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A BIRDWALK IN YOSEMITE

By Walter Donaghho

The day dawned a lovely one. The golden rays of the sun flooded the magnificent canyon, illuminating mighty crags and pinnacles, and washing them with the loveliest hues of blues and purples. The great falls of the Yosemite sparkled gaily as its waters took that breathtaking plunge into the mist-filled canyon below. And the birds were expressing their rapturous feelings, making the magnificent cedar forest ring with their calls and songs as we, Allan Richardson, a student ornithologist from the East, and I, started out on a walk from the Lodge to see what the valley had to offer. Robins and black-headed grosbeaks sang cheerily as we started out. A Stellar jay called, and another answered. One flew across the road and landed in a tree, cocking its saucy crested black head and showing its beautiful blue plumage to best advantage.

We turned up the road to the foot of the falls. Strange notes were heard in the foliage of a solitary black oak, and I investigated. Soon I saw several large shapes, about the size of the cardinal. Some were brown-breasted with yellow bellies. Once a bird showed its side, and I saw the white secondaries and black primaries, plus the black head with the yellow forehead, identifying the evening grosbeak.

We crossed the bridge in a hurry through the swirling mists from the thundering lower falls, and started along the trail proceeding up and along the slopes of the valley side, passing through cool forests of live oaks. Black headed grosbeaks were common, ever singing their cheery melody. Strange notes sounded in the trees above, and once a bird broke out into a short song. I searched the trees carefully and soon saw a yellow breasted green backed warbler; the Calaveras warbler. Another small shape moved in the same tree and I caught a brief glimpse of a black and white warbler with its striped sides.

At one place, Richardson called my attention and pointed up into an oak by the trail side. A pair of red-breasted nuthatches were coming down the limbs, upsidedown. I never tire of watching these fascinating birds at work. Higher in the foliage of the same tree was a pair of mountain chickadees, away out on the end of a limb, scrutinizing the foliage for insects. Now and then, perched high in a tall pine, was an occasional band-tailed pigeon. At one

time a bird flew across the trail and landed in a tree, staying long enough for me to identify it as the black-throated grey warbler, identified chiefly by the diamond shaped stripes about the eyes. We came upon two flickers that flew out of a tree near us. I followed them hoping to get a good look, and noticed that they acted peculiarly. One landed on a limb and the other landed opposite it. Then they began to bow to each other. One tried to get closer but the other bird moved on up the tree away from it. When the pursuer got too close, the other bird darted at it. The attacked bird flew out, followed closely by the attacker, and they clashed in midair, dropping to the ground before separating.

The trail dropped into the valley again, passing through cool forests of cedars, ponderosa pine, and white and Douglas firs. We left it under Washington column, and walked through the cool forests, across the valley. Robins were common, running about on the floor seeking their worms. A white-headed woodpecker flew out of a tree nearby and perched on the trunk of a cedar, where it immediately started moving up the tree. We came across a nuthatch as it descended a tree trunk, and got to within a few feet of it before it noted our close proximity.

In a large meadow I could hear twanging metallic notes, and went over to investigate. There were several red-winged blackbirds perched on several bushes. Also, I saw a black phoebe.

Richardson called my attention to a bullock's oriole. I couldn't see it too well, but that it was a brilliant orange with a black superciliary stripe through the eye. It flew across the river and disappeared into the forest. There were other birds in the same tree. One I recognized as a vireo; Cassin's probably, as it had a white iris and two white bars on the wing.

I had been told where to find a nest of a water ouzel, which I was very eager to see, and decided to go up and see if I could find any ouzels around it. I followed the Tenaya river up under the majestic bulk of Half dome, and, coming to the Iron springs, I realized that I was near the nest locality. The nest bend and out in the stream was an enormous boulder. On the side of that boulder I found the nest. It was a ball of moss with an entrance hole, placed in a cranny about five feet up from the rushing water, and six feet from the top of the rock. Now I scanned the river, eager to catch a glimpse of an ouzel. No ouzel, I began to think, when my eye fell upon a grey bird sitting on a dead limb jutting out into the river not ten yards distant. An ouzel! I approached the bird, getting as close as the width of the stream allowed. It hardly gave me heed as it sat lazily on its perch. Suddenly it came to life and uttered a series of high shrill notes, directed at another ouzel that was flying swiftly down the stream. It took off and pursued or followed it, disappearing around the bend. I went over to the nest and stood on a rock just opposite, to jot down notes. Suddenly the ouzel flew onto the sides of the boulder just across from me and ran along the sides, giving me excellent views

of its shape and manner. Then it sang a passage of high notes that seemed to pierce the loud rushing of the river as a knife cuts a cake. It preened its feathers for a bit and then flew back to its perch on the dead limb to continue its snoozing.

