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Adventures in Bird Study Collecting Specimens of Birds (continued) By George C. Munro

A collector will preserve parts of birds he finds. Sometimes a bird can be identified by a feather, head, wing or leg. There is a specimen, a head and wing, in the Bishop Museum. It positively identifies the Bonin Island petrel as occasionally straying to, and probably at some time inhabiting, the main group of the Hawaiian Islands. So far this is the only evidence there is on record. I found these remnants at the edge of the forest on Lanai in 1914, near some dry ridges where this bird may have nested in the past. I have known several instances of sea birds returning to long deserted nesting places. There are wings of the uau in the Bishop Museum. They were found on Lanai many years after the uau was supposed to have deserted that island as a nesting place. There were five pairs of wings, neatly cut from the body by a cat, the teeth marks can be plainly seen on the bones. All had not been killed at the same time, probably over a month or two. These birds of course may have nested on Lanai all the time. Had I known the habits of these birds then as well as I do now I should certainly have made night investigations in the Lanai forest.

I believe that in importing birds, specimens of the species should be taken. This might well be done with birds which die in transit. Then if the birds become established specimens should be taken periodically to note changes which usually come from changes of environment and different foods. An interesting collection could have been made of the tame canaries released on Midway island that have changed from yellow birds to white and brown birds and intermediates between the two.

It is true that some collectors are apt to emphasize the value of the specimen over the live bird and over collect, just as conservationists will often go to the other extreme and disbelieve in collecting at all. Collectors do not like to kill birds any more than anyone else. David Starr Jordan, who has done great work on fishes, once told me he had started with bird collecting. He disliked killing the birds so he took up fishes for that and other reasons. The fishes also had to be killed, but it evidently did not repel him as did the killing of birds. As a matter of fact collectors kill fewer birds than others who work with birds. The collector takes but a small number, and under protection he would be allowed to collect only under a special permit. I did this for several years, all the specimens going to the Bishop Museum. Sportsmen kill birds in large numbers. Trappers catching for aviaries and exportation lose by death a large proportion of the birds trapped. Others die in transportation. But strange to say to the general public this does not seem so cruel as a merciful killing of a bird for a specimen. Once in the aviary the birds are much better off than in the open. Their food is provided and they have no fear of predatory animals. Imported birds that are released and become

acclimated will perhaps produce a larger number of happy individuals than if they had been left in their native habitat. So trapping for these purposes is undoubtedly justifiable. This is true if the birds are in large numbers and those taken are from the natural increase. Both will provide much pleasure and instruction to human beings.

A bird specimen if properly preserved and cared for will last indefinitely; whereas those killed for other reasons serve only for a short time. Collecting in the future will be different from what it was in the past. Most countries will make restrictions against collectors from other countries taking away large numbers of specimens. Collecting will be under regulation and over collecting not permitted.

Nevertheless there is still a wide field for collectors. Little is known of even our commonest birds and a few specimens taken from the natural increase may give much enlightenment and react to the benefit of the live birds. In this as in everything else we must take a reasonable course. Such action as confiscating mounted birds by the Customs because there is a law against importing parts of bird skins for millinery purposes should be avoided.

May 1, 1944

Mr. and Mrs. Morrison of Midway Island
By George C. Munro

The death of Mrs. Daniel Morrison on April 13th., as reprinted in the Honolulu Advertiser of April 14th. 1944, brings to mind the fine work she and Mr. Morrison did for the bird life of Midway Islands.

Mr. Daniel Morrison was in charge of the Commercial Pacific and Cable Company's operations on Midway from 1903 to 1915 and Mrs. Morrison lived with him there for nine years, the only woman on the island.

When the Rothschild expedition was on Sand Island of Midway in 1901, apart from the sooty tern there were then practically no birds on the island. Now birds swarm there, land as well as sea birds.

Besides caring for the sea birds the Morrisons were instrumental in procuring the Laysan finch (Telespiza) from Laysan Island and also the rail of that island. These are now numerous on Sand Island. They released eleven tame canaries and these have also increased and changed in their wild environment. I have seen it stated that tame canaries will not survive in a wild state. They did on Midway, thanks to the care of the island by the Commercial Pacific and Cable Company and the Morrisons. Captain Piltz informed me that no dog, cat, rat or mouse was allowed to land on the island for many years. It would be extremely difficult to keep this up under present conditions but we hope it is being done to whatever extent is possible. The wild canaries on Midway are a monument to the Morrisons. Unfortunately Mrs. Morrison, when I interviewed her a few years ago about these matters, could not remember the year in which the canaries were released.

