

THE ELEPAIO

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For the Better Protection of Wildlife In Hawaii

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A Trip up a Jungle River (Second installment) by Walter Donaghho

The road followed the bank of the river, coming to a bridge under construction. I was interested in some iiwi like notes and trills coming from a high tree towering overhead on the opposite bank. Scanning this carefully with my glasses I saw a large bird fly up from one limb and perch upon another. It was glossy black with a yellow bill and facial mask, and I recognized the true mynah. It closely resembled the false mynah in appearance, but it was much larger.

I stepped off the bridge and entered the jungle, starting down stream. I passed under the shade of great trees, homba, several kinds of banyans and many others that reached over a hundred feet in height. The going was not difficult, but soon I brushed against vines and the leaves of a palmetto that were armed with barbs, and regretted that I did so. This palmetto also had a long slender creeper that had a nasty habit of reaching out and twining around you, so that you had to peel it off, thorn by thorn. Several other kinds of palms grew about under the trees, including a fishtail palm. The floor was a myriad of ferns and other plants, and butterflies with colors that matched the gloom flitted about. Strange birds called occasionally, and at one time I was startled by two large birds which flew up from the ground where they had apparently been disturbed at their feeding, and jumping from branch to branch ascended to a high roost out of danger. They were very strange in their appearance, resembling a pheasant, or more nearly, a South American chacalaca. They possessed a large whitish bill that somewhat resembled that of an eagle. The tail was long and wide, and the feathers were a mottled brown with black, in the manner of a turkey. The male had a white head. They sat in the tree making loud raucous, grating notes. At one time they uttered a high, harsh and piercing scream, which was answered by other birds in the vicinity.

A guttural "wow" sounded up from somewhere nearby and I went toward it. Getting up near the tree from which the cry had come I was startled by a loud flapping of wings and a large bird flew out and perched in another, where it disclosed its identity as the white headed fruit pigeon. It was larger than the homing pigeon and had green wings and a red brown breast.

I decided to visit the river and its sand bars in hopes of finding some new kind of bird living in that habitat. The heat was much greater as I scrambled through the thick growth of vines and vine covered shrubs that grew at the edge of the jungle and entered the high grass of the sand bars. Large grasshoppers were scared up as I progressed, and presently I came up the bank of one of the small channels running alongside the main stream. Two grey backed white breasted sandpipers flew up on the opposite bank as I came out of the tall grass. I came to the main stream and stood looking at the high jungle wall on the opposite bank. Large flocks of lorellas were noisily

feeding in the high trees, and large flocks flew in and out among them. It was quite a beautiful sight as their red forms blended against the brilliant green of the liana festooned trees.

Following the large bend of the river around, I soon came up to the jungle wall and entered the jungle again. Two brown ducks flew up from a quiet pool at the edge of the stream as I went into the jungle. I noted the trees about me were alive with birds and lingered a bit to see what species they were. There were several kinds, many strange to me. A large brown bird with a yellowish back and two or three kinds of flycatchers, two of which I recognized as the myiagra and the fawn-tailed flycatcher with a brown breast. One bird flew into a high tree overhead that I recognized as a Ramsey's cuckoo shrike. It was grey, and the underside was barred. One unidentified bird flew into the same tree and, alighting on a thick limb, proceeded to creep along it, passing under it and hanging there while it hunted for insect prey. I didn't see it very well, but noted that its back was a dark olive and the breast was yellow. I believe its bill may have been slightly curved.

Several cinnamon breasted thickheads flew about and I heard strange notes that closely resembled those of the elepaio. So much did they resemble one that I expected, as I stalked it, to see some new kind of flycatcher. The bird flew out of a vine covered tree as I approached and perched on the limb of a dead tree nearby. It was a kingfisher, with a back and tail of deep, ultramarine blue. The breast was a clean white.

I now struck a course through the jungle, now and then stopping to free myself from the clutches of a thorny creeper that had reached out and grabbed me. Presently I heard the noises of construction somewhere and went in that direction which I supposed was the direction of the coconut groves. Passing a slough of stagnant water, over which flitted several beautiful dragonflies with bright iridescent blue wings, I came out on the bank of the river. Several natives were sitting there, and I went over and spent several very profitable minutes learning the names of some of the fauna and flora. I stood gazing for quite a while at a bridge under construction before it suddenly dawned upon me that I was right back where I had started from! More in the next letter.

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BIRD WALK Six people turned up for the walk on June 12th. Sergeant "Tarzan" Wilson of the Marines (now Staff Sergeant, congratulations!) brought a friend, Pfc Austin, Miss Shields, Miss Hoskins, Miss Kojima and the writer. By the bye, Sgt. Wilson showed us some of his water colors of birds and flowers. They are splendid, most life-like and accurate.

We started from the Hogsback and took the trail on the Pauoa side of Tantalus. It is so little used now that it is overgrown and hard to follow, but so beautiful, winding through clumps of ginger, coffee trees with their glossy dark green leaves, and mysterious thickets of bamboo. From the top of Tantalus on the return trip we had that superb view, range after range of wooded ridges to the north, at our feet was Honolulu and beyond the blue ocean. The birds were obliging, we had inspection visits by several elepaios and we met a few parties of hill robins which treated us to a fine warbling chorus.

