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For the Protection of
Hawaii's Native Wildlife

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YELLOW-FRONTED CANARY EXTENDS RANGE INTO 'OHI'A FOREST ON THE BIG ISLAND

By Peter W. C. Paton

The Yellow-fronted Canary or Green Singing Finch (*Serinus mozambicus*) is a common cage bird of the Serin group, native to Africa (Bates and Bussenbark 1970). The species was first reported in Hawaii at Koko Head, O'ahu (Ord 1964). It has been recorded on every Honolulu Christmas bird count since 1965, mainly in the Diamond Head area (van Riper 1978). The first nesting of the species in Hawai'i was reported by Berger (1977). Yellow-fronted Canaries were discovered on the island of Hawaii in December 1977 (van Riper 1978). They have only been recorded on the islands of O'ahu and Hawai'i (Shallenberger 1978). In this paper I report on their range expansion into a new habitat type on Hawai'i Island.

On the island of Hawai'i, all previously reported sightings of the species were confined to the mamane (*Sophora chrysophylla*) and naio (*Myoporum sandwichense*) forest on the east, south, and west slopes of Mauna Kea. Their known range extended from Pu'u La'au to Pu'u Kahinahina, in a belt from approximately 2100 m (6400 ft.) to 2800 m (9200 ft.). The birds in this area were observed feeding primarily on orchard grass (*Dactylis glomerata* L.) seed heads and possibly on wind-blown seeds. Foraging was confined to the ground (van Riper 1978).

On 29 May 1980, I observed a flock of approximately 20 Yellow-fronted Canaries near the entrance to Pu'u Wa'awa'a Ranch, adjacent to Highway 190. The habitat there is similar to the upper slopes of Mauna Kea, as both are dry savanna areas with an understory consisting mainly of grasses (see Ashman and Pyle 1979 for a description of the vegetation at Pu'u Wa'awa'a Ranch). Since Pu'u Wa'awa'a Ranch was the presumed release site for a number of exotic birds, possibly including the Yellow-fronted Canary, seeing the flock there was not unexpected (Lewin 1971, van Riper

1978). In fact during the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service forest bird survey of this area in 1978, it was found to be a common species (J. M. Scott, pers. comm.).

Eight months later, ca. 2 February 1981, I was surprised to find a flock of over 30 birds at 1280 m (4200 ft.) on the Stainback Highway. This is an area of wet 'ohi'a (*Metrosideros collina*) forest, with an understory composed of a variety of ferns, native and exotic shrubs, but little grass. The birds were in the tops of 16 m high 'ohi'a trees, slowly moving through the forest in a loose flock. They spent most of their time inspecting the small outer twigs of the trees. At times, they appeared to glean off the leaves, although I did not observe any prey being taken. I visited the area again (telephone pole #333) on 12 February and saw a flock of 12 Yellow-fronted Canaries at the top of a 15 m 'ohi'a tree. On 4 February, J. M. Scott (pers. comm.) also observed 17 Yellow-fronted Canaries in the scrub 'ohi'a forest between the steam vents and Kilauea Military Camp (KMC) in Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park. Although it is possible that these birds were part of the flock I saw on the Stainback Highway, it was a distance of about 16 km (10 miles).

When van Riper (1978) first noted the Yellow-fronted Canary on the Big Island, he postulated that, because the island had recently experienced a drought, the species was forced into new areas on the island. Hawai'i Island had another drought from late 1980 through the first two months in 1981. The Yellow-fronted Canary increased its range by approximately 40 km (25 miles) during this period, and possibly began to exploit a new habitat type. I explored the area around telephone pole #333 on 9 May, two months after the drought had ceased, and failed to find any

Yellow-fronted Canaries. The Yellow-fronted Canary's recent range expansion was apparently localized. Biologists with the U.S. Forest Service conducting an intensive study of the avifauna on Keauhou Ranch, 8 km (5 miles) west of telephone pole #333, have not observed any Yellow-fronted Canaries there (C. J. Ralph, pers. comm). Keauhou Ranch has large areas of pastureland, and I would have expected the Yellow-fronted Canaries to have moved into this area during the drought. Observers watch for the species in other areas of the island. It is important to find out whether the birds leave the wet 'ohi'a forest, or remain. The Big Island is starting to experience another drought, and it will be interesting to see if they continue to expand their range.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank J. Michael Scott, C. van Riper III, and S. Conant for their helpful comments on the manuscript.