We started back across the floor of the valley. Walking along the road, I heard strange whistles. I gave crude imitations, as I stalked, and presently received a thrill as a brilliant black and yellow, red-headed bird flew out of a cedar. A Western tanager. It sat in plain view for quite awhile, giving me a splendid view of its vivid and striking coloring, then it darted out and snapped up an insect like a flycatcher, returning to the same tree. Finally, it disappeared into the evergreens again. Going by the Park Museum, I noticed several cowbirds, recent arrivals in the Park, I was told.

A pair of California woodpeckers climbed up the limbs of one of the large black oaks in the spacious meadows just West of the Park headquarter's buildings. I heard a strange bird warbling passages from the top of one of the oaks and a short search soon disclosed a red-eyed vireo. Coming back to the cedar forest about the Lodge again, my pleasant birdwalk through the valley had come to a close.

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COMMENTS ON THE "BIRDS OF HAWAII"

By George C. Munro

Those who have opened "Birds of Hawaii" are aware that the book is dedicated to Dr. R. C. L. Perkins. Frequent references throughout the book acquaint the reader with the background for the claim in the dedication that Perkins has done more than anyone else for a better understanding of the Hawaiian birds. Having been granted the use of so much of his records and material I was anxious that the book should reach him as soon after publication as possible. "Birds of Hawaii" was issued by the press in February 1944 and much to my satisfaction a copy reached Perkins safely and in good time. He was able to study it and write his comments to me on May 26 and I received them on July 10.

Comments on the Hawaiian birds at this stage from Dr. Perkins I think are valuable and should go on record. He says rather ruefully: "I presume from the course taken in your book that a whole lot of the Hawaiian species of birds have been sunk as only subspecies. Of course systematists do not always agree as to what are species or subspecies, but personally I consider that the species of Chasiempis, Paroreomyza and others are perfectly good species. I don't know who is responsible for first sinking so many species. I suppose Stejneger genus was preoccupied hence the use of Paroreomyza for all the species. To me it seems quite impossible e.g. to consider P. maculata and P. flammea as a single species though P. newtoni might be considered

only a subspecies of P. montana, or as it would be then written P. montana newtoni. Also I should have the same objection to the treatment of the Akialoa and the Nukupuu. The latter appears to me also to be an entirely distinct genus from the former." He also calls attention to the mistake in the tree of Genera of Drepanis where Pseudonestor is put in twice in one place, instead of Psittacirostra. He also thinks that Heterorhynchus should have been retained.

Perkins goes on to say: "I have often wondered whether the derivation of the Hawaiian Drepanididae should not have been from Fringilline or Tanagerine ancestors, but Gadow, whose knowledge of the anatomy of birds was so great, was opposed to this. Had it been so then the Melanodrepanine stock would have been based on Ciridops or a somewhat similar bird, and the Chlorodrepanine on some form more or less like Psittacirostra and the tips of the tree would be Hemignathus on the one side and Drepanis on the other. These two genera though so alike in many respects became so no doubt from convergence of habits, but are of quite different origin. Everything points to the big island having been the starting point of the ancestor of our Drepanids. Its great size gave it a much greater chance of receiving the wandering or stray ancestor or two ancestors of the present family, vast ages ago of course."

