

# THE ELEPAIO

Journal of the HONOLULU AUDUBON SOCIETY

For the Better Protection of Wildlife in Hawaii

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## Birding in Hawaii National Park by Pfc. D. Amadon

Hawaii, presumably because of its large size and diversified terrain, was the home of more species of native forest birds than any other island in the group. There as elsewhere a number of species are now extinct, but the "Big Island" is still the best place to see these birds. I was pleased, therefore, when conditions permitted me to accept a kind invitation from Paul Baldwin of Hawaii National Park to spend the week-end of November 25-26, 1944 with him studying birds in and near the Park. Upon arriving I found apapane (Himatione) common in the ohia lehua trees about Park headquarters, their brilliant plumage matching the scarlet blossoms from which they were feeding. We started at once. After driving a few miles, Paul led the way down the Napau Crater trail. We took a side branch, the Lava Trees trail, and entered a jungle in which tree ferns and ohia lehua were the most noticeable plants. Pillar-like "lava trees" were numerous, while underfoot the rough lava was full of holes and crevices. An elepaio (Chasiempis) soon appeared and others were noted at intervals during the afternoon. Soon Paul called my attention to a querulous alarm note which he knew to be that of the thrush or omao (Phaeornis). They are fairly common and perch at moderate elevations in the trees, yet rather shy, dull-colored and difficult to see.

Leaving the trail, we plunged into the forest towards an area my guide had not previously investigated. It was necessary to cross an 1840 flow of uneven lava that is now covered with staghorn fern and scrubby ohia lehua. Birds seemed scarce here, but an occasional amakihi (Chlorodrepanis) was heard. Napau Crater lay in our path, its 1921 lava flows already covered with mosses and lichens. We again entered an older forest with an understory of tree ferns. A few miles from here Paul had seen what is now perhaps the rarest of native birds, the ou (Psittacirostra). This was in 1940. Later searches had been unsuccessful but today we were to be more fortunate. Upon hearing a plaintive whistle somewhat similar to one of the call-notes of the amakihi, Paul advanced cautiously and was rewarded with a close view of an ou. Another flew into a nearby tree. They left before I had a good view. About half a mile further on still another ou, perhaps attracted by an imitation of its call, alighted briefly in a nearby tree. These records were made at an elevation of about 2750 feet in a large area of protected forest and give some reason to hope that the drastic decline in numbers of this fine bird may halt before it is extinct. The akepa (Loxops) occurs a few miles away in somewhat drier forest. It is uncommon though not so rare as the ou.

On Sunday morning we drove up the Mauna Loa truck trail past the grove of large ohia lehua, koa and rarer Hawaiian trees that is called Bird Park. Shortly beyond we stopped at a hillside, Kipuka Ki, that is a favorite haunt of the iiwi (Vestiaria). Here this remarkable and beautiful bird, for which I had several times searched in vain on Oahu, was common. They were feeding from the yellow blossoms of the mamani as well as on lehua. Iiwi are active, sprightly birds. As they fly the rustle produced by their square tipped flight feathers is more audible than is the case with their similarly modified, smaller cousin, the apapane. Iiwi utter rather squeaky whistles that are sometimes linked together in an odd song. When several were about, I was reminded somewhat of the medley of whistles and calls emanating from spring flocks of red-winged and other black-birds.

