

THE ELEPA IO

Journal of the HONOLULU AUDUBON SOCIETY

For the Better Protection of Wildlife in Hawaii

Volume 4 Number 5

November 1943

BIRDS OF HAWAII and Adventures in Bird Study

Some Breeding and Feeding Habits of Sea Birds
By George C. Munro

Never before have these islands been visited by such numbers of men as at the present time. The war has caused a wide distribution of armed forces at widely scattered stations. Among these men it is reasonable to suppose there will be careful observers who will be able to contribute many new facts to our scanty lore about the sea birds of this part of the Pacific. Members of the Honolulu Audubon Society are urged to be on the alert to secure and report as much of such material as may be gleaned in personal contact with these men.

The feeding habits of some of the sea birds of the ocean surrounding Hawaii form an interesting study. Some of these birds come to certain outlying islands in countless thousands to nest and rear their young. It would be almost impossible for the favourite breeding islands to comfortably accomodate them if all the different species came ashore and laid their eggs at the same time. Also the competition for the sea food available would be very great if all the young were well grown and at their heaviest feeding stage at the same time.

Numbers of these birds come from long distances but the waters within range of the islands must supply all with food, adults as well as young, for the summer months. In the past these were no doubt in vaster numbers before man's devastating influence was felt by them. The drain on the food and the competition for it would have been much greater than at present. In this competition the weaker and less adaptable species were no doubt overcome or reduced in numbers. But the whole process of adjustment would be so intricate that it might be impossible to guess at it now. Suffice it to say nature has ways of adjusting these matters so that what we call the "balance of nature" eventually works smoothly. However, we can find pleasure in studying the results.

Let us take the island of Laysan as an instance. Here the Bonin Island petrel arrives about the middle of August when most of the other birds have left or are about to leave. Its young has to be fed from February to May. The two albatrosses arrive about the end of October, the black-footed preceding the Laysan albatross by a short period. They feed their young from March to June. The Christmas Island shearwater arrives about February and feeds its young from the middle of June to October. The wedgetailed shearwater and Bulwer's petrel arrive about April and feed their young from early August to October or November. By thus having the year divided among them they will not feel the competition for food so keenly. When the birds are in immense numbers and are mating they make a tremendous disturbance in

the island with their mating calls and cries. If all arrived at one time the bedlam would be intensified to an enormous extent. Donaghho describes the petrel's cries on Eastern Island of Midway: "The strange notes of the three, the shearwater's moans, the 'humping' and barking of the Bulwer's petrels, and the strange cries, yowls and coos of the Christmas Island shearwater blended to give a strange eerie feeling to the night, well enough to send cold shivers up and down the backs of the uninitiated." Add to this the terrific din of the Bonin petrel as described by Schauinsland on Laysan and the medley of sounds by the black-footed albatross which Donaghho also describes on Sand Island of Midway; the screams and yells of the sooty tern as I heard for several nights over my tent on Howland Island and you would have bedlam indeed. By arriving in succession one species has settled down before the other arrives.

The tern, frigate birds, tropic birds and boobies seem sometimes to have a succession of broods in the season or breed at all times during the summer.

The dates given above are approximate, as though some of the species lay very regularly near the same dates every year, others vary for different reasons.

The Bonin petrel and wedge-tailed shearwaters are burrowing birds but each burrows at a level of its own, so the incoming Bonins do not interfere with the recently hatched wedge tails. The Christmas shearwater and Bulwer's petrel nest on the surface under grass or other vegetation and do not suffer much inconvenience from the burrowing birds.

To be continued

NOTES FROM GUADALCANAL. Walter Donaghho sends us another story which he calls:

A Hike into the Mountains

Set out this morning to climb Mt. - - - to see the view from the summit. Caught a ride which brought me down to the - - - road, where I started up. Mt. Popomanasiu, rising purple in the distance above range upon range of jungle covered mountains was busy dressing for the day, throwing on garments of fleecy white clouds. Mynahs (true) called as I progressed up the road and cockatoos flew screaming out over the jungle choked ravines. Their white plumage contrasted beautifully with the green of the jungle. The country through which I was passing was a series of rolling grassy ridges, dissected with jungle choked ravines that fell away to either side. The bulk of Mt. - - - loomed up ahead, and on either side in the distance were the higher mountains of the island, rising up to 6, 7, and 8000 feet in height. It was a very beautiful region.

