

T H E E L E P A I O

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For the Better Protection of Wildlife in Hawaii

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Birds of Hawaii and
Adventures in Bird Study

Notes on Migrations and Straggling Birds (continued)

By George C. Munro

A black-footed albatross banded by Walter Donaghho on Midway Island, December 20, 1940 was recaptured off Tokyo, Japan, on May 23, 1941. It had travelled 2250 miles westward in four months and 25 days after banding. It was reported by Maomiti Oka, of the Institute of Ornithology and Mammalogy, Neguro, Tokyo, Japan. Another banded on the same day was found dead $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles north of Yacats, Oregon, by W.O. Hammon, Waldport, Oregon, on May 27, 1942. It had travelled 3800 miles. Another banded by Donaghho on Midway, December 25, 1940, was caught on a fish hook 15 miles southwest of Cape Omeny, Alaska, July 22, 1942. This was one year, six months and 28 days after banding and about 4000 miles away from where it was banded. The last may have made the journey twice, returning to Midway for the intermediate breeding season and staying till June 1942. This species evidently ranges widely over the north Pacific.

I recently had information from Midway Island of 50 Laysan albatrosses banded by Fred Hadden 1938 to 1940, which had returned for the present breeding season. Hadden had given me records of several of the bandings he had done on Midway and a number of these returning birds are among them. He banded 90 young birds of this species in 1937, but none of these seem to have been retaken, so far, on Midway. One was reported settling on a boat 300 miles off the coast of Japan. It will be interesting if any of these numbered young birds turn up at any time. It is my belief, as I have stated before, that most of our sea birds when young go to a different island to raise their first chick from that on which they were themselves reared. Then I believe they return each succeeding year to the nesting place they have selected. This serves to keep the species uniform and to populate new islands. We have banded mostly adult birds at their nesting place and many records have been taken of these old birds returning to their nesting island.

It is estimated by ornithologists that the normal mortality in young birds is about 50%. Therefore the Biological Survey discouraged the banding of fledglings, as half the bands might be lost. Though this applies more to land and perching birds, it caused us to confine our attention more to adults. However, where it was difficult to obtain adults in numbers young birds were banded. This was the case with the brown booby and though fewer were banded than of most other birds, they have given us some good returns from long distances. They seemingly have furnished us evidence that individuals of this species go far from the home of their parents to find nesting places for themselves. In future I shall endeavour to have a larger proportion of young birds banded to obtain more evidence on where they go to breed.

There are several points to be considered in connection with records from long distances. The birds may not regularly migrate there. They may have been driven out of their course by storms, or may have lost their way. Therefore more returns will need to be recorded before conclusions can be arrived at as to the regular movements of these birds.

There has been some interesting information from Palmyra Islands in the last two years. Near the end of 1942 the following notes were received: "Recently we have been visited by a number of ducks, about 30 being the largest flock seen, and I have some reports of some wild geese alighting on the island. All these wild migrators seem to be quite unafraid of man, and are very weak in the legs on first arriving. They seem grateful for fresh water and food." On January 25, 1943 the same informant wrote me: "The pintail ducks which we watered and fed have stayed with us. They seem to like having their food caught. We had about 22 in a large airy coop for several weeks but they developed rickets, so we turned them loose. They return regularly to the coop." On February 13, 1943 he again wrote me: "Although the slatted pen in which they were formerly kept is now open all the time, four of them, including two drakes, return there and spend each night. I suspect they feel safe from the crabs there. Most of them make use of some pools of brackish water during the day." Correspondence was about this time interrupted and my informant and others interested left the island. I have not yet obtained information of bird-bands I sent there to be used on the sea birds, and I asked also that the ducks be banded. Possibly this information will reach me later. It will be interesting if they were banded and sportsmen on the mainland report them being taken there.

February 3, 1944

To be continued

SHOOTING OF WILD DUCKS AND DOVES

We have received two letters from the Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, D.C. concerning the shooting of wild ducks and doves in Hawaii, which was reported in Elepaio, Volume 4, pp. 27,30. The letter follows:- "Receipt is acknowledged of your letter of November 30, 1943, addressed to Washington, D.C., enclosing a copy of "The Elepaio", the journal of the Honolulu Audubon Society, reporting the shooting of wild ducks and doves in Hawaii, alleged to be injurious to agriculture.

The Service wrote to Mr. J. L. Dwight, Executive Secretary, Commissioners of Agriculture and Forestry, at Honolulu, on December 8, 1943, regarding permits for controlling duck depredations, and a copy of this letter is enclosed for your information. A printed copy of the Secretary's Orders is also enclosed.

The Service appreciates the information contained in your letter regarding the occurrence of a flock of about 250 pintails near Honolulu recently, and it would very much appreciate being put on your mailing list to regularly receive "The Elepaio". It should be addressed to Fish and Wildlife Service, Chicago 54, Illinois. Your cooperation in these matters is appreciated.

The letter to Mr. Dwight is as follows:- "There is enclosed a copy of a letter recently received from Mr. Maurice Watson, 3254 Honolulu Street, Honolulu, dated November 11, 1943, alleging the destruction of fish by waterfowl on the island of Oahu, and requesting an open season on these birds in the Islands of Hawaii. A copy of our reply is enclosed.