Reluctantly leaving the iiwi and driving higher, we were soon in an area of grassland interspersed with groves of large koa trees. In these the Hawaii nukupuu (Hemignathus wilsoni), the possessor of perhaps the most unusual bill in a family noted for variability in this appendage, exists in moderate numbers. We stopped near several koa groves but Paul did not detect the note of the nukupuu. Skylarks were common in the grassy areas; California quail and Japanese pheasants were noted. Near the end of the road at about 6200 feet is an area of lava often visited by the nene or Hawaiian goose. We saw none. On the way down we stopped near a large stand of koa. I donned a raincoat to make a last try for nukupuu. Some ohia lehua were scattered among the koa. Iiwi, apapane and amakihi were all present and easily observed. When almost back to the car, I saw a greenish bird appearing slightly larger than an amakihi fly to the top of a tall koa. It was visible for a few moments as it clung to the bottom of a branch feeding. Its bill, I thought, looked peculiar but it was too dark and rainy to make a certain identification of a new bird. The creeper (Paroreomyza), another uncommon species, is also found in this general area. Introduced bill robins and white eyes were noted here and there in the forest. We paused for a glimpse into Kilauea Crater. A tropicbird was flying along the opposite face of the pit. The rain drove us to shelter at last but afforded me an opportunity for a brief examination of my host's storehouse of carefully organized notes on Hawaiian birds before it was time to catch the bus and conclude a memorable excursion.

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Bird Banding in Hawaii  
by George C. Munro.  
Continued from January issue.

The purposes in bird banding are many but to be specific let us narrow our remarks to the wedge-tailed shearwater, which is most easy to study here. By banding it we hope to find:

1. The extent of its range at sea when nesting on these islands between April and November and when it takes to the sea for the other months till the following breeding season.

Birds may be picked up in various ways, the number on the band read and passed on to the Biological Survey. On three occasions I have examined birds aboard ship that have come there of their own accord, evidently attracted by the lights. Many birds land at lighthouses in the same way.

2. Whether they return to the same island to rear their young and keep the same mate or change every year, and
3. Whether the apparently mutant, all brown form, which inhabits the Southern Pacific is absorbing the white-breasted form of the North Pacific, or separating into a different species.

We have a wonderful opportunity to study that problem here. On islands off the coast of Mexico both forms and intermediates are mixed and breeding together, and here we have a sprinkling of the brown form and intermediates. Handling so many individuals of a species as is done in banding gives an insight into characters which otherwise might readily be overlooked. I sometimes think that we already have evidence that the intermediates keep together and to some extent have characteristics different from the white-breasted form. I found two all browns mated together but on the other hand there were several browns mated to quite white-breasted birds. A great deal more observation will be necessary before there can be any definite conclusions on this subject. Last year I found one all brown sitting on its egg on September 3, whereas the other birds had hatched their eggs by the end of July and their chicks at that date were half grown. This brown bird has returned this year, and I hope eventually to find its mate.

We spend the daylight hours looking in the burrows for and banding the mated pairs we find there, taking notes and resting a while in the forenoon as we find that the birds come from the depths of the burrows to near the entrance in the afternoon. At night we band continuously, taking a few notes. The only interruptions are when we get an all brown, a partial albino or a return. We take note of the numbers of these. "Return" is the term used for birds banded in previous years that have come back. We can not record pairs at night. We dine early in our little caves and lie forth with our flashlights, lie on the ground, and if on Rabbit Island watch the entertaining evolutions of the noddies on the wing overhead, wait for darkness, and the returning shearwaters to come in. When they arrive just after dark and before they leave at daylight the birds are not so easily caught so we take two snacks about those hours instead of a midnight supper so as to keep working during the most favorable time.

A remarkable thing was noted about the shearwaters last year. The boat boy landed on one island on June 16 and found that they had not laid any eggs. On the 18th he landed us on another island and all this species seemed to have just finished laying their eggs the night before. This induced me to look up my journal written on Layson Island in 1891; there it was recorded that the wedge-tailed

shearwater laid its eggs between the 16th and 18th of June. That the birds should keep so near the same dates for 47 years seems astonishing. The egg is generally laid near the entrance of the burrow and so is easily seen.

I have watched this bird and others of the petrel family in large numbers for days at sea and but once saw them stop to feed. On that occasion we sighted what appeared to be a small island, but on closer approach turned out to be a mass of birds picking their food out of the water. They were probably amongst a great shoal of small squid or flying fish which are their principal food.

