

# THE ELEPAIO

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## Cottage at Kokee

A recent vacation at Kokee on Kauai gave some chances of seeing new birds. No intensive work was done but a few remarks on the birds seen may be of interest. The vacation was spent at a cottage near Puu Ka Pele, Pele's Hill, overlooking Waimea Canyon. From an elevation of 3,600 feet one looks down into that mighty gorge, half a mile to the bottom.

The faint bleating of goats comes up from the depths, their trails can be seen crossing the steep slopes far below. Tropic birds are the dominant birds of the canyon, the near ones sailing close by, so that their long tail feathers and few black plumage marks can be seen, the far ones are snowy white specks. The crevices in those great cliffs are their nesting places and the canyon is their playground. The winds in that deep gorge strike the walls and surge up, providing uprising currents on which the birds can float with ease. At times thirty or forty can be seen at once, sailing around in great circles with outstretched wings. When they reach the top of the upward current they dash down again, hundreds and hundreds of feet in wide swerving swoops, down and down until they are lost in the green depths. Then the gradual upward sail starts again.

Sometimes two will fly close together, enjoying each other's company in that sublime play. Occasionally a bird will break off and flutter to a crevice, perhaps to comfort its partner sitting there on the egg or perhaps to assure itself that all is well at home. Hour after hour they continue, soaring and swooping, their sharp cries sounding above the rush of wind at the rim.

The rim of the canyon is no place for a weak head, some of the trails follow along the edge with a drop of hundreds or thousands of feet to the bottom and though the views are magnificent I prefer a trail through the forest. The horses we rode had no such qualms and even preferred to walk on the outside of the trail. It would seem to be safer for them to keep away from the edge but this habit of the horses is instinctive and someone explained that if a horse slips and falls when it is near the edge its body is more likely to stay on the trail, that is, it has a better chance of throwing its body back onto the trail than if it fell from the inside. Perhaps so, but I still wished they would keep away from that awful drop when I was on the back of one.

The valleys and ridges are crossed with trails and on our daily rides we kept a lookout for birds. Of the native birds the elepaio was commonest, the immature birds were very similar to the Oahu immatures, showing russet on the head, shoulder and breast, but the adults were grey on the back instead of brown, as in the Oahu species. Amakihis were seen occasionally, but native forest birds were scarce. One day a pair of creepers was watched, probing the crevices of a lehua tree. Owls were common, even in the forest. One day while sitting quietly and



"squeaking" to attract the birds an owl came floating over us, its face seemed broad and cat-like. Other times we saw them perched on boughs of trees at the road side. At the airport one was hovering, hanging with fluttering wings while it scanned the ground below for its prey.

Most of the cottages in the area had small lawns around them and as we approached a plover would arise and skim away on pointed wings, uttering its musical cry.

Of the introduced birds the Chinese thrush was common, singing loud and clear both in the lowlands and in the forest. Sitting in the garden of our cottage and "squeaking" would generally bring a pair to investigate. They are shy birds but very inquisitive and as they approached closer we could hear their warning croaks and gurgles, mixed with an occasional snatch of song, and then caught a glimpse of one peering at us with its curious spectacled eye.

White eyes were plentiful and both the Chinese and barred doves were seen frequently. Wherever we came across a grassy clearing there was generally a flock of rice birds. Their mode of feeding was amusing, a bird would alight on a tall stem of grass and sidle along till its weight bent down the stem so that the bird could reach the seeds.

Wild fowl are still common in the forest, we frequently heard the crowing of the roosters. Pheasants were often seen and heard. It is claimed that the latter are doing some damage to crops and the Board of Agriculture and Forestry are allowing some regulated shooting.

Twenty years ago I spent a weekend at a cottage at Kokee and my chief memory was of the birds that came and took peanuts from our fingers. Soon after we arrived at the cottage this time I heard a "tee-tee-tee" in the trees and a brightly colored little bird flew down. It was a yamagara or Japanese tit, often called chickadee by the local inhabitants. It had a black head with a thin white streak along the top; a whitish forehead, the white spreading into two broad whitish patches on the side of the head, a slate grey back and russet flanks and breast. Its large grey feet enabled it to cling to the trunk of a tree as easily as perching on a bough. Hurriedly we searched for peanuts and spread some out on the lanai. In a few minutes the birds were down, each snatched a bit of nut and flew off to a bough where it held the nut between its feet and pecked it to bits. Soon they were taking the food from our hands. The quantity of nuts those two birds disposed of was astonishing and when the supply was exhausted "tee-tee-tee" came from the trees as a reminder.