You are aware, of course, that while the Service has given the question of an open season on waterfowl in Hawaii careful consideration.

in years past, no open season has ever been promulgated under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act Regulations, copy enclosed. And we see no necessity at present to do so in order to provide relief in the present instance, if relief is necessary, which we are inclined to doubt. If it is conclusively proven that any species of migratory bird is injurious to fish or other interests, relief can be had under existing Orders of the Secretary of the Interior. There is enclosed a printed copy of an Order, dated February 13, 1942, authorizing the Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service, or the Regional Directors when so authorized, to issue permits, under certain conditions and restrictions; also a copy of the permit generally issued, which must be countersigned or approved by the State fish and game authorities.

From Mr. Watson's letter we feel that your Commissioners do not believe that serious damage is being done to the fish of Oahu by wild ducks, and we are loathe to issue permits in such cases until assured that there is real damage and that no remedy (such as scaring the birds), except killing, will protect the fish or other crops. However, we desire to cooperate with you in all matters pertaining to wildlife in Hawaii, and if in your judgment a permit is necessary in this or any other similar case in the future, we can issue permits and forward them to you for approval and delivery. Such permits, of course, would not authorize the killing of migratory birds contrary to the wishes of the military authorities.

The Service will be glad to have your views on the subject and will consider any recommendations the Commissioners may care to make regarding an open season on waterfowl in the Islands of Hawaii. Very truly yours, (signed) W. E. Crouch, Chief, Division of Game Management."

We have quoted these letters from the Fish and Wildlife Service at length because they specify the fact that Hawaii comes under the provisions of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. For several years we have emphasized this fact but local authorities are unwilling to recognize it. This is because local hunters have so far had too much influence in framing our hunting laws and they resent any outside influence, but we believe that our best chance of obtaining better protection for our migrant birds lies in the provisions of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

Enough public money has been spent to ensure good hunting for all. Thousands of dollars went to the Game Farm at Mokapu and tens of thousands of pheasants and other game birds were reared there and liberated. This Society has no objection to those birds being hunted under proper regulations but it strongly objects to the migratory shore birds, such as plover, turnstone, tattler, sanderling and the migratory ducks, such as pintail, mallard, teal, bufflehead and shoveller being further depleted.

It seems useless to include the curlew among the birds needing protection. It was the largest and handsomest of our migratory shore birds but owing to excessive shooting it is very rarely seen now. It still migrates to other Pacific islands but it has disappeared from the main Hawaiian Islands. Let us protect the others before they too join the curlew.

BIRD WALK

J.d'A.N.

Meet at mauka end of Paty Drive at 2.00 p.m. Saturday, March 11th for a short walk up the valley. Afterwards return to 3449 Paty Drive for refreshments. Miss Peppin will show her colored movies of the stilts.

BIRDS OF HAWAII by George C. Munro. 189 pp. Tongg Publishing Company, Honolulu, Hawaii. 1944. \$3.50.

Mr. Munro's long-awaited book on Hawaiian birds is on sale and he has done a fine job. It has 20 colored plates by Y. Oda and numerous photographs, some by our friend T. M. Blackman, who won the Honolulu Audubon Society - Bishop Museum prize for the best bird photograph in 1940. The picture of the white tern with nine fish in its beak on page 14 is very interesting and puts the inevitable question, how did it catch all those fish? It is unlikely that it caught them all at once and if it caught them one at a time how did it hold those it had already caught while opening its beak to catch another? We believe the answer is that it holds the fish by pressure of the tongue against the upper mandible. This would leave the lower mandible free to open without losing those already caught. Someone at Midway with a good pair of glasses ought to be able to settle this.

Now the average person can again see colored pictures of the beautiful birds that only fifty years ago filled the forests of Hawaii. These birds were well illustrated in Wilson's and Rothschild's books, but they have long been out of print. It is often asked why the native forest birds became extinct, many reasons have been given and no doubt more than one factor contributed, but we believe that Mr. Munro has found the main reason when he blames imported bird diseases, to which the highly specialized native birds had no resistance.

Mr. Munro has a great store of experience in the study of Hawaiian birds from which to draw. Ever since his association with the Rothschild expedition of 1891 he has been deeply interested in the subject and no one is better qualified to write this book. He has seen and collected many birds that will never again be seen alive and readers of Elepaio have enjoyed his reminiscences of those early days which have appeared from time to time in this paper.

The book is dedicated to Dr. R. C. L. Perkins and Mr. Munro speaks highly of Dr. Perkin's achievements. In Aves Hawaiiensis Dr. Perkins has given the best descriptions of the abundant bird life of Hawaii forty years ago. His work in the classification of Hawaiian birds was outstanding.

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GULLS, TERNS AND A BOOBY

We are glad that Mr. Jared Smith has found the Elepaio interesting enough to use it for his column in the Honolulu Advertiser twice recently. Gus, the injured booby which was saved by Mr. Munro's grandson, is having its "social security number" broadcast, and Mr. Munro is reported to have seen nine species of gulls at Moku Manu. On checking back (Elepaio, January 1944) we found that Mr. Munro reported nine species, presumably of sea birds. There are no gulls in Hawaii, except for an occasional straggler from the Coast. Another point which Mr. Munro could clear up is the statement that noddy terns raise two broods a year, one at Palmyra and one at Moku Manu. This sounds most unusual, they certainly nest at different times of the year on different islands but it is doubtful if the same birds nest twice in the same year.

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