The eight islands off the southern end of windward Oahu which are the scene of my activities as cooperative bird bander with the Biological Survey, lie along the coast from Makapuu Head to Ulapau Head by Mokapu. The line is about 12 miles long. The nearest isle is not as much as a quarter of a mile from Kailua and the farthest out about a mile from the shore. Manana or Rabbit Island is the largest. It is about three eighths of a mile long and a quarter of a mile wide. It is an old crater with a high rim of bare rock on the seaward side, and a lower rim on the northwest. The crater bottom and the western slope have a good depth of soil with a heavy cover in most places of imported grasses, weeds, wild small fruited tomatoes and some pumpkin vines. Almost the whole soil surface is undermined with shearwaters' burrows, which extend four or five feet along under the ground. On the bare rocky rim thousands of noddy tern had already laid their eggs on May 5, without making any kind of a nest. The landing is generally rough but in our case the 65-year-old Hawaiian deftly handled his little boat and took us safely off the rock where breakers had wildly dashed a minute before. On another visit we had hoped to band noddies at night but found them too wary so we went on with the shearwaters and left the noddies until the fledglings are sufficiently grown to be banded. The Biological Survey does not favor banding fledglings as the mortality is much higher with them than with mature birds, not from banding but from other causes. So we band adult birds when possible.

Popoia or Flat Island is one of the smallest but one of the most interesting of the series. There is a beautiful little sand beach on the landward side where landings can be made from a small boat in almost any weather. It is probably not more than two acres in area and nearly covered with a growth of small milo trees. It is a piece of raised coral reef, from four to seven feet high and the trees add another seven feet where they are highest. It was probably originally much larger, but the sea is slowly eating it away. The surface of jagged coral rock is fairly flat and covered with a thick mat of Portulaca. There are sunken places, down about three feet or more, generally filled with a rich growth of a native purple flowered morning glory, Capparis with large white flowers and other plants. The first two make a fine floral show in the early morning or on dull days. In the deeper depressions the tide rises and falls in miniature lakes. The rock is honeycombed with holes and channels in which the birds take refuge and rear their young. They can burrow here only in some limited patches of sand drifts. The vegetation is with almost no exception of at least sixteen species of interesting native shoreside plants and the island could be made a fine sanctuary for this class of vegetation

of which there are some rare species on other islands.

I would say that the little island of Popoia harbors about 2,000 wedge-tailed shearwaters. We have already banded 790 and I hope to eventually band every bird that nests on the island and make a thorough study of the species there. The total number banded of this species in the two years on four islands is 1,636 and we have 40 returns from the 492 we banded last year.

I have been concentrating as much as possible this year on banding pairs as found together in the burrows and we now have the numbers of 148 pairs. This will be continued till the end of May when I expect all the birds to depart to sea only to return about June 17 to lay their eggs. Then only males can be taken in the day time as they sit on the egg. The female probably comes in at night to take her turn or feed the male as she does the young later on.

There are seven other species of birds yet to band but better weather must prevail to permit landing on the almost inaccessible island of Moku Manu which is a real bird island with seven or eight species, some in countless thousands. A different procedure is necessary of course with each species. I hope to band a number of these in the month of June and the young ones later on.

In regard to the bird inhabitants of these coastal islands, I have been told by old Hawaiians that the birds have come to some of them within the last forty-five years. This is a matter of history that should be on record, and I would be grateful for any information on the subject.

Mrs. Helen Shiras Baldwin of Hilo, a keen bird student, has given me information that the Biological Survey would welcome a cooperative bird bander to work on the plover here, as it is not known whether it breeds in Alaska or Siberia. It would, however, be useless to band birds of this species until it is removed from the list of game birds, as the banded birds might be shot before they had a chance to migrate. We must get it taken from the game list first. Eventually I hope that there will be banders on many of the Pacific Islands to work out problems of this kind. I expect in July to accompany Mr. R. B. Black of the Department of Interior as far as Canton Island to give his colonists a start with bird banding on a number of islands to the south. Later banding will without doubt be done on the Bird Reservation to the northwest and on Midway. Very much of value to science will thus be brought to light.