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NOTICE TO LIBRARIANS

Inadvertantly, page numbering of the July 1981 issue of the 'Elepaio was carried on from Vol. 41. Therefore, pagination of Vol. 42, No. 1, should be changed from 137-146 to 1-10. We regret any confusion this may have caused.

A BAIRD'S SANDPIPER AT WAIPIO PENINSULA, OAHU, WITH COMMENTS ON IDENTIFICATION

by Peter V. Donaldson

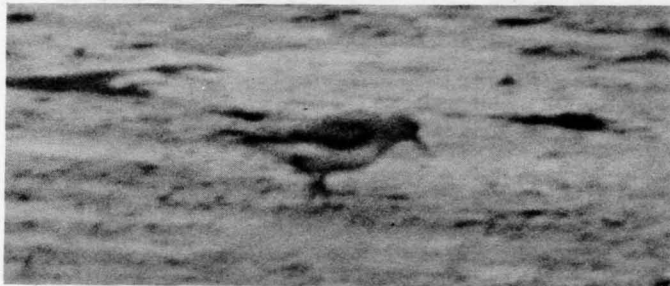
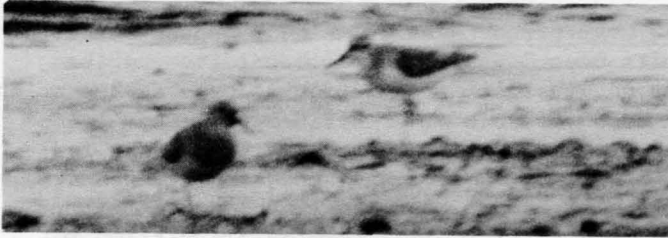
On 26 August 1980 I was observing birds alone at Waipio Peninsula near Waipahu on southern Oahu. The day was overcast and showery with occasionally gusty southeast winds. There was smoke in the air from burning bagasse and dust raised by heavy equipment in the canefields. The tide was rising after a low tide near 1100.

Around 1500 I spotted two "peeps" among the shorebirds in one of the small settling ponds near the large central pond. One of the peeps was small and gray, possibly the same bird I had seen in the area on 19 and 20 August. It looked like a Western Sandpiper, but had a fairly short bill, and I could not positively identify it. The second bird was larger and very buffy. The buffy coloration made me think that it might be a Sharp-tailed or Buff-breasted Sandpiper, but I soon decided that it was actually some type of peep. The buffy color and size of the bird (slightly smaller than nearby Sanderlings) led me to believe that the bird was a Baird's Sandpiper (*Calidris bairdii*). I did not have a field guide with me to check the identification.

I observed the bird for over an hour through a Questar scope at 40x and took a number of pictures. (Unfortunately, the clouds, smoke, dust, and wind made photography difficult and my pictures are not very sharp.) Both peeps remained in the settling basin 30-50m away from me, feeding in the mud and small puddles and occasionally stopping to rest and preen themselves. Even when I accidentally flushed most of the birds in the basin, the two peeps never flew while I was observing.

The larger peep was intermediate in size between the smaller peep and a Sanderling (Fig. 1). It had a horizontal posture and appeared long and slender with wings extending well beyond its tail at rest (Fig. 2). The bird's head and neck were buffy, while its back and wings were grayish-brown with black and pale splotches. Its mantle appeared mottled rather than scaly. The bill was thin, straight, and black, and it had short blackish legs.

When I returned to my car, I checked several field guides and decided that the bird was indeed a Baird's Sandpiper. Its overall appearance was that of a peep, size comparisons



Upper Photo: Fig. 1. Baird's Sandpiper on left with unidentified "peep". Note length of bill.