"The type of my subgenus Paroreonzyza was added by someone to my Ibis paper as I named no type. I should not have chosen maculata certainly as it is a rather aberrant species, but either montana or flammea the two first described species. I was not in England when the paper was published." In regard to the Palila (Loxioides) he says: "Sweezy wrote to me in recent years that he observed specimens (I think in numbers) of this bird on Hawaii ... I think it was towards the north end of the big island whence he sent me some insects." This supports Donaghho's observation in 1937 that he saw it on the slopes of Maunakea. Perkins remarks that "the ou was excessively common on Lanai in 1894 - in hundreds in the Urera trees" in the Kaiholena valley. "The birds killed by cats were mostly ou and I shot two of them while actually killing or eating the bird. Its extreme abundance would have made it perhaps more easy to overlook your bird." This seems very likely. I have shot the bird thinking it was an ou. Several of Rothschild's new birds were taken for other birds when first collected. Strange to say that while Perkins found wild cats killing many small birds in Kaiholena valley in 1894 in the 20 years I was on Lanai I never saw evidence of cats killing a small forest bird. Several times I found where cats had eaten sea birds in the forest. I heard cats but never saw any in the Kaiholena valley or in fact in any part of the forest though with my dogs I killed many in the open country. The wild chickens disappeared from Kaiholena valley, Lanai, and valleys eastward. I blamed a cat which later invaded our hen roost and which I trapped and killed. Sometimes a cat will find how to catch certain birds and will carry on its depredations unchecked and make serious inroads on the number of the species in the vicinity.

Perkins asks: "Are you quite sure that the 'scales' you found in Loxops were not some small ones of vegetable growth? There are

so far as I know no native scale insects in the islands of species that are covered with hardened scales. There are plenty in all gardens in Honolulu. The only one I remember in real forest was a common introduced one, very thick in kukui trees and largely eaten by Chlorodrapanis near Honolulu on Oahu, as I recorded. It did not go up into the Loxops localities on Hawaii and Maui where Koebele collected with me, and he had a special knowledge of scale insects. If there had been any native species of these hard scale insects in the forests he would almost certainly have found them. He was very keen about these and ladybugs as his main economic work was concerned with them." Koebele and Perkins were very friendly, they went together to Queensland, Australia in 1904 for the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association, to procure parasites for the cane leafhopper, which they did and thus saved the sugar industry in Hawaii which was menaced by this insect. This of course discounted my theory that the cross bill of the akepa was developed to more easily detach the scales from the bark of the trees. Certainly to develop a crossbill would require the scales to be very numerous. I could only answer that I found the scales in birds shot on Kauai above the Kalalau valley whether they were of imported or native species I of course could not tell. He adds: "Telespiza cantans. Did the date when the birds were brought to Honolulu from the "Mary Bohm" correspond with Wilson's stay in the islands? Early in 1892 I visited Mr. Jaeger in Honolulu. He told me he got a thick-billed bird (Captured by hand) on Nihoa and I have some idea that Wilson, whom he knew obtained it from him. It was before I started collecting myself." Wilson in his paper in the "Ibis" stated that he was in the islands but not on Oahu when the "Mary Bohm" arrived with the birds. I shall look up Wilson's paper in the "Ibis" and the date of the excursion to Nihoa that occurred before I arrived on the islands which would most likely be the time Mr. Jaeger visited the island. Perkins goes on: "It is curious that Bloxam found birds scarce on Oahu while Townsend and Deppe 10 years later found them very plentiful and much more so than on Kauai, but I expect the latter naturalists were much better collectors. The night I slept on the high ridge and in the early morning saw the akialoa (male chasing female) as I supposed, I shall not easily forget, as there was a terrific thunderstorm and very heavy rain and of course I was soaked to the skin, having no shelter. It is just possible as this is so close to Deppe's locality that the bird was very local on Oahu. Otherwise it is strange that neither Palmer nor myself saw any sign of it in the much finer forest towards the other end of the Koolau range. It is also strange if no Oahu thrush was obtained by Deppe and Townsend and perhaps this may yet be found to exist wrongly named as one of the allied species in some museum."

"With regard to the English names of Hawaiian birds I think these given by Latham who was the earliest describer of the Captain Cook collection should be kept where possible."