Kokee is the place to spend the rest of one's days. There is plenty of bird work to be done. The cool climate is so invigorating after Honolulu; there is not too much rain, though Waialeale, one of the wettest spots on earth, is only a dozen miles away. There is fishing. Trout were planted some years ago and good fish can now be found in the streams and reservoirs. The streams are usually too overgrown for fly fishing but the fisherman who is not too particular can always use a worm.

There is the beautiful forest with miles of trails which can be followed on foot or horseback. The trees grow to a size not often seen, the purple lilikoi everywhere offers its delicious fruit, golden water lemons hang from their vines. The fragrant maile twines on every bush and when strung with the mokihana berries makes a lei that to the departing guest is a long reminder of happy days on Kauai.

JD' A.N.



NEWS FROM GUADALCANAL. Walter Donaghho writes "Was delighted to receive your letter of July 28. I will gladly send you a new list of birds, which will include many new additions. It will also be revised, as there are several errors that have been corrected thru prolonged observations.

The record of the iiwi on Mt. Olympus comes as a surprise. My only record of an iiwi in the Honolulu district was one that I heard in the valley west of Kalihi Valley about six or seven years ago. In 1935 I saw a pair along the Halawa trail. Have you heard or seen any creepers near Honolulu? Closest locality that I have found creepers in is along the Kipapa trail. The hill robins must be increasing. Do the Japanese bluebirds appear to be increasing? (Too bad they have to come from that infernal place).

If you go to Kauai, try to go along the Koia gulch trail at the end of the road (it was the end, in '35) and the Alakai swamp trail, which branches off the Kaunohua ridge trail, near the Kalalau end. These are the best localities for birds in the Kokee area. The kamau, most beautiful singer in the islands (exotics included), is found in the former locality. There is good chance for the akialoa and the O-O here. Look carefully for the akiapolau. I have never seen it on Kauai, nor has anyone else. It is the only one of the thirteen forest birds that I have not seen. I have no reason to believe that it is extinct.

I have moved into a new camp situated in the jungle. The place is alive with birds; true mynahs, aplonis starlings, pigeons, five kinds of parrots, which includes a new one seen since I moved in here, and many others. There has been a pair of cuckoos around camp recently. I procured a gun and shot one, but the pellets tore it to pieces. Wish I had a 410 shotgun. Just right for getting small birds. The cuckoo is brown below, and a dull bottle green above. The two outer feathers on each side of the tail are barred with black and white bars. The bird resembles the American cuckoos, except of course for the colors. I have shot a mynah; a beautiful sapphire blue, orange billed wasp snatcher (?), and what I call, for want of its correct name, a red eyed blackbird. It is glossy black with a metallic green sheen, the beautiful large eyes are fiery red. The female is bottle green above, with a white breast and neck, streaked with black lines. They are sociable birds, going about in flocks of around fifty, and they also nest in colonies, building hanging nests of grass with the entrance at the side. They live on berries, and visit a certain tree near camp every day. There is another species that frequents the coconut groves and open fields with scattered groves of trees. (They don't seem to like the deep jungle). Its habits are similar to the other species, except that it builds its nest in holes and cavities in the crown of cocoa palms, etc. The former species emits grunts and squeaks whereas the latter has a call note resembling the cry of a chick. I have heard it sing a short warbling song.

There are megapodes about camp. They have a loud plaintive cry which seems to say, "I buy - - tobacco". This is preceded by several turkey like "kows". They are often heard on moonlit nights. The men call them chickens.

I am salting my skins and packing them in a cigar box into which I have put camphor crystals. Then I sit tight and keep my fingers crossed. - - - I have several feet (of film) of the mynah and the Australian gallinule, which I photographed in one of the ponds of the Damon residence at Moanalua. Also I have two reels of different birds in the Bird Park at Kapiolani, including excellent shots of pheasants and birds of paradise. Hope I may have an opportunity to show them to you."

Very sincerely yours, Walter Donaghho



Would it be practical for our Audubon Society to have volunteer "listening posts" thruout the Hawaiian Islands? These agents might be bird lovers who would report on the kinds of birds found in their respective localities and note the comparative numbers. They might describe the appearance of any unknown species found there and give any other pertinent observations relative to the subject. The pooling of all this information would be a definite contribution and would give a more accurate picture of Hawaiian bird life than we have to-day.

A recent issue of the "Elepaio" mentioned a noticeable decrease of the Chinese thrush, based on observations during our rambles on the Honolulu mauka trails. This is distressing news and yet may not tell the whole story. When one considers the amount of heavy gun practice thruout these environs, it is quite conceivable that many birds have sought refuge in the deeper hinterlands. And since our former mountain trails are no longer open to us because of the "Emergency" there are not the opportunities for obtaining more complete information. For that reason it is possible that the decrease of the thrush is but a local condition.