Next walk: meet Punahou and Nehoa for another Tantalus walk, July 17th at 2.00 P.M. Can anyone get a banana wagon?

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Value of Birds to Man (continued)

By George C. Munro

The Pacific golden plover, kolea, previously mentioned; turnstone, akekeke (Arenaria interpres interpres) and the despised mynah (Acridotheres tristis) begin to collect. The kolea have a habit of leaving the upland pastures towards evening. They collect in large flocks on the beaches and borders of coastal lagoons and raise a tremendous clamor. Probably they are discussing and comparing notes on the best foraging grounds, or the new rich areas discovered. The mynahs also collect in large numbers to roost and raise a deafening noise as they go over the doings of the day. However much there may be in this, it is certain they have some way of informing one another of fresh fields, and hasten to them with the morning light. These meeting places are sometimes on small islands off the coasts, and so the birds may change islands as the food situation develops. In general feeding the koleas and the mynah spread over large areas of country. Each pair or group of mynahs and single kolea seem to have their regular feeding grounds but they quickly collect in large flocks where food is plentiful. The kolea, scattered over a large area, collect in a flock on the wing in a few minutes uttering their loud cheerful call.

The caterpillars are plowing their way through the vegetation leaving devastation behind them. The flocks of birds descend and gorge on their fat bodies, the flocks increase, the caterpillars are thinned out and eventually the invasion is halted. It can thus be seen that in a favorable year for these insects and their larvae a very limited number of moths emerging from chrysalids that have spent the summer months in the ground can put one of these invasions into full force. So the "repressive effects of birds.....during periods of insect scarcity" cannot always prevent these invasions but numbers of birds can stop them when in full swing.

Of course in periods of scarcity of insect food the mynah has to live and takes some fruit but he surely earns this. The kolea, however, requires nothing from us. He can vary his food and eat many things but while with us his food is insects, their larvae and fresh water or beach molluscs and crustaceans. When he arrives here in September it is about the end of the dry season. The shore lagoons are shrunk and the pond life is concentrated in small pools or stranded as the water falls. This food is small fish, shellfish, larvae of dragon flies and other pond life. He finds plenty to eat till the winter rains come and insect life increases over the land and there is then ample food. If there is not food enough on these islands he can move on south as all lands of the Pacific furnish foraging grounds. When its breeding season approaches the plover prepares to move northward. The snow has just melted up there and the berries of the previous season are lying on the ground where they were preserved by the snow, ready for the birds to fatten on after their long trip over the ocean. There are places where the snow falls and melts with astonishing regularity at close on the same dates every year. The birds know this and arrive just as the snow is melted and depart just before it begins to fall in the autumn. As the northern days lengthen the young is quickly raised and the birds depart again to be of service to the Hawaiian agriculturalists.

How have the Hawaiian agriculturalists recompensed this exceptional bird of exceedingly great value to Hawaii? For fifty years I have witnessed its inconsiderate destruction in the name of sport or provision for the table. I contend that it is not true sport to shoot a bird that has been rendering us good service, to lure it by decoys within gunshot of the shooter who is hiding behind a "blind". Now and then scientists and others would point out the foolishness of this

course. But it was like "the voice of one crying in the wilderness", it fell on unheeding ears. Even now many of the residents of this favored country give but a half-hearted support to movements for the protection of this bird. True after a hard fight in the 1939-40 Legislature two years of closed season was secured for the shore birds and now on account of the war all birds on the game list are enjoying protection. But the kolea is still on the list of game birds and not enjoying full and permanent protection by law as it deserves, and providing economy for the agriculturalists. This is an astonishing thing in a progressive country. It would cost the people nothing to give this bird permanent protection. All they have to do is to insist on their Legislators taking this step. It is sincerely hoped that this recognition will not be long delayed.

Feb. 24, 1943

For many years Mr. Munro has urged the complete protection of the plover and other shore birds and in this the Audubon Society is in full accord with him. Those of us who have had dealings with the Legislature in this matter are aware of the power and trickery of a small group of hunters and the ignorance and apathy of most of the other members. One member of the House advocated shooting the plover on the grounds of conservation of our food supplies!

It seems to us that protection may best be obtained under the provisions of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, which prohibits the shooting of migratory shore birds and ducks in Canada, the United States and Mexico, except under regulations issued by the Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, D.C. In 1940 and 1941 several letters passed between our Society and the Service and in one dated 10/29/40 and signed by Dr. Gabrielson, the Director, it says that "it is the opinion of the Service that the Migratory Bird Treaty Act does apply to Hawaii. - - - if and when the Territorial Legislature enacts laws permitting the taking of migratory game birds, consideration will be given to the promulgation of appropriate regulations under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act".

At our request, the Service wrote to the Territorial Board of Agriculture and Forestry and also for the first time included Hawaii in the regulations for 1941 under the Act. No migratory game birds were allowed to be shot.

The Board of Agriculture and Forestry in October 1942 prohibited any further shooting of game birds here but that may last only to the end of the war. We must be constantly on the watch for any attempts to allow hunting of migratory game birds again and we shall at once advise Washington if they occur.

J.d'A.N.

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