Balance in bank, November 30th 1942		<u>\$18.40</u>
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The report is very satisfactory and the Society owes a lot to Miss Hatch for her careful accounting of funds and hard work during a difficult time.

Will members please note that subscriptions of \$1.00 for 1943 are now due and payable to Miss Grenville Hatch, 1560 Wilhelmina Rise.

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NOMENCLATURE OF BRAZILIAN CARDINAL. Perhaps this note will catch the eye of Captain E.H. Bryan Jr., though he is probably too busy with his military duties to have much time for bird work.

In his checklist #226 is *Paroaria cucullata* (Latham), the Brazilian crested cardinal, but Wetmore (Observations on the Birds of Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay and Chile, Bulletin 133, U.S. National Museum, page 399) says that the species must be titled *Paroaria cristata* (Boddaert). "Mathews and Iredale (Austr. Av. Rec., vol. 3, Nov. 19, 1915, p. 38) have indicated correctly that *Loxia cucullata* Latham 1790, long in vogue for the species known to aviculturists as the Brazilian cardinal, is preoccupied by *Loxia cucullata* Müller, so that the species must be titled as indicated above."

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IVORY-BILLED WOODPECKER.

In 1937 the National Audubon Society, in cooperation with leading American Universities, inaugurated a series of Research Fellowships, for the intensive study of certain species of Wildlife threatened with extinction. Of these the Ivory-billed Woodpecker had come closest to the vanishing point. First it was evident that a study of the bird in its natural haunts would have to be made. The man uniquely fitted to supervise the undertaking, Dr. Arthur A. Allen, Professor of Ornithology at Cornell University, generously consented to direct the project; and an outstanding young naturalist, James T. Tanner, was selected to make the field studies.

The detailed account of his three-years' study has now been published as Research Report No. 1. The text is abundantly illustrated with half-tones, maps and charts; and a colored reproduction of the painting of Ivory-bills by George Miksch Sutton. Copies may be secured from the National Audubon Society, 1006 Fifth Avenue, New York, for \$2.50 each.

BIRD WALK

The walk on December 5th had already been postponed on account of rain. The day for which the original plans were made dawned gray and rainy. It continued so all day with alternating drizzles and downpours. By noon even the most enthusiastic trail follower had given up the hope of an afternoon in the hills. The decision was confirmed when one looked toward the falls at the head of Manoa Valley. They were wide bands of white against the rocky walls of the Koolaus, which meant that trails were wet and slippery and that every branch and tree was dripping. The only panacea for a disappointed walker is a date - not too far in the future - for another walk.

On the appointed Saturday afternoon a small group met at the usual place. Some of the most faithful members were unable to go but the rest of the party set off for Tantalus. The drive up is always so lovely that we regret once more that shortages of tires and gasoline prevent our going that way more frequently.

The trail begins in unobtrusive fashion and may be easily missed because the right of way enters at a private driveway, then it branches off to the right. Almost immediately one has a splendid view of Manoa Valley, Honolulu, Diamond Head and the ocean. The path has been overgrown but it is not steep, and freed from the necessity of watching each step one can appreciate fully the many new sights and sounds along the trail.

Our attention was immediately drawn to markers on some of the trees. The late Charles Judd, Chief Territorial Forester, had the names placed on different Hawaiian trees. This particular trail was easily accessible and trees were marked to stimulate an interest in learning more about the native flora. Unfortunately many markers have been removed or destroyed and have not been replaced. An occasional "Ahakea" still survives. To those who love the outdoors each item of authentic information gathered along the trail is remembered long after "book learning" is forgotten.

There were few birds at the beginning of the trail but soon the chattering of the mejiros was everywhere. We could hear hill robins in the distance, their harsh "quack-quack" coming cautiously nearer. Some of the group had excellent glimpses of the noisy excitable fellow in the late-fruited guavas. The friendly little elepaio entertained the whole crowd with his inquisitive behaviour. This amusing bird with his cocked-up tail balances himself on a nearby bough with all the nonchalance of an experienced tightrope walker. The amakihi is the shy forest bird, frequently heard but seldom seen. If one has the patience to sit very quietly (and that seems to mean without moving an eyelash) the birds will come around after a short while. But a group of people, moving, does not encourage birds to come near.

In every walk it seems that some particular thing is longest remembered. On this walk we saw apapane, one of the brightest of native forest birds. A flash of crimson - a jangling bird note - and one is likely to find this small bird in a nearby lehua. The apapane seems to have a particular liking for the nectar of the lehua blossom. It was also seen feeding on the white blossoms of the wild hibiscus, which at this season of the year covers the mountain side for some distance above and below the trail upon which we were walking.

The walkers were a little tired from the unaccustomed exercise, but not the tiredness of the classroom and the office. Outdoor fatigue is associated with a tranquillity of mind and spirit which is the enviable reward of all who seek relaxation from present day tensions by following a winding trail.

Next walk: meet Liliha and Wyllie, 2.00 p.m. Saturday, January 16th., for the Alewa trail.