Returning visitors from Maui report that on the slopes of Haleakala at Olinda the thrush seems well-ostablished. They tell of listening to the answering calls from different points of the surrounding woods which led them to believe there were several families. The Maui thrush has apparently lost much of its characteristic reserve since it is claimed that daily he was within fifteen feet and in full sight of the dwelling. Another recent vacationist to Hawaii reports practically the same story from Olaa where the thrush make the countryside joyous with their songs.

How enlightening it would be to have reports from the other localities and what a unifying interest it would be for many within these Islands.

Hazel Peppin

Miss Peppin has suggested above a most interesting project for our Society. It could be started by obtaining data on the distribution of certain birds in the Honolulu area. A map, such as is put out by the Honolulu Rapid Transit, could be used for each bird and on it could be marked, with appropriate symbols, the localities where the bird has been seen, where it has nested and so on. The symbols suggested in Nicholosen's The Art of Bird Watching page 104 could be used, s represents a singing male; 2, a pair; 2x a pair definitely nesting; 2x+4, a pair rearing four young. Subsequent broods can be added after a further plus sign. In some cases further categories may be necessary for unmated hens and immature birds or non-breeding parties.

If we all helped with the necessary information we could have a good picture of the distribution of each bird over the city, in blank areas we should have to find someone whom we could interest in the project. Seasonal movement would be noted and in that way we might find out where the cardinals go each autumn, they certainly have a definite migration away from the residential areas each year. It is probably part of the yearly break-up of territories and dispersal of the young but more detailed information is needed. The Brazilian cardinal has a less even distribution than the Kentucky, it does not seem yet to have reached Woodlawn. The maps would show their yearly spread. Later the plan could be expanded to cover the whole island and more birds.



Miss Peppin has consented to start the project, each of us can contribute information which in years to come will give us a most interesting and valuable picture. J.d'A.M.

BIRD WALK. Thirteen persons, including members and friends, attended the September bird walk. The group met on Nehoa Street and from there travelled in cars up to the entrance of the Manoa Cliffs trail. The trail showed definite signs of neglect, since it was heavily overgrown with coarse grass and shrubs. A good part of the afternoon, therefore, was spent in breaking through the dense underbrush which prevented rapid travelling. The thick grasses offered almost no opportunity for a place to stop and listen. For this reason, and because of the constant rustling, only an occasional white-eye or rice bird was seen. However, at several places along the trail hill robins were heard from a distance, but only Miss Kojima was lucky enough to see them. She had walked a short way in advance of the rest of the group and found about six hill robins feasting on strawberry guavas.

The birds were not the only ones who enjoyed the numerous strawberry guavas. The entire party spent some time gathering and eating them. Fragrant yellow ginger was also abundant and many of the women came home with blossoms in their hair.

As usual nowadays, the guests included members of the armed forces. This time the Navy was well represented by Mr. Kohler of Pennsylvania and Mr. Groferer of California. Mr. Kohler told an amusing story of himself which proves definitely that he has been a true bird-man for years. It seems that while he was in high school he was a member of the first-string football team. However, even his strict training rules didn't keep him from slipping away every now and then for an Audubon trip into the mountains. This time, of course, he planned to be back for the game, but afternoon came, the starting whistle blew, and he was still in the hills. The coach just couldn't seem to believe his story, that he was out looking for birds.

At the end of the Tantalus hike, the members gathered beside the cars to discuss business for a few minutes. Mr. Northwood appointed a Nominating Committee consisting of Mrs. Carr, Mrs. Evans, and Miss Shields. The list of those present on the bird walk is as follows: Mr. and Mrs. Northwood, Mr. and Mrs. Evans, Miss Hatch, Miss Kojima, Mrs. Douglas Baldwin, Mrs. J. A. Matthewman, Miss Anderson, Mrs. Carr, Miss Steen, Mr. Kohler and Mr. Groferer.

Jane Steen

Thank you, Jane, we hope you will let us have another contribution soon.

Next walk: meet Woodlawn and Alani, October 9th., 2.00 p.m.

#### Report of the Nominating Committee

The Committee wishes to submit the following names to be placed on the ballot for the coming election of officers for 1944:

For President-----Mr. J. d'Arcy Northwood

For Vice-President-----Mr. Charles Dunn

Miss Hazel Peppin

For Secretary-Treasurer-----Miss Grenville Hatch

Respectfully submitted, (signed) Elizaveth Carr, Chairman

If any member wishes to add any names to the above list will he or she write to Mrs. Denzel Carr, 1832 Wilhelmina Rise. Voting ballots will be sent out with the November issue of Elopeio.