Referring to the book "Birds of Hawaii" Perkins says: "I cannot end this letter ... without congratulating you heartily on your very useful little book. It was just what the people in the islands and

visitors required. How different was the condition when we began our collecting! There was almost no useful literature on the subject at that time. I could spend a long time talking to you about all sorts of matters on the Hawaiian Ornithology but I fear that such an opportunity can never occur now and to write about all these things is now beyond my powers ... writing is quite a labor." At the start of the letter, after thanking me for dedicating the book to him he said: "But I think you made too much of my work. I often reproach myself that I did not do more. I am quite sure that if I could have stayed in the wet forests above Hilo - it rained nearly all the time during the four camps I had there I am sure I could have got the Mamo and the Ula-ai-hawane. The beautiful Prichardia palms were not in the right stage when I was near them. I have not the least doubt that these birds would have been there at certain seasons like the mamo, oo and Palmeria on Molokai which I found shifted their quarters at seasons and were totally absent for months together from the places where I found them - appearing and disappearing suddenly."

"When I was with you on Molokai, in 1902, Palmeria was still common and was lower down than I ever saw it in 1893 while the mamo and oo were totally absent from the places where I had then got them as in fact I expected would be the case at such a different season. I had no idea that you did not get Palmeria yourself. Although I really was only concerned with insect collecting I took a few birds in 1902 and I gave away the Palmeria and *Oreomyza flammea*, I think some to Henshaw and some to Bishop Museum. The latter was still as common as in 1893 if not more so. It was in 1902 that I made the count of specimens seen by me in a single day (F.H.Vol.1 p 415)". On that occasion he counted 127 birds of this species going one way so there was no counting twice. Perkins offered me some of his specimens in 1902 but I refused them. I was then manager for the Molokai Ranch Company and forester and fire warden for Molokai under the Board of Agriculture and Forestry and intended to make a thorough exploration of the Molokai forest in their combined interests and make a collection of the birds for myself at the same time. But alas I never got around to it. I kept too close to my work on the ranch and continually postponed it. When when I did get out for a short while in 1907, after I had left the ranch, I could not find the oo, mamo or Palmeria. Paroreomyza flammea was still not uncommon and I secured a good series which is now in the Bishop Museum. I saw no sign of the species in 1936.

Perkins adds in his letter: "I found Henshaw a most attractive friend and I spent many hours talking about birds and Hawaiian land-shells with him ... In 1892 pheasants were very numerous at Waialua in the lower mountains about 1,000 feet and in lovely condition. I shot 12 fine males in an hour one day ... A year later they were diseased. I found in April 1892 one covey of quail in the Waianae range. He wound up his eight pages of 5 x 7" sheets of closely written letter thanking me for sending him the book "(with its too flattering appreciation as I think of my work)." In this I certainly do not agree with him.

Perkins has suffered all his life from the self-imposed privations and lack of care of his physical condition in his 10 years of

enthusiasm in study of the Hawaiian Fauna. Tramping the forests in mud and rain; staying up all night collecting insects that were attracted by his strong light; forgetting to eat when he should; confined to his tent on the mountain bog for days at a time with the pouring rain. This without monetary remuneration but satisfying his urge for the study. Yet though we are both advanced in years I have still hopes of meeting him again and comparing notes on the Hawaiian birds which like ourselves many of them may be within measurable distance of the end of their history.

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"Birds of Hawaii National Park" by Paul H. Baldwin, illustrated with black and white reproductions of paintings by Sarah Baldwin. From "Audubon Magazine", May-June, 1944 (National Audubon Society, Fifth Avenue, N. Y., N. Y.).

This is one of the best popular articles on Hawaiian native birds that has appeared. In addition to hints on the identification of forest birds, Mr. Baldwin has included many original observations on their songs, nesting habits, seasonal movements and homing instincts. He emphasizes the scanty information available on the life histories of native birds. Further data are needed both to aid in formulating sound conservation policies and to throw light on the origins and evolution of this remarkable group of birds. Conservationists will be interested in the discussion of the effects of changes in the forest on native birds and attempts at the difficult task of taking censuses of forest birds. The undesirability of further introductions of foreign birds is mentioned as follows: "Another danger to native birds is the fashionable practice of importing exotic birds. An alternative outlet for the bird lovers' desire to improve the local avifauna would be to bend all efforts toward rehabilitation of our many beautiful and interesting native species."