Lower Photo: Fig. 2. Baird's Sandpiper foraging. Note length of bill and tail.

indicated that it was the size of a Baird's or White-rumped Sandpiper, and the overall buffy appearance and bright buff breast, without obvious streaks, indicated that it was a Baird's Sandpiper. I had never before seen a Baird's Sandpiper but I am familiar with the White-rumped Sandpiper and most of the other peeps and I am convinced that the bird was a Baird's Sandpiper. I returned again to Waipio on 1 September but did not see the Baird's Sandpiper then or on later visits. Baird's Sandpiper is very rare in Hawaii. The only previous occurrences were reported by Woodward and Clapp (1977). They reported collecting 2 individuals on Laysan Island on September 6, 1967 and 1 at Kahuku, Oahu on September 26, 1967.

Since several field guides describe Baird's Sandpiper as having a scaly mantle, and the bird at Waipio did not, some comments may be appropriate. Bruun (1970), Bull and Farrand (1977), Peterson (1947, 1961), Robbins *et al.* (1966), and Udvardy (1977) have all used the word "scaly" to describe this species. For example, Udvardy says in his text: "Back feathers are dark brown with buffy edge, giving it a scaly appearance." Yet the Baird's Sandpiper pictured in Fig. 197 has a light gray-brown back with black and buff spots. The bird looks more mottled than scaly. (The

bird I saw at Waipio looked much like this one.) The Baird's Sandpiper pictured by Bull and Farrand (1977) in Fig. 225 does have dark brown back feathers with buffy edges and does look scaly. Apparently, Baird's Sandpiper exhibits a variability in its plumage which is sometimes ignored in field guides.

There are field guides which acknowledge plumage variation. For example, Pough (1951) says, "The back feathers, *particularly in young* are so broadly edged with light buffy that the birds have a scaled appearance." (*italics mine*) And in his new, 4th edition of *A Field Guide to the Birds* Peterson (1980) says, "Back of *immature* has a rather *scaled* look." (*italics mine*) Earlier Peterson guides make no distinction between adult and juvenile plumage. The most detailed description of Baird's Sandpiper plumages that I have read are in Prater *et al.* (1977) where 5 plumage patterns are described. Alas, even Prater is somewhat inconsistent. To quote Prater: "mantle appearing scaly in juveniles and SP (summer breeding plumage), becoming dark brown tinged buffish in WP (winter nonbreeding plumage)." Prater then goes on to describe specific plumages: "Juv--Mantle blackish and grey-brown with extensive whitish-buff fringes forming a scaly pattern; SP--Mantle grey-brown and black, with whitish and bright buff fringes and spots giving a variable blotched pattern." While Prater *et al.* consistently describe juveniles as scaly, SP birds are called either scaly or blotched.

What can we conclude from all this? I think these examples are ample evidence that field guides can be imperfect and must be used with care: plumage variations may be ignored, descriptions may be subjective and imprecise, and authors may uncritically accept inaccurate descriptions in earlier works. In the case of Baird's Sandpiper, an observer might fail to identify this species if he depended on seeing a scaly mantle pattern. Juveniles probably will appear scaly, but birds in other plumages may not. Yet, Baird's Sandpiper seems to be fairly distinctive for a peep, and some field marks are consistently described in the field guides. Field marks that do appear to be consistent are: size--larger than most peeps--close to the size of a Sanderling; black bill and black or greenish-black leg color; short legs; long wings--extending well beyond the tail; and overall buffy appearance with clear buffy breast in all plumages.

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AUGUST CONSERVATION UPDATE

BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
HAWAII AUDUBON SOCIETY

Proposed Fishery Management Plan for Billfish in the Western Pacific Region--Testimony submitted by the Society on this proposal to control foreign and domestic longlining around Hawaii, Guam, and American Samoa stressed the importance of documenting all marine mammals and sea turtles that are accidentally taken during fishing operations. Such a reporting requirement is not now included in the draft plan currently undergoing public review.

New Oahu Harbor Wasteful--The proposed Barber's Point Deep Draft Harbor as been cited by the National Wildlife Federation as one of the nation's 12 most wasteful water-related projects. This \$85 million project competes with funding for wildlife and conservation programs. The State will bear 10% of the U.S. Army Corps project. The Corps will be soon seeking \$10 million for spending in 1982 from Congress. If you are concerned about this pork-barrel project and its detrimental impacts on Barber's Point native flora, the destruction of archaeological and avian paleontological sites, the loss of 4 million gallons of water into the harbor from Oahu's coral aquifer, etc., please write your Congressional delegation and ask that the vote against further federal funding for this boondoggle.