May 1, 1944

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Paul Baldwin, Assistant Superintendent of Hawaii National Park, and Mrs. Baldwin were in town for a few days recently. He has promised a story for the Elepaio soon.

SOUTH SEA LORE by Kenneth P. Emory, B. P. Bishop Museum, Special Publication 36.

Mr. Emory has written a most useful textbook for a castaway. It is being used by thousands of the Armed Forces in Hawaii, who are taught by practical demonstration how to exist in an emergency. At the Bishop Museum Mr. Emory has set up a demonstration plot, with edible plants growing and labelled. The common pigweed is right in front, cooked or raw and with fish it is capable of supporting life. The kamani is called the tropical almond. Some of our members may remember tasting the nuts on a bird walk at Kahuku.

The booklet deals briefly with the South Sea islands, the natives, living at sea and on land, clothing, shelter, useful articles, local remedies, and it is illustrated with many sketches which are useful in identifying plants and animals. "Danger of being poisoned by plants is negligible, but a falling coconut can seriously injure or kill a man. Never sit or sleep under a cluster of nuts and avoid walking under bunches when the wind is blowing after a heavy rainfall". Apparently there are only two poisonous fruits in the Pacific and only one of these is found in the South Sea islands, and also Hawaii. This is the common castor oil shrub.

"Danger from poisonous snakes is slight, as there are few of them (none in Polynesia) and they are seldom seen." "Lagoons and reefs, mudflats and mangrove swamps abound with shellfish. These are easy to obtain, may be eaten raw, and the flesh of none is known to be poisonous." Some of the reef and lagoon fish are poisonous during part of the year and you are advised to eat only a small portion of fish and wait about an hour. If in that time there is any indication of poisoning, drink enough salt water to cause vomiting.

Coconut cloth, the fibrous material which wraps the base of growing coconut leaves, is a convenient substitute for cloth, eye-shades may be made from the leaves, sandals from green coconut husks, and a raincoat from ti leaves. Plaiting coconut leaves for making shelters or mats and basket weaving are clearly illustrated.

Mr. Emory is a practical man and no doubt has proved his instructions. He tells us that natives tie a weight on the end of a fish line and swing it over the body of a bird within reach, thereby entangling its neck or wing. The natives of South America use two weights attached by a cord six or eight feet long, the smaller weight is held in the hand and the other swung round the head two or three times and then flung at the animal or bird which is to be caught. Any part of the cord touching the animal at once wraps around its legs or wings and disables it. In South America these are called bolas, the Eskimos use a similar contrivance for catching birds. They might prove more effective than a single weight on a cord.

Major-General Ralph C. Smith contributes a preface expressing his appreciation of Mr. Emory's work. "Fear of the jungle and so-called barren lands, so prevalent among the inexperienced, is banished. Mr. Emory has given unstintingly of his time and talents, and the Bishop Museum of its facilities, in training personnel of our division it gives me a great deal of pleasure to express in writing our gratitude for these services."

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Miss M. Titcomb, Librarian of the Bishop Museum, reports the arrival of "Northern Shore Birds in the Pacific" by Eleanor H. Stickney. (Birds collected during the Whitney South Sea Expedition, 53: Am. Mus. Novitates, 1248, Dec. 31, 1943)

Continuing Walter Donaghho's letter from the last issue referring to Sgt. Wilson, he writes; "His letter in the February issue comes from the Solomons. The bird described as resembling the mynah is the mynah; the true mynah. That 'thing' we are familiar with is false! I know the swift, or wood swallow (?) he describes. It is a very handsome bird. The gallinule is, in New Zealand, where a race is found, known as the Pukeko. Australia knows it as the Swamp hen. The heron he describes is the handsome night heron. It closely resembles the night heron we know, only that the white underparts of the latter are a rich brown in the former species. I didn't see any curlew; only the golden plover and a small grey sandpiper, however I have no reason to doubt him, as the curlew does come there. Sgt. Wilson is probably in the Central Solomons, where there is more of the terrain that the curlew likes. Where I was is only jungle, interspersed with grassy fields. Down towards Lunga Point were cow pastures which, in season, would attract curlew, but I visited them in the summer; off season for the curlew in the Solomons. I wish to correct Sgt. Wilson on his identification of the red parrots; a fault for which he is by no means to blame. I have always been bothered with the troops calling them macaws. They are red lories. The macaw, in addition to being many times larger, is not found outside of tropical America and the West Indies.