D. Amadon

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SEPTEMBER BIRD WALK Howard L. Cogswell

A copy of "The Elepaio", so kindly sent to servicemen like myself who express an interest in Hawaiian birds, gave me the location of the Honolulu Audubon Society's bird walk of September 9-----the Manoa Falls trail. Since I had all day free and the scheduled walk was for the afternoon only, I spent the morning climbing up the steep "Ti slide" above Woodlawn to a spot near the main ridge where I had previously made my first acquaintance with Oahu's forest birds.

This trip was most successful. I lunched leisurely on strawberry guavas as I went along, and there were more birds than on any other birding excursion I've made on the island. The usual scolding White-eyes and restless flocks of Ricebirds flew from ahead of me at the lower altitudes and Elepaio whistled and scolded from all sides.

I tried to imitate them but didn't need to get them to come to me; several in immature plumage hopped close above my head as I stood motionless so I could get as good a view of them as they did of me. Hill Robins sang from the canyons and the pair that has territorial rights on the little flat just below the main ridge came out to scold my intrusion. Here also I saw the first of 4 or 5 Amakihi of the morning's list. Further up, from a saddle in the main ridge, I glanced far to the southeast at the hazy outlines of the islands of Lanai, Molokai, and Maui, then looked down the steep slope to where a Chinese Thrush was singing--in the same bush as I had glimpsed on in June. This time, however, his mate came up from the thickets below and together they hopped leisurely through the upper foliage while I peaked cautiously and apparently unnoticed from above, watching these retiring birds for fully ten minutes. By that time the gathering dark clouds were sprinkling me directly or by drops off the leaves; but a pair of Apapanes in the tree tops talked to each other in low whistles and then flew far out along the underside of the gray clouds with wings beating rapidly in slow but even flight, apparently revelling in the rain. On the return trip through the little flat mentioned above I had a perfect view through my binoculars of a brilliant adult Apapane dressing its plumage as he perched among the equally brilliant Ohia lehua blossoms.

With that I came rapidly down the steep grassy slope and just caught up with the Audubon bird walkers at the end of the Manoa bus line at 2:15. Miss Grenville Hatch, Miss Alice Reid, Miss Unoyo Kojima, Lorin Gill, Harold Cantlin, Meyer Klein and the writer formed the party; room was hospitably made for all and we drove to the start of the trail. Miss Kojima, our guide, let us along a route through a guava forest which together with the occasional thimble-berries in the shade beneath afforded us refreshment, and several crossings of the stream cooled our feet when tired. Several of us were emulating the ancient Hawaiians and hiking barefoot, and I was pleased to note that no one worried about slipping off the rocks and getting wet feet, oftentimes considered a major drawback to bird walks on the mainland.

Going up to the falls we were perhaps too intent on getting there to see many birds, for other than the ubiquitous White-eye and a few Ricebirds at the start we heard but one Elepaio. As we talked and relaxed at the foot of the falls Miss Kojima watched a White-eye taking a bath in the spray far up the cliff, and I spent a few minutes collecting two of the large red damselflies for an entomologist friend. Soon we heard an Elepaio give his loud four-noted whistle and then saw a pair of them leave the kukui trees nearby. As we came back down the trail we had two more close views of the only really inquisitive bird among Oahu's native species, a perfect choice for Honolulu Audubon's emblem--the Elepaio. A song from a securely hidden Hill Robin, a sharp "Stic" from a Cardinal nearby, the "hoo-koo-coooo" of the Chinese Dove, and the chatter of the Mynah as we returned to the car finished in grand style a day rich in birding experience.

Our president, Mr. J. d'Arcy Northwood, has been called to wider fields, and is now with the National Audubon Society, serving as warden at Okeechobee Lake Sanctuary in Florida. This reservation comprises 750 square miles of water and an equal area of prairie land. Our society has profited much through Mr. Northwood's capable leadership. His interest in conservation projects and knowledge of bird life have rendered a distinct service to the community, and stimulated a deeper appreciation of Hawaiian birds. We hope to hear often from Mr. Northwood, for with him go our heartiest wishes for success in his work.

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Next birdwalk: Meet at the Library of Hawaii at 2:00 on October 14th, for a trip to the Kalihi flats. Stilts are reported here in large numbers.

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