



Observations of a Hawai'i Creeper in Mamane Forest

by Thomas J. Snetsinger¹

The Hawai'i Creeper (*Oreomystis mana*) is an endangered species endemic to the island of Hawai'i where it is now unevenly distributed in wet or mesic 'ohi'a (*Metrosideros polymorpha*) and 'ohi'a-koa (*Acacia koa*) forests above 1000 m elevation (Scott et al. 1986, USFWS unpublished data). Until the early 1970s this species also occurred in dry mamane (*Sophora chrysophylla*) forest in low numbers (King 1964; Orenstein 1968; van Riper 1978; Baldwin 1943; Richards 1950; and Ward 1964 in Banko 1984). Using data collected in 1976-1978, Scott et al. (1986) estimated the total population to be 12,500 birds.

On 12 January, 1994, while conducting a bird survey in dry mamane forest near Pu'u Kanakaleonui on Mauna Kea, I observed a single adult Hawai'i Creeper. The location of the sighting was near the top of a mamane kipuka at 2600 m elevation and about two km southeast of Pu'u Kanakaleonui. The kipuka is on the eastern slope of Mauna Kea extending from 2400 m to 2700 m elevation, only seven km from the Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). This refuge protects the largest population of Hawai'i Creepers, including a high density pocket (201-800 birds/km²) from 1500 m to 1900 m elevation (Scott et al. 1986).

I observed the adult Hawai'i Creeper foraging alone and vocalizing on a 4 m tall, old mamane tree. I observed the bird in good light for three minutes with 10 x 40 Zeiss binoculars at a distance of 19 m. The dark, heavy mask, straight, pale bill, foraging behavior and characteristic "swit" calls confirmed its identity. The bird actively crept and foraged along the trunk of the mamane tree between one and three m above the ground before it flew off. At the time of the sighting I had extensive experience identifying Hawai'i Creepers in wet forest, and had studied the differences between Hawai'i Creepers and Common 'Amakihi (*Hemignathus virens*) in the field for more than two years. Six follow-up visits to this area since the initial sighting

failed to find any Hawai'i Creepers.

Although Ralph and Fancy (1994) found Hawai'i Creepers to show strong philopatry, or faithfulness to their home range (average size = 7.48 ha), T. Pratt observed a Hawai'i Creeper four km from its original banding site near Pua Akala in the Hakalau Forest NWR (J. Lepson and T. Pratt pers. comm.). E. VanderWerf also observed two color-banded Hawai'i Creepers more than a kilometer from where they were banded at Pua Akala (E. VanderWerf pers. comm.). These sightings indicate that Hawai'i Creepers can move long distances. The proximity of the kipuka to a large source population at the Hakalau Forest NWR could explain its occurrence at Kanakaleonui in comparison with other dry forest areas.

During the 1940s through the 1970s several observers reported Hawai'i Creepers in mamane forest near the Pu'u La'au cabin on the southwest slope of Mauna Kea, indicating that a small population existed there. In December 1950, L. P. Richards (in Banko 1984) reported a single, scattered flock of Hawai'i Creepers near the forestry cabin below Pu'u Kanakaleonui. Since 1986, extensive work by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the National Biological Service (NBS) in the Pu'u La'au area has failed to record Hawai'i Creepers. Only three Hawai'i Creepers were detected during annual censuses for Palila conducted since 1980 (USFWS unpublished data). One audio detection in July 1986 and one visual detection in February 1988 were in the Kanakaleonui kipuka. Another Hawai'i Creeper was seen on transect 109 west of Hale Pohaku in January 1989. Hale Pohaku is situated on the south slope of Mauna Kea at 3000 m elevation, approximately 15 km southwest of Pu'u Kanakaleonui. This was the only record of this species during USFWS and NBS studies of Akiapola'au (1989-1992) and Palila (1992-1994) in the Kanakaleonui area.

There are too few observations to determine whether a very small population of

Hawai'i Creepers resides year-round in dry forests or if a few individuals seasonally or occasionally move to dry forests. In either case, the Hawai'i Creeper is even rarer in dry forests than the Akiapola'au (*Hemignathus munroi*). The fact that all four observations near Kanakaleonui occurred from July-February, offers some support for the seasonal dispersal theory. This period is typically the non-breeding season when mixed species flocks often form in the wet forest. The two sightings of color-banded birds at Hakalau Forest NWR made by E. VanderWerf were also during the non-breeding season, adding additional support to the theory.

Sightings of Hawai'i Creepers in dry forests occur very infrequently and should be documented. Because of the difficulty in separating this species from the Common 'Amakihi in the field, observers should take detailed notes on all characteristics that may give clues to the species' identity. The straight bill, light throat, broad, dark, triangular mask, and sweeter, "chippier" vocalizations help separate the Hawai'i Creeper from the Common 'Amakihi (Scott et al 1979, Pratt et al 1987).

Acknowledgments

I thank Steve Fancy, Paul Banko, Thane Pratt, Michelle Reynolds, Christina Herrmann, Eric VanderWerf, and Jim Jacobi for their helpful comments on a previous draft of this manuscript.

