

THE ELEPAIO

Journal of the HONOLULU AUDUBON SOCIETY

For the Better Protection of Wildlife in Hawaii

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BIRDS OF HAWAII

and

Adventures in Bird Study

Some Breeding and Feeding Habits of Sea Birds (continued)

By George C. Munro

The sea birds of the Hawaiian waters feed to a great extent on squids or cuttle fish and also on real fish. Their young are fed largely on squids. The albatrosses fly all day and evidently settle on the water at night to feed, as some species of squids and fish then come to the surface. The black-footed albatross follows ships and gains an amount of food in that way. I have seen a large fish taken from the gullet of one of these birds. But the young we examined had only oil, cuttle fish bills and small stones in their stomachs. Following the schooner of the Rothschild expedition in 1891 they came right up to the stern of the boat to pull fragments off the salt salmon and turtle limbs hanging over the stern to attract sharks. They could devour quite a quantity and dived down after meat that was sinking. The Laysan albatross also fed on squids as shown by the numerous bills of this mollusc in the stomachs of the specimens taken. The young place their bills across the open mouth of the parent and catch the food as it is regurgitated.

It is generally supposed that the albatrosses and some of the petrel leave their young when full grown to live on their fat for some time before they take wing and go to sea. But according to Hadden and also in my experience they return, probably at longer intervals than before to feed the young and without doubt, eventually to guide them to their ocean range. As we know that some birds systematically teach their young it is to be assumed that these birds are not left entirely alone to find their way without guidance over thousands of miles of ocean. The wandering albatross of southern seas is supposed to leave its young and put it off the nest when it returns to lay the following season. But the young birds undoubtedly go to sea with the old birds when they leave the nesting island and the present season's chick.

The wedge-tailed shearwater feeds largely on a long bodied squid or cuttle fish. It is seldom that these birds stop to feed in the daytime. When they do they "raft" and appear like an island when seen from a distance. They seem to have no trouble in catching their prey, they just sit on the water and gobble it up. The feeding grounds are probably a long distance from the breeding island and as they arrive at the island about dusk the food has been carried a long time. But the birds can fill their stomachs and their whole gullet with food and while that in the stomach digests, the food in the neck remains fresh. I have taken a long garfish from the throat of a white-tailed tropic bird. It was folded twice to admit of its being swallowed, even then only the head and a bend of the body were in the stomach



and partly digested while the rest of the fish in the bird's throat was quite fresh.

The smaller petrel and storm petrels are reported to pick their food of small molluscs and crustaceans from the surface of the sea as they skim or apparently run on the water. The Hawaiian species Bulwer's, Tristram's and the white-rumped storm petrel do not follow ships, around the Hawaiian group as the more long-legged storm petrels in other seas do. These follow in the ship's wake either for shelter or to gather food brought to the surface by the motion of the ship. The petrel family, including the albatrosses, in fact probably all our sea birds, except the little white tern swallow their food and regurgitate it for the young. The young boobies thrust their heads right down the parent's throat. I have been told that the booby when chased by the frigate bird sometimes opens its beak and allows the frigate to take the fish out of its throat. The blue-faced booby when at rest always seems to have fish and disgorges when disturbed, before taking wing. I once went through a colony inducing them to do this to study their food supply, which I found to be mostly flying fish.

The boobies and tropic birds dive on their prey straight down from a height. Some say the height depends on how deep the fish are from the surface. I have seen brown boobies dive obliquely into the water when apparently in full flight. It is said they do this when the fish are close to the surface. It is a fine sight to see the blue-faced booby when there is a large flock fishing in a closely packed shoal of fish. As described there is a constant stream of birds descending into the water, which is churned into foam. The strange part of it is that they never seem to collide with the birds rising from the surface of the water. I saw this once off Niufoo or Tincan Island but the birds were some miles away and I had to view them through a field glass. I heartily wished they were closer. The frigate bird fishes from the surface of the water without alighting, catches flying fish when in flight, picks up young birds of other species off the ground if exposed or unattended. It even takes the young of its own species if the parent birds are put off the nests. The immature birds of a previous clutch, distinguished by their white heads are generally the culprits in this. Only once did I see one catch a flying fish in the air and only once saw one of these birds alight on the water. It had dropped a tern chick and instead of picking it as usual from the surface of the water without alighting, it settled beside it and stayed a few seconds when it arose without difficulty. Usually when a frigate is chasing a booby and the pursued arrives over the beach of the island the frigate leaves it. Mr. Hensley Towill, who has spent some time on Canton, Midway and Christmas Islands asserts that the booby makes provision for the frigate by catching an extra flying fish for it. And that it also catches a squid for its young. It gives up a flying fish to the frigate but steadfastly refuses to give up its own or the squid. His conclusion was formed by the fact that the booby always disgorges a flying fish and the young always a squid when disturbed.

Nothing is known of the feeding habits of the sea birds that used to nest in countless thousands in the mountains of the main islands, the uau and the ao. Both laid their eggs about May or June.