At one time I heard the call of a strange bird that seemed to say: "I buy tobacco!" I descended into the jungle to stalk it, but it stopped before I got near.

I passed a dead tree standing at the edge of the jungle and noticed a strange bird sitting on the uppermost branch. Half again the size of a robin, it resembled the South American puffhead. It had a large black head and a wide, bright orange beak. The breast was blue black, and the wings were bright smoky blue. Two white patches showed in flight. Every now and then the bird flew off its high perch and darted down over the grassy slope to snap up some insect it had seen. A cockatoo decided, as he flew towards the tree, that he wanted to

land upon the "puffhead's" perch, and the puffhead flew off at once, not wishing to argue.

I grabbed a ride to get up towards the summit faster and got out at a motor pool camp halfway up the mountain. I walked on up the road, passing through low jungle of trees around forty feet in height. I heard a strange sound, resembling the muffled roll of drums, and while I was wondering what on earth it could be, two magnificent hornbills flew by overhead.

The road climbed sharply up a hill and I looked down into a deep valley, choked with a magnificent stand of jungle. Attracted by strange bird notes, I went off the road and down a ridge. I heard a series of guttural "wows", and imitated them, hoping to attract the bird. (This is a common cry of the white-headed fruit pigeon. I had recently identified the call with the bird). There was a movement in the foliage ahead and a pigeon sized black bird which resembled a rook flew into sight. Another shape moved in another tree and I brought my glasses to bear on a beautiful red and blue polly. This started screeching and squawking in true parrot like manner, and it was answered by another and another, until the woods rang with their sharp notes.

A white-headed fruit pigeon eyed me close by, and when I made a movement, flew with loud flapping of wings into another tree farther away. I passed under a tree through which was draped a vine with orange colored blossoms like passion flowers, among which was a green honeysucker. A strange bird called in a rapid series of "quas" that startlingly resembled notes of the birds of paradise. It sent a thrill through me to hear them, and a passionate desire to identify their composer.

I went out to the road and continued on up the hill, the road reached the summit and came out into the open, following along the crest. A large bird sat in a dead tree at the far end of the crest and through the glasses turned out to be a whistling eagle, calmly surveying the terrain spread out below him for some choice bit of morsel. I approached him, following the road which ran right under his tree. He sat on the limb eyeing me very closely, but allowing me to come quite near. Then he launched into the air and drifted out over the slopes, where he started wheeling in wide circles, climbing higher and higher into the sky.

The road descended the hill, crossed the gap and climbed sharply on toward the summit of the mountain, which was covered with jungle. We plunged into this, (I had in the meantime caught a ride) and bumped and slid over the rough track winding in and out among the trees. Coming to a branch, we took one road which soon came to an end, or rather became a trail. I followed the trail which dropped into a deep glen of dense jungle. A crow called up the valley and I imitated it, hoping to call it down. A strange bird flooded the shadowy glade with beautiful melody and a babbling (?) thrush chimed in. The jungle was magnificent with great trees over a hundred feet high, and several kinds of tall palms growing underneath. There were also large ferns.

I crossed the valley, climbed over the ridge, crossed the next valley and started up the side of the following ridge. A strange pigeon boomed in deep notes, closely resembling those of the crowned pigeon, and I started stalking it, eagerly hoping to identify it as such. A bina started "sawing wood" nearby and it was answered by a score of others that filled the glade with their harsh cries. The clouds had gathered threateningly and I heard the roar of large rain drops as they advanced over the jungle covered ridges. Soon I saw them, a white army of hundreds, advancing rapidly to the attack. It was only a few moments after that I was bombarded unmercifully by the watery legions. The binas stopped, as did the pigeon, and I turned back to

follow the trail on down into the next valley. The rain stopped as I started down and the sun fought a battle with the clouds above. The sun won and was soon flooding the jungle with its golden rays.