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Laysan Albatross Project: 1994 Report Issued, 1995 Coordinator Seeks Volunteers

by Susan Elliott Miller

A report on the 1994 season of the "Laysan Albatross/Bird Strike Hazard Project" focused on Kaohikaipu Island, O'ahu, was recently distributed by the Project funder, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) Hawaii Biodiversity Joint Venture program. The project seeks to encourage Laysan Albatross to nest on Kaohikaipu Island near Manana Island and Sea Life Park. Another part of the project is looking at ways to diminish the hazards to both birds and air facilities from collisions. The contributions of Hawaii Audubon members as observers and the leadership of Steve Carter and Andy Cowell are gratefully acknowledged in the report, which is available at the HAS office for review.

As noted in the November 'Elepaio, the project is starting its third season. Dr. Gail Grabowsky Kaaialii was selected as the coordinator early in November. She urges any readers who are (or think they might be) interested in volunteering as an observer to call her at 528-4241 any day before 10 p.m. She will send you an information sheet and let you know the time and place of the orientation meeting (not set at press time). Individual training sessions will follow at the observing site, Sea Life Park.

A special form of help is requested: if any HAS member has a boat which they might be willing to offer in case of an emergency need to reach Kaohikaipu Island, please call Dr. Kaaialii. The USFWS will take care of decoy set-up, but should there be problems with the sound system, transportation rental would be a heavy expense to the limited budget.

Moving?

Please allow four weeks for processing address changes. Because our records are kept in order by zip code, we need both old and new addresses.

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Much Ado About Paradise Pursuits by Sylvianne Yee

34 Schools Take the Challenge

A large number of teams have signed up to take the Paradise Pursuits Challenge for the 1995-'96 school year. A total of 34 teams from public and private high schools throughout the state are already preparing for the competitions that begin in February. Of these, 23 are returning schools and 11 are schools that have never participated before.

The O'ahu high schools and their coaches are Farrington (Gerald Javier, Nylen Takahashi), Hanalani (Rob Araki), I'olani (Vincent Totero), Kahuku (Anne Zellinger), Kaimuki (Jeanine Nakakura), Kaiser (Laurel Clay), Kalani (Lorene Suehiro), Kamehameha (Chuck Burrows, Richard Mills), La Pietra - Hawaii School for Girls (Tom Sheeran), Leilehua (Robert Keane, Karen Nagaoka), McKinley (Alison Iwamoto), Mililani (Elaine Mahoney), Moanalua (Michelle Matsumoto), Pearl City (Ted Brattstrom), Roosevelt (Cynthia Chun), St. Francis (Daniel Katz), St. Louis (Timothy Ho), Waianae (Linda Gallano, Margaret Aken), and Waipahu (Stephen Nakano, Teri Matsushige).

From the Valley Isle we have Baldwin (Don Gard), Earth Guardian (Marko Cunningham), Hana (Tim Starr), King Kekaulike (Wayne Feike), Lahainaluna (Ed Bartholomew), Maui (Warren Liu), and St. Anthony (Michelle Paynich). Part of the Maui school district is Moloka'i High and Intermediate School with coach Daniel Bennett. A special welcome to the team from King Kekaulike High School, the newest public high school in Hawaii.

Four Big Island schools are participating. They are Kona Waena (Patti Stover), Pahoa (Ann Oliverio-Caldwell), Parker (Pat Wagner), and St. Joseph (Dan Churach). From the Garden Isle we have Kapa'a (Kimberlee Stuart), Kaua'i (Sharon Orth), and Waimea (Deborah Chaffin).

We salute all of the coaches who are investing much time and effort to act as coach, advisor, chauffeur, confidante, and whatever other roles Paradise Pursuits coaches are asked to perform by their young charges. Welcome aboard to the new coaches and hello again to the veteran coaches. Hats off to all of them for being willing to enrich their students' lives by participating in this unique program.

All participating schools have been sent copies of the new resource materials, the

game format, rules, and coaching tips and insights. Consenting to be our question writer for the second year is Kaua'i resource teacher Dave Boynton. He will be ably assisted by Steve Montgomery. Hawaii Audubon Society Education Committee members Emily Gardner and Wendy Johnson also have been most helpful and knowledgeable regarding new resources. *National Geographic Magazine* has generously donated 50 copies of their September 1995 issue featuring "Hawaii's Vanishing Species" which will be used as a new resource.

We are looking forward to a banner year working with all of the teams. We hope that they will find participating in Paradise Pursuits to be a rewarding and fun experience.

Teacher Workshops Held

In response to Paradise Pursuits coaches' requests for more help with coaching, the Hawaii Audubon Society in partnership with the Department of Education sponsored a workshop held on two Saturdays in November. A total of 30 public school teachers attended the workshop, "Exploring Intermediate and High School Science Programs." Teachers could earn Department of Education credit.

A portion of the workshop featured Paradise Pursuits coaching tips and insights. Dr. Chuck Burrows, one of the coaches of Kamehameha Schools' winning Paradise Pursuits team, and six of his students graciously consented to be presenters. They shared how they prepare for the competitions (practice games, putting together a file of resource materials, each team member specializing in a category) and what was needed to be a good team (team members with wide and varied background knowledge, good memory, quick recall). They also stressed the importance of experiential learning. An exciting mock game between a team of teachers and the Kamehameha students was held. As the host, I learned how difficult this task is! Much fun was had by all with the students defeating the teachers by a score of 90-60.