The sooty, noddy and bridled terns nesting on islands of the Hawaiian Chain catch their fish by dashing at them when they come to the surface of the water. The little white tern is said to catch little fishes as they jump from the water. It carries them crosswise in its beak, sometimes packing it from tip to base and so carries them to its young.

Gulls and phalaropes straggle to these islands but do not seem



to find the sustenance they require here and die of starvation as evidenced by bodies of these birds extremely thin but in good feather, exhausted or dead on the beaches. There are no gulls resident in the Territory of Hawaii.

Nov. 8, 1943

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# EXOTIC BIRDS OF HAWAII

by Hazel Peppin

Visitors to Hawaii are sometimes disappointed by the comparatively few native birds found here. They fully expect to see riotous tropical plumaged birds flitting in the palm trees, and the mynah, they feel, is a poor substitute. Indigenous birds we have, but to meet them it is necessary to penetrate deep into the more secluded and solitary areas. They are seldom found near urban habitations. Also there is a marked variation in species and numbers among the different islands, Hawaii claiming by far the lion's share of native birds.

More curious, perhaps, is that apart from the water birds, there are no migrants in Hawaii, and even the exotic birds seen here would be practically non-existent had it not been for the vision and enterprise of a few public-spirited individuals and organizations.

Introducing foreign birds has been an experimental project carried over a period of years and motivated for both aesthetic and economic reasons. It has involved much painstaking effort and study. There have been many disappointments, some of the most beautiful birds never survived after liberation. Others are now well established and are not only among our most welcome garden visitors but can be seen and heard on the mountain trails. The fate of many introduced birds is unknown. They have not been seen but may be living in the more inaccessible regions. Time will eventually give the story.

It is interesting to note that one of the earliest imported song birds to become established was the sky lark which arrived from England in the middle of the last century. Later, Governor Cleghorn liberated many more on the high plains near Wahiawa and the songs heard there to-day are probably from the descendants of those pioneers.

That same decade (1865) the mynah was brought from India by Dr. Hillebrand to help rid the pasture lands of the devastating armyworms, and needless to add, it has thrived beyond expectations. Dr. Hillebrand likewise introduced the rice bird, one of the few birds found detrimental to agriculture, due to its avidity for the tender green rice. The linnet and the sparrow made their appearance soon after, the former coming from California and the latter traveling from New Zealand. As far back as 1879 the Chinese dove was commonly seen. It had originally been brought here for food purposes, but had probably escaped captivity and became established.

During one of the most recent bird walks, quite a ripple of excitement was caused when a Japanese tit, or yamagara, appeared not more than a quarter mile from the Upper Woodlawn homes. This active little bird was first liberated on Kauai in 1890 by Mrs. Francis Sinclair and later by Mrs. Dora Isenberg in 1905, but not until 1928-9 was it brought to Oahu by the Board of Agriculture and Forestry and the Hui Manu.

What has been called "one of the most fortunate accidents that ever occurred in Hawaii" was when a number of Chinese thrush were liberated from their cages during the "great fire" of 1900 in Honolulu. Since then the thrush has been a welcome sight in forest regions and until a year ago it occasionally ventured into gardens near Punchbowl and Upper Manoa.



It is to the Honolulu Chamber of Commerce that we owe the importation during 1922 of the little Australian barred dove that is so much at home in Honolulu parks and gardens.

The years 1928-9 were banner years of activity for the Hui Manu and the Board of Agriculture and Forestry. During that interval those organizations, as well as Mrs. Dora Isenberg, Mr. William McNerny and a few others were responsible for the introduction of the gregarious hill robin; the mocking bird, that can be seen and enjoyed on the Kamehameha School grounds; the tiny mejiros or white-eyes; and the cardinals, both Brazilian and Kentucky, that have given so much life and color throughout the Islands. The Japanese bluebird was also liberated at this time. For a number of years there were rumors that it had been seen in various localities, but lately recurrent reports have come from the St. Louis Heights area from several who have positively identified it. No more welcome news could be received.

These are the birds most frequently found in the local environment and they have now become a complementary part of the Hawaiian landscape. It can readily be seen that the community to-day is far richer in bird life than was the case fifteen years ago, and those who made it possible rendered a distinct civic service. Information is not complete regarding individual benefactors. No doubt there are many whose names have not been mentioned, which is unfortunate, for they should be known. But at least they all must have a certain warm satisfaction in knowing they were instrumental in providing a gift that has added immeasurably to the charm of Hawaiian life.

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HONOLULU AUDUBON SOCIETY  
Treasurer's Report  
1943

REVENUE

Balance from 1942	18.40	
Membership dues	64.75	
Subscriptions to "Elepaio"	5.00	
Gift	10.00	
Interest on Bank deposits	.16	98.31

EXPENSES

Dues to National Society	10.00	
Publishing "Elepaio"	18.09	
Mailing "Elepaio"	12.00	
Binding "Elepaio", Vol. 1 & 2	2.20	42.29

Balance in Bank, December 1st 1943 \$56.02

Respectfully submitted,

There are 63 paid-up members (Signed) Grenville Hatch  
Secretary-Treasurer

The Society's thanks are due to Miss Hatch for her careful handling of funds. She has avoided Bank charges on our account and even collected interest. Approval of this report will be asked at our next meeting.