I hardly expect that banding will clear up the mystery of how seabirds find their way back to their former nesting island or what is still more difficult of explanation, how the young birds can unerringly follow the old ones that have migrated weeks or months before them. It would seem that they have senses that we humans lack or have lost.

Such is a brief picture of birdbanding work in Hawaii. It is scarcely likely that all of you will take to bird banding but all can swing your power to the important work of protecting our hitherto neglected shore-side waterfowl, waders and migratory birds. But that is another story and must wait its turn.

The above article was written by Mr. Munro in 1938. The colonists of whom he speaks were doing good work in bird banding, until the war brought their efforts in that line to an end.

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JANUARY FIELD TRIP.--- On the beautifully clear morning of January 21 some 12 members and guests of the society enjoyed one of the most fruitful bird walks since the war. Meeting in Aiea at 9:30 A. M. all took the transportation offered and rode to the start of the trail up the ridge from Aiea Heights. Mynahs, White-eyes, and Barred Doves were common all through the area where we left the cars; and it wasn't long before Chinese Dove and House Finch were added to the list, two members from Los Angeles remarking that it seemed almost like home with them around. Best of all in this lower part of the trail, where eucalyptus and ironwood trees are planted with the koas, was a Rice-bird's nest under construction some 25 feet up in a eucalyptus branch. The entire party watched the pair of birds for some time, one of which was carrying a long green grass stem about 5 times its own length. It flew around and around, from tree to tree with it trailing out behind, too concerned over our presence to fly directly to the nest. Eventually it did, though, and so we found the site.

Further up the trail in the real forest the real birding began. Several Hill Robins were heard singing in the canyon below, and one small flock was seen. When we were well within the koa and tree fern belt we began to hear Amakihi's every little way, and later on the flight note and gurgling song of the Apapane was heard. Seeing these birds, wary as they are, close at hand is another matter though, and all we got were glimpses, until at lunch time an Amakihi called from the trees right above us and was seen by those who were quick enough to turn their heads before it flew. One member had a camera with which he took an Amakihi's eye view of the group; it is hoped each one present received a copy.

On the way back we resolved to spend some more time by some blossoming lehua trees in hope of seeing some Apapanes, and after waiting quite some time several of us were successful. A brilliant red one hesitated long enough in the tree crown just over the bank for a brief but good view of him. Besides these more unusual birds we were well entertained, as usual, by the curiosity of the Elepaio which came up to look us over. At the return to the cars at about 2 P. M. we had listed 11 species and had all thoroughly enjoyed the easy hike and beautiful vistas of plains and seashore below us as well as the forest and its birds.

Howard L. Cogswell

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Dr. Irving Fisher, who has recently arrived in Honolulu, will study the evolution and distribution of Hawaiian birds and management of imported game birds. He has joined the department of zoology at the University of Hawaii, coming here from the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, University of California, where he has been since 1942, first as vertebrate zoologist, then as technical curator. Dr. Fisher has published several papers on the evolution of the skeletal system of birds, and on feather patterns, and is assistant editor of the "Condor". He has already made several trips to areas frequented by our shore and forest birds.

A Project for the Society  
by Harold T. Cantlin

Some time ago an interesting project was suggested for the members of our society--one in which all can take a very important part. The objective of the project is to establish a detailed picture of the distribution of all the birds found in the Honolulu area. Interested members will be asked to send in frequent reports on the varieties and numbers of birds seen throughout the city. These reports will then be entered on maps thus showing the different localities where the birds are seen. Miss Hazel Peppin has consented to accept the reports and once a month will enter them on maps which have been specially prepared. Once a year it is hoped to issue a supplement of the "Elepaio" which will contain the results of the project.