Conservation Enforcement--Society members are urged to telephone enforcement authorities whenever suspected crimes against Hawaii's biota and other natural resources are observed. For Oahu, the 24-hour "hotline" telephone number of the State's Division of Conservation and Resources Enforcement (appropriately abbreviated DOCARE) is 548-5918. Telephone numbers for the neighbor islands are as follows: Kauai 245-4444; Maui 244-4352; Molokai 567-6618; Lanai 565-6688; and Big Island 961-7291. For violations that involve whales, porpoise or sea turtles (all of which are fully protected species) a call should also be made to Federal enforcement agents of the National Marine Fisheries Service at 955-8831 in Honolulu. In addition, certain wildlife laws relating to the sale and importation of endangered species are enforced by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at 546-5602 in Honolulu. The earth's creatures and their habitat are unable to speak out in their own defense. They need your help. Please keep these telephone numbers handy and don't hesitate to use them when violations are seen.

Weapons' Firing "Danger Zone" Encircling the Moku Manu State Seabird Sanctuary--The Society's ongoing investigation of this proposal by the Kaneohe Marine Corps Air Station and the Army Corps of Engineers has identified a number of flaws and shortcomings relating to permits, coastal zone management consistency, weapons' impacts on Moku Manu, encroachment on State waters, and access to the sanctuary. The Society is in full agreement with the State Board of Land and Natural Resources in opposing this unnecessary proposal.

Special Investigators Needed--Society members on all islands who would like to consider

volunteering for short-term investigative assignments relating to Hawaiian conservation problems should write to the Board of Directors at P.O. Box 22832, Honolulu 96822.

Continuing Problem of Cattle Egrets As A Hazard to Aircraft Operations at Hilo Airport--Mae Mull reports the issues raised at the May 27 meeting held at the Hilo Airport manager's office were substantially covered in the June 5 front-page Honolulu Advertiser article on the Cattle Egret problem written by Jan TenBruggencate. The unresolved question is what agency is responsible for eradication of the roost at Lokoaka Pond on Kalaniana'ole Highway in Hilo, which is the source of the threat to safe operations at the airport. It appears the Governor must designate the State Department of Transportation as the lead agency to control egrets at State airports.

Better Protection of 'Opae'Ula Pond at Makalawena (North Kona)--Mae Mull reports on the feeding and breeding habitat of the endangered Hawaiian Stilt and Hawaiian Coot. Mrs. Deborah Chang Abreu has asked the Society's assistance in solving the problem at 'Opae'ula caused by people digging at the edge of the pond. The Society could also request help from the owners (Bishop Estate) and State Wildlife such as: reduction of the domestic goat herd maintained there by the caretaker; fencing the pond periphery to reduce pollution and disturbance by goats, people and mongooses; the Estate controlling access more effectively by reducing access permits and have strict rules for the campers who are allowed; and acquisition by the State. The State BLNR refused to permit the Bishop Estate to sell the land to the US Fish and Wildlife Service as a waterbird refuge in 1978, although the Estate was a willing seller.

Legislative Forum Held in Hilo on May 20, 1981--Mae Mull reports that this drew about 43 people including the four panelists: Sen. D. Carpenter, Rep. H. Segawa, Rep. A. Levin and Rep. R. Matsuura. It was a modest success for the joint sponsors: Sierra Club, Audubon Society, Conservation Council and League of Women Voters. Rep. Matsuura said he would get information to me on State budget items ("hidden" or open) for bulldozing native forests, "site preparation" costs, forest plantation maintenance funds, or any other budget items connected with forest clearing.

Resource Conservation and Development Council (US Department of Agriculture)--Mae Mull attended a June 3 meeting in Hilo of the Forestry Committee of the Councils to discuss the fiscal year 1982 Forestry Work Plan. The two recommendations are: (1) To improve marketing technology and processing techniques for *Eucalyptus (robusta)*; and (2) To identify the various types of research needed on young koa timber stands. Apparently, \$8-10,000 of U.S. Forest Service funds are available now for the first project. Mrs. Mull raised a number of questions on the economic feasibility over the long haul of a self-supporting, profit-making *E. robusta* lumber industry on the Big Island, considering the known difficult properties of the wood in water retention, warping, checking and resistance to hand tooling (because of the density and hardness).