## WILD DUCKS AND DOVES ACCUSED OF DAMAGING CROPS

It was reported in the Honolulu Star-Bulletin dated 11/1/43 that wild ducks and doves are damaging crops and that upon proof of such damage farmers may obtain permits from the Board of Agriculture and Forestry to shoot them.

Wild ducks is a vague term. Several species of ducks migrate to Hawaii from the Mainland during the winter months. These include the pintail, shoveller, mallard, green-winged teal, buffle head and others and all are protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. We would advise that the Board check with the Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, D.C. before issuing permits to shoot birds which are protected by international law. In the case of the doves, we have only the Chinese turtle dove and the barred dove (*Geopelia striata*) which are likely to be concerned. These are eaters of weed seeds and grass seeds and are largely beneficial.

The report seems to us a pretext for further hunting. Members will remember that the Board issued permits to shoot pheasants which, according to a report in the Star-Bulletin dated 9/2/43, have been an increasing menace to farm production.

Owing to improved conservation on the Mainland we may expect increased numbers of migrant ducks in Hawaii. We should take pride and satisfaction that our lakes and swamps are being repopulated by wild-life. Unfortunately the sight of flocks of ducks in Hawaii only means to hunters an opportunity for slaughter, but now that we have an increasing number of people who believe in conservation and also have a law to enforce that doctrine, we may hope that such gatherings will be increasingly evident and that the people of Hawaii may once again see great flocks of wild fowl.

J.d'A.N.

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## BIRD WALK

We were a group of twenty to start on the bird walk on Saturday, November 13th, to watch shore birds at the fish ponds behind Moanalua Gardens. Four of our party were service men, whom we always welcome. We were particularly delighted with the store of information Harold Cantlin (one of the service men) was able to give about his bird and photographic experiences in the East. Lorin Gill, a Roosevelt High School student, came for the first time. We would like to have other interested students join our group.

We knew from the start that this trip would be successful, for the weather promised to stay good and great numbers of birds were on the pond. We spread out and started toward the pond when some sound sent about seventy-five pintail ducks wheeling up into formation and setting off toward Salt Lake. Three stayed behind as if to give us a chance to compare them to the stilts which now dominated the water. They soon followed the others though, and none returned while we were there.

Getting closer we centered our attention on the stilts. There were about 230 of them, and they were not in the least concerned with our interest or nearness. Their movement made a shifting color pattern of black and white -- white as some moved toward us and black as others moved away. With the glasses we could see how really beautiful they were, walking so delicately on their very long pink legs.

We left Miss Peppin there with her camera equipment and high hopes of getting another strip to add to her movie of Hawaiian birds.



We had gone only a short distance when the lily pond to our left took our attention. The flowers were lovely; and the whole pond served as adequate camouflage for the birds, which after some time we saw moving in and out. The white alae or Hawaiian coot seemed the most numerous, with dark bodies and all white faces. Not as numerous but easy to distinguish were the alae ula or Hawaiian gallinule (sometimes called the mudhen) with dark grey bodies, shading into lighter under parts, and with brilliant red beaks. They hurried back and forth, chicken like, searching for food, only occasionally giving a loud cry.

We were interested too in the buildings of Chinese architecture and the landscaping which could be seen beyond the lily ponds.

Our pathway now led to the narrow road which divides the fish ponds leased by a Chinese, a Filipino fisherman was there at work. We soon found we could enter without benefit of cum shaw!

Then for awhile the birds were of secondary interest as we watched hundreds of three inch awa being transferred from a trap to nets from which they were to be transferred to another pond. We were told that these fish would be about a foot and a half long in a year's time.

From this point we could watch the stilts again. One preened itself on a rock as if to prove to us that it does have the longest legs of any bird of its size. From here we heard the clear musical notes of two wandering tattlers, one of which we later located upon a rock. From here too we heard and saw several plovers.

We continued around the pond and were back again at Moanalua Gardens shortly after four o'clock with lunches spread out and everyone ready to eat.

We all enjoyed lingering this little while more. The day had brought pleasure and new knowledge of the shore birds to many. To one person the day had added four birds never seen before and only a bird enthusiast knows what that means.

Evelyn Johnson

Next walk: meet at Punahou and Nehoa at 2.00 p.m. Saturday, December 11th for a Tantalus trip.

#### ELECTION OF OFFICERS FOR 1944

With this issue of Elepaio go the voting ballots for the election of officers for 1944. No further nominations have been received since the report of the Nominating Committee was published in the October issue. We regret that owing to the condition of the mails Mainland members will not be able to vote.

#### 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