If Sgt. Wilson would write to me I would be able to help him to get acquainted with many other birds. There are, for instance, hornbills in the jungle. They love to visit large banyans, laden with fruit. Also there is a tiny parrot there no bigger than your thumb! And a bird that lays its eggs in a hole and covers them up with debris going away and leaving them to hatch by incubation (fermentation?). This is the megapode, the brown "chickens" that you may have hunted in the jungle. It has a loud mournful cry that resembles "I buy - - - tobacco!", preceded by a few turkeylike "cows". Or the strange, heavy billed birds, large as pheasants, that "saw wood".

Very sincerely yours, Walter Donaghho"

There was a note in the Star-Bulletin dated May 9th about Walter, which some members may not have seen. It reads "News has been received that Walter S. Donaghho, son of Mr. and Mrs. John S. Donaghho of 913 Alewa Drive, has been honorably discharged from the army because of physical disability after nine months of active service at Guadalcanal. Young Donaghho was in a hospital at New Caledonia for about two months after ill health caused by his service on Guadalcanal and was then sent to a hospital at Modesto, Calif.

He is now in a veterans' hospital in Palo Alto for further treatment, but is recovering satisfactorily. He expects to be discharged from the hospital in a few days. He is planning to go to the University of Wisconsin next fall. Mrs. Martin F. Raynoha, his sister, lives in Madison, Wis., site of the university.

His father, for many years a member of the faculty of the University of Hawaii, is now teaching at St. Andrew's Priory."

BIRD WALK, May 13th. The clear bright sunlight on Saturday afternoon brought out a larger crowd than usual. One of our 'regulars' who could not spend the entire afternoon came along just to say "hello" to the crowd, and one who had been given up for lost (her last appearance being on the overnight Rabbit Island expedition 'way back in '41) joined twenty other ambitious walkers in exploring the Alewa Trail.

By threes and fours we hurried ahead to reach the top or lagged behind enjoying the view (and incidentally getting a breather). Every step upward was rewarded by an ever widening sweep of ocean, mountains and sky. The trail levelled off and on the right Nuuanu Valley spread out with the Country Club so neat and tiny directly below. On over lava rocks, through ironwoods and eucalyptus till we reached the narrow path where the ridge falls away on the right into the valley and on the left to Kuahiwi Alapaki, the wooded hills back of Kamehameha School.

A little farther upward we reached the broad flat rock and the survey mark, where we rested. Even the passing shower could not dampen our enjoyment of deep green valleys, rugged mountains, blue ocean and sky.

The return trip, downhill all the way, was too soon over. Every one was too polite to mention it but the sight of just one bird would have been welcome. It apparently was not the day for birds.

Suddenly we heard the mocking bird! There he was balancing himself on a telephone wire. We stopped the cars, he flew away into the bushes of a nearby garden but reappeared on the wire with a grasshopper in his slender beak. The wind ruffled the dark grey feathers on the wings and back and the lighter ones underneath. His remarkably long tail seemed to help him to keep his balance on his uncertain perch in spite of the stiff breeze. Then with a series of short flights he zigzagged through the trees and disappeared in a tangle of branches in a cypress. We could hardly believe our eyes, but there was the nest! In a few seconds he was off again. We watched for his return and heard the demanding cries of hungry nestlings.

One mocking bird may not make a bird walk but it certainly helps.

O.M.N.

Since this point of birdless bird walks has been so gently noticed may I rise to remark that the birds are there but they are shy creatures and object to a crowd of intruders in their haunts. If anyone wishes to see them let them sit down in a suitable place and keep still. By keep still I mean keep still, many people think they are keeping still when they are waving flies away and fidgetting. When a bird appears do not suddenly raise the arm and point at it. Any movement is a danger sign to a bird. If you must move do it imperceptibly.

And please do not leave the trail or try any short cuts. Our mountains can be dangerous as well as lovely.

Next walk: meet at mauka junction of Woodlawn

and Alani Drives for Puu Pia walk.

J.d'A.N.

2.00 p.m. June 10th.

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