Eradication of Mauna Kea Sheep and Goats. Mae Mull reports that the state began a new phase of the program on June 1. Staff elimination efforts will go on during the five work days of the week. Public hunting will be open only Saturdays and Sundays. Hunters estimate that 300 sheep remain on the mountain. The court-mandated deadline for complete eradication of sheep and goats on Mauna Kea is July 31, 1981.

Mouflon Sheep not Considered "Sheep" on Mauna Kea. The state is not removing Mouflon Sheep from Mauna Kea, because the court order does not include this animal in its eradication directive. Mouflon sheep are, in some experts' opinion, the same species as the barnyard "feral" sheep. Further, there is no doubt that they eat mamane to a large extent. A Division of Forestry and Wildlife biologist has recently given evidence showing their food habits are almost identical. The Board will pursue this matter in a timely and appropriate fashion.

HAS to Join Sierra Club on Endangered Species "Harm" Definition. The Society has joined forces with the Sierra Club in sponsoring Michael Sherwood in his testifying on the dilution of the Endangered Species Act by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. (See last month's 'Elepaio for details of this potentially devastating development).

REPRINTS OF ARTICLES

Reprints of articles in the 'Elepaio are available to authors and others at the following rate. For 100 copies, \$10 per page of the article. For each additional 100 copies, add \$3 per page.

HAS TESTIFIES ON HAWAIIAN CROW

Dr. Wayne C. Gagné, 1st Vice President of the HAS testified on April 20 to Rep. Byron W. Baker's Committee on Energy, Ecology & Environmental Protection on a resolution requesting the Department of Land and Natural Resources to study alternatives to assure the 'Alalā's survival and assess the environmental consequences of the alternatives.

Recent newspaper reports indicate that the taking of wild 'alalā for captive propagation at the San Diego Zoo was likely. We wished further consideration of the alternatives. Such wild removal of this endangered species, the total population numbers of which numbers only between 30 to 150 individuals, represents a significant percentage of the total population. Thus, this will be a significant experimental manipulation, and if detrimental, could jeopardize rather than help the 'alalā on the initial road to recovery.

Although the San Diego Zoo likely has had much experience with the breeding of endangered birds it still represents a potentially hostile environment to the 'alalā, especially from avian diseases. The Honolulu Zoo, an alternate rearing facility, is also fraught with problems for captive rearing.

We suggested several feasible and prudent alternative measures and programs.

1. The captive rearing details must be worked out utilizing common, closely related corvids. Similar endeavors are, or have been accomplished with the Andean Condor and the California Condor, and with the Sandhill Crane and the endangered Whooping Crane.
2. Habitat acquisition and habitat improvement.
3. Further observations on wild 'Alalā populations, but with the minimum interaction between the observer and the observed, so as to better understand the perturbations impacting this species.
4. A review of State-owned leased lands with the purpose of taking actions to alleviate perturbations and other negative impacts on the 'Alalā which arise from the leasee's use of such lands in 'Alalā habitat or potential habitat.

On reflection of this and other testimony presented at the hearing, two central issues with respect to the 'Alalā's survival still need resolution. Firstly, there is a lack of adequate State funding to build and maintain, within Hawai'i, a first-class breeding facility for the 'Alalā, and this funding either wholly or in part cannot be anticipa-

ted from Federal sources due to likely slashes in State-Federal cooperative programs for endangered species. Secondly, there is a lack of State administrative initiative to seriously review leases of State-owned lands within the historic range of the 'Alalā and amend such leases as necessary to assure the survival and recovery of this species.

ALOHA TO NEW MEMBERS

We welcome the following new members and encourage them to join in our activities.