I heard a babbler sing near the trail and imitated it. Soon its yellow green form shot out of the dense thicket and perched on a limb in front of me. It was a beautiful bird with a bright golden yellow breast and a lemon yellow throat. It wore a black bib. A brown shape flew out of the same thicket after it and alighted in another tree where it turned out to be a golden brown thrush, with a reddish hue. Its dull colored mate followed it. Perhaps this was the beautiful singer that flooded the first glen that I crossed with its notes.

The trail turned down the valley and I followed it. Soon it climbed back up the same side and I went on down the valley. I clambered over mossy logs and splashed across small pools. The sides grew steeper and soon I was hemmed in by high mossy coral bluffs. I slipped down several waterfalls and finally came to the brink of a high cataract that dropped over a hundred feet into the chasm below. It was plain that I couldn't go on, so I turned and after following the stream up aways, climbed up the opposite bank. I saw something green fly up ahead which perched in a small tree. It was a pigmy parrot; a tiny bird about four inches in length. Iiwi-like notes resounded through the forest from overhead and I saw a large black starling. (This is the bird that I had supposed to be in the genus *Aplonis*, its notes are identical with the Samoan starling) There was another shape flitting about and it turned out to be a fantail flycatcher. It somewhat resembled the fantail of the beach only it was smaller. The black breast and throat were covered with white spots, and the rump and tail coverts were white. A small green honeyeater with a grey breast flitted about in the same tree, pausing at a blossom now and then for a sip of nectar.

I came out of the jungle onto a grassy ridge. A grassy knoll was ahead, which I climbed. The view from the summit was superb. Ahead the ground fell away sharply into a deep valley which ran back for quite aways into the jungle clad mountains. It descended into a larger valley that twisted and wound down between grass covered coral bluffs to the sea. Beyond, the ridges fell away to the distant cocoanut groves of the beach, that receded for miles up to the distant end of the island.

Hornbills called from the depths of the valley and I saw small companies of them flying in and out among the trees. Swiftlets darted about over the grassy slopes of the knoll.

I descended the slopes of the knoll and followed the ridge down. The trail plunged into the jungle again and I crossed a plateau. The harsh cries of parrots filled the woods and I saw two green pollys flying through the trees. They were followed by a red and blue one, the male bird. I came to the road soon and started down. A jeep came along and I was whisked quickly down the mountain to the beach road where I caught a ride back to camp.

oOo

All members of the Audubon Society should also be members of the Hui Manu, if only to show their appreciation of the fine work of that Society in introducing so many beautiful birds. The activities of the Hui Manu are necessarily restricted but the Society is eager to resume as soon as possible. Dues are \$1.00 yearly and will be gratefully received by the Treasurer, Mrs. Reginald H. Carter, 247 Dowsett Avenue, Honolulu 8.

BIRD WALK. Nature is so full of unexpected delights that no two bird walks are alike. On Saturday, October 9th, a bird walk was scheduled, and the members were to meet at Woodlawn and Alani Drives at 2.00 p.m. As usual, the whole week was quite dry, but Saturday morning was very cloudy and it was raining very hard. No bird lover is ever bothered by rain or a little discomfort, for after a good shower the trees look clean and vigorous and the birds' songs seem to penetrate the forest more clearly.

On this day eight very fortunate individuals, Mr. and Mrs. Northwood, Mesdames Carr and Evans, and Misses Carlson, Hatch, Kam and Kojima, were able to enjoy the most quiet, delightful, and yet exciting walk we have ever experienced. The trail was rather wet, but it showered only once and very lightly.

The first thing we noticed as we started to walk into the forest was the cool refreshing breeze combing through the guava trees. The trees were full of ripe fruits, and there were evidences of birds by the half eaten fruits left on the trees and some on the ground. Except for a few late blossoms, Acacia Koa and Ohia Lehua trees were not as colorful as two months ago, but no one can deny the beauty of the graceful spreading of the koa trees along the ridges. Ground orchids were in full bloom everywhere. The first birds we saw were the rice birds, feeding on grass seeds and chirping and flying all over the forest.