To start out, the limits to the areas to be covered will be governed by the size of our map. The boundaries follow:

1. On the ewa side--extends to include Salt Lake and the Kalihi area.
2. On the Waikiki side of the city--to include Koko Head and Kuapa pond area.
3. Makai--to the shore line. Mauka--to include all the familiar trails in back of the city.

All reports must include the following information: (1) the species' name and the number of individuals observed; (2) the locality; and (3) the date of the observation. Reports with this information may be sent in whenever practical as long as the date is included. Several reports a month similar to the following would be a helpful contribution from interested members.

Sample report.

January 6.	Grounds of the Royal Hawaiian Hotel.		
Barred dove	19	Kentucky cardinal	4
Chinese dove	8	Frigate bird (high over-	
Mynah	26	head)	1
White eye	6	(Nests--One barred dove, too	
Rice bird	3	high for good observation)	
English sparrow	10		

Special attention must be paid to birds we may consider too common, such as the mynah, barred dove, etc. There may be a tendency to overlook their great numbers in the residential areas but all observers are urged to get a close estimate of them.

If this work is successful it will be of great interest to bird students in years to come, in comparing the increase or decrease of certain species. Movements of certain groups of birds may also be noted as they invade new territories or abandon old ones.

All reports may be mailed to Miss Hazel Peppin, 2524 East Manoa Road, Honolulu. Any additional information such as nesting sites and outstanding roosts may also be included in the notes.

Members are also asked to enlist the aid of friends throughout the city who might be interested in helping with the project. All reports will be welcome.

Members will be interested in the following excerpts from two letters:

"Lake Okeechobee is about 750 square miles in area, and the Society's sanctuary area is about 30 square miles of marsh along the northwest shore. I have an open skiff for lake patrols, and a car for the prairie area, the boundaries of which are rather vague, but take in at least 750 square miles. The lake sanctuary is the feeding ground of many marsh birds, wood, white and glossy ibis, several kinds of herons and egrets, ducks, ospreys, water turkeys and cormorants, terns, limpkins (very odd birds and common here). The prairie area is largely given over to cattle raising, most of it is open grass land with a scattered growth of pines. In some parts there are hammocks, islands of trees on the open prairie, which are usually the roosts or breeding places of many birds. Along the creeks or rivers there is generally a heavy growth of trees and bushes, cypresses of great size with festoons of hanging moss.

(My duties are)...primarily to further conservation in this community. I have no regular patrol duties, the area is so big and the gas ration so small that I couldn't begin to cover the territory properly. I do about 1,000 miles a month in the car (1941 Plymouth station wagon, which I have fixed up for camping; screened windows, electric light, just like home) and take trips on the lake in the "Limpkin," a 20 ft. 125 h.p. cruiser, or in the skiff, in which I can get through the marsh... Today I was poking about in a dry weedy spot near the road, the place was full of birds, pretty little gnatcatchers, palm warblers, Florida yellowthroats, savannah sparrows, cardinals and mockers, a thrasher, wrens, and then I saw a new bird, which I found was an oven-bird. My Florida list is now 131...when I came here less than six months ago I hardly knew a meadow lark from a flicker. Talking about woodpeckers, we have a pileated woodpecker which knocks chunks of bark onto the roof of our cottage.

Please give our warmest aloha to all our Audubon friends."

J.d'Arcy Northwood

We are delighted to hear such good reports from our past-president, and rejoice with him in his most congenial new life.

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Francis Evans and Charles M. Dunn are acting as our legislative committee. Questions and comments of members in regard to all legislative matters may be directed to them.

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Despite the ban on all hunting, evidences of shooting have been observed by several members recently. This has been reported to the Board of Agriculture and Forestry, but anyone who finds such activity should also report it immediately to the nearest police station.

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NEXT WALK: To Kaupa pond. Meet at the end of the Kuliouou bus line, at 2 p.m., Saturday, March 17th.

HONOLULU AUDUBON SOCIETY

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Dues \$1.00 a year.