Joint (National and Hawaii): Suzie L. Andrews, Laie; Anita Benfatti, Honolulu; Douglas and Janie Blake, Kailua-Kona; Mrs. John R. Butler, Wahiawa; Dr. Roy T. Cunningham, Hilo; FTM2 T. R. Daniel, FPO-San Francisco; Helen D. Devereaux, Honolulu; James K.C. Doo, Honolulu; Kendall Ellingwood, Jr., Kapaau; Rachel Fitzhardinge, Honolulu; Mrs. A.J. Fristoe, Kaneohe; Donna Grain, Honolulu; B. Hashimoto, Hilo; Raymond L. Hipple, FPO San Francisco; Kathy Holdins, Barbers Point; Eric L. Jewett, Waipahu; Ms. F. Kitibanlubhorn, Honolulu; Mrs. Betty Laing, Honolulu; Kendall H. Lutes, Honolulu; Barry E. Massie, Lahaina; Mrs. W.E. Miller, Jr., Kailua; Mr. & Mrs. David K. Morse; Kapaau; William E. Nakoff, Ewa Beach; Miss M. Owen, Honolulu; Mrs. Tom Papez, Honolulu; Laura H. Sanborn, Honolulu; Mrs. E. Solmirin, Aiea; C.K. Tamanaha, Honolulu; A. Tiemeyer, Honolulu; VTN Pacific, Honolulu; Burton L. Waltz, Kailua; Ruth Wilsgard, Lahaina; David H. Woodside, Waimanalo; and Josephine K. Young, Honolulu.

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AUGUST FIELD TRIP

There is still room for 6 Hawaii Audubon Society members for the field trip to Manana Island on Sunday, August 9. Call Rick Coleman (262-8424) to place your reservation. Preference is for members who have not had an opportunity to visit Manana Island yet. Meet at the Makai Pier at 8 a.m. There is a \$5 charge for the boat ride to and from the island.

WETLANDS FEATURED AT AUGUST MEETING

On Monday, August 17, Dr. Robert Shallenberger will present a film and talk on the subject of *Hawaii's Wetlands*. He will show slides of some of Hawaii's few remaining wetlands, and show a film narrated by E.G. Marshall on wetlands in America. The film and his talk will focus on the value for wildlife, conservation, watershed, and other uses of wetlands. The meeting will be at 7:30 at the McCulley-Moiliili Library, 2211 South King Street. Parking is available behind the library.

HAS CO-SPONSORS BIG ISLAND TALK

HAS in cooperation with Hawaii Volcanoes National Park (HVNP) presents the next program in a new series of public programs on Hawaii's unique natural history. On Saturday August 7 at 7:30 PM in the HVNP Auditorium, Dr. Pat Kirch, Bernice P. Bishop Museum Archeologist, will talk on "Prehistoric Hawaiians and their Environment." This is a new look at life in ancient Hawaiian times arising from recent finds in local archaeology. Everyone is welcome.

XVTH PACIFIC SCIENCE CONGRESS, 1983

The XVth Pacific Science Congress will be held in Dunedin, New Zealand, 1-11 February 1983. Its theme is to be "Conservation, development and utilization of the resources of the Pacific."

A session is planned on the diversity, distribution, abundance and management of vertebrate populations in the Pacific region. Joint sessions will be arranged with related disciplines. Speakers are now invited to offer papers (with title and short summary) on such topics as: Biogeography; Species diversity; Habitat requirements; Migration and movements; Population ecology; Ecosystem studies; Man-induced changes; Endangered species; and Conservation and management.

For further information, write to: Dr. C.W. Burns, Department of Zoology, University of Otago, P.O. Box 56, Dunedin, New Zealand.

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HAWAII AUDUBON SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

(for details, see inside back cover)

August 7 (Friday). HAS Natural history talk at Hawaii Volcanoes National Park Auditorium. 7:30 p.m. Dr. Pat Kirch will speak on *Prehistoric Hawaiians and the Environment*. Everyone welcome.

August 9 (Sunday). Manana Island Field Trip for members. Call Rick Coleman (262-8424) for details and reservations. Limited!!

August 14 (Friday). Board of Directors meeting at home of George Balazs, 992A Awaawaanoa Place (395-6409), 7 p.m. All welcome.

August 17 (Monday). Meeting at McCulley-Moiliili Library 7:30 p.m. with Robert Shallenberger on *Hawaii's Wetlands*, with special film narrated by E.G. Marshall on wetlands in the United States.

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