Since we knew the forest was full of birds, we sat down under a spreading Java plum, where two months ago we were greeted by an elepaio, but unfortunately no birds called on us. Quietly sitting and waiting for the birds sharpened our senses of hearing and sight. We were able to hear the hill robin calling, dove cooing, and the white-eyes chirping and singing in the next valley. The soft birds' songs, the different shades of green, and the interesting cloud formation blended so perfectly that the five or ten minutes rest under this tree seemed like a dream in a peaceful world.

The tranquillity was quickly broken up into excited movement, for a little further on we saw an elepaio on a guava tree, for this was the first native bird that some of the members have ever seen. He was very curious and came to see us. We all know that we scare birds if we get excited, but when we saw a red bird among the guava trees everyone started to point at it. It was a Kentucky cardinal. It is very picturesque to see a bright red bird flying among the trees in the forest.

After this delightful treat we continued our walk until we came to a guava grove. Here we saw only white-eyes, and were about to continue our walk after resting for five or ten minutes, when we heard a very unusual soft singing. No one seemed to know the song. We were all excited, but no one saw the bird. It might have been a hill robin. This mystery served as an added challenge to the hikers.

As we walked a distance we were able to hear the wind blowing against the ironwoods. Here we had an even more delightful experience. We stood around for a while, for we heard hill robins quite close. Mrs. Carr said that she saw an elepaio in a koa tree, but the rest saw only rice birds. They were very cheerful and singing and flying from one tree to another. Then suddenly Miss Kam saw a male elepaio with very lustrous feathers only about six feet away. This bird was very curious and friendly. He came near us and hopped from one ironwood to another. He caught flies, combed his feathers, and looked at us with satisfaction. He even responded to our squeaking. One must watch him in order to really appreciate his habits. The way he looked at us with his tail perched way up in the air as though saying, "Gee,

I bet you don't know how much I am enjoying you funny creatures," was very amusing. At times he seemed to tell us, "The world is full of beauty, so follow me and I will show you happiness." He flew away among the trees, then he came back with a younger bird, but he did not stay with us very long. He left us, but we were all thankful for this very pleasant moment to keep as our own.

No one minded the steep climb through uluhe or staghorn fern, for we were all still enjoying the display by the elepaio. When we reached the top of the climb we were able to see the different ridges with their kukui nut trees. No word can describe the beauty of the cloud formation, sun's effect on the trees, and the soft melodious music from the distance. It was quite windy here, but we saw an elepaio perched on a koa branch.

Always on a bird walk the time flies too fast, and especially this day was over too soon, but we were able to linger for about ten to fifteen minutes by a sign post to enjoy the beauty of the valley and the ocean.

When we parted about 5.30 p.m. everyone was satisfied and grateful for this opportunity to enjoy the beauty and the tranquillity of nature.

Unoyo Kojima

Next walk: Meet at the bus terminus at Fort Shafter at 2.00 p.m. Saturday, November 13th for a walk around the fish ponds at Moanalua. 71 stilts, 21 pintail and numerous coot and plover were seen on October 10th. Bring supplies for a picnic supper in the Gardens.

oOo

REVISED ORDINANCES OF HONOLULU 1942

Sec. 1072. Use of slingshots and air-rifles for shooting birds prohibited. It shall be unlawful for any person to use slingshots or air-rifles within the city and county of Honolulu for the purpose of shooting or destroying birds. (O. 707, 1937, #1)

Sec. 1073. Penalty. Any person above the age of eighteen who shall violate the provisions of section 1072 and 1073, and any parent, guardian or any other person having the care, control or custody of any minor under the age of eighteen who knowingly permits any such minor to use slingshots or air-rifles for the purpose set forth in section 1072, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and shall be punished by a fine not exceeding one hundred dollars or by imprisonment of three months or by both. (O. 707, 1937, #2)

oOo

HONOLULU AUDUBON SOCIETY

President: J. d'Arcy Northwood, 3449 Paty Drive, Honolulu, T.H.

Vice-President: Charles M. Dunn, 3227 George St., Honolulu, T.H.

Sec. Treas.: Miss Grenville Hatch, 1548 Wilhelmina Rise, Honolulu, T.H.

Dues \$1.00 a year