Teachers were required to complete a learning log which reflected their thoughts. Here is a sampling of what they wrote regarding Paradise Pursuits coaching tips and insights:

Great program for students; students learn a lot about Hawaii's flora and fauna, geology, and more,

Happy to find that Paradise Pursuits is not just an exercise in rote memorization but a culminating activity for a process; good way to develop critical thinking skills,

Glad to see this program going on; really enables students to broaden their science background, and

Paradise Pursuits is a great idea; could they "market" it too? Would be a fun way for people to learn more about our Hawaiian islands.

Although most of the teachers attending were not Paradise Pursuits coaches, it was obvious by their comments that they think it is a good program that should be continued. Hopefully, we have piqued their interest and they will want to become future coaches or get involved in the program in some other way.

Donations Needed

Due to the large number of schools registered to compete in Paradise Pursuits, I am requesting donations for prizes for Paradise Pursuits teams. There are four students and a coach on each team so a group of five prizes would be most appreciated. Past prizes have ranged from books, notecards, and T-shirts to campouts and kayak trips. Please call me at 373-3062 to arrange pick-up of any donations. Your help is much appreciated!

Mahalo HEI

A very special thank you to Hawaiian Electric Industries Charitable Foundation for once again being the major sponsor of Paradise Pursuits. Launched in 1991, Paradise Pursuits has evolved and grown over the years to become an exemplary program of the Hawaii Audubon Society. Hundreds of Hawaii's high school students have benefitted from this unique environmental quiz show. In addition, the general public when viewing television broadcasts of the final rounds of competition is exposed to conservation information and to the concept that this knowledge is important to our future. Financial support from Hawaiian Electric Industries Charitable Foundation is crucial to the growth and success of Paradise Pursuits. On behalf of all of the people of Hawaii, the HAS wishes to thank HEI for their continuing support of a most worthy educational endeavor.

Office/At Home Volunteers Needed by Susan Elliott Miller

'Elepaio Mailing Menehune Moving On—Would You Like to Be One?

Menehune are reputed to be known by their works but seldom seen. Two women who have been stalwart assistants to Bob Pyle, HAS membership chair, are certainly in that category. Now, however, other tasks are calling them, and they would like to find new menehune to take their places.

Christi Moore has come into the HAS office to maintain the HAS membership and subscription files and produce labels as needed for many moons. She wants to find someone soon to teach and work with, as she will be moving on in the spring. Experience with MacIntosh computers and Filemaker software would be a plus, but she will work with a willing volunteer. Time commitment is several hours each month to do updates (frequency can be monthly or less) and produce labels. Call the office (528-1432) and leave your name and number; it will be forwarded to Christi.

Alice Zacherle has been updating the mailing labels received from National Audubon Society (for those who are members of both societies) to reflect address changes and added members. The information is supplied to her by Bob Pyle, who will be happy to train a new helper. Please call him at 262-4046 (H) to let him know of your interest. Again, it is a few hours each month and can be done at home.

Mahalo to Christi and Alice for their loyal help!

Hey, Buddy! Got an Hour?

After several weeks as HAS' Administrative Director, it has become apparent that keeping the office from being inundated by paper is a major need.

Volunteer Lynnea Overholt has been putting in yeoman time catching up with the past accumulation. Now we need to work out ways to keep ahead of the paper storm.

There are several tasks that would help if they were done on a regular basis in an hour or two a week, after work or during lunch hour.

If any of these sound interesting, please call me at 528-1432.

HAS receives newsletters from Audubon chapters throughout the United States and from ornithological societies around the world. These need to be filed so that they can be a resource to HAS' members.

Any office, ours included, needs to keep its records, correspondence, and such in order by keeping filing current.

The office receives requests for membership information during each week; it would be more efficient to respond to them all at one time during the week.

I hope these opportunities will provide a way for more people to help us keep the paper storm at bay!

You Can Help With January Phonathon Without Leaving Home

After a two-year hiatus, a phonathon follow-up to the annual mailed fund appeal will be conducted by Hawaii Audubon Society's board members and friends. Funds raised as a result of this activity are targeted specifically to the HAS' conservation and education work.

You can be a friend in one (or more) of the following ways. Call Susan Miller at the office (528-1432) to volunteer.

Research telephone numbers: National Audubon Society does not have telephone numbers in their records nor does HAS have numbers for all members. You can help without leaving home—looking up numbers to add to labels you will receive and return by mail. It is a good post-holiday project, and that is when we will get the labels.

Volunteer the use of your office with multiple phone lines; the phonathon will be conducted on evenings or weekends in January.

Volunteer to help call. You will be calling Audubon members who haven't responded to the annual mail appeal.

Last, and most important, respond positively and generously if you are called by your fellow members!

Mahalo Nui Loa Farrington High Leo Club

by Susan Elliott Miller

On 10 November, seven members of the Leo Club, a service organization at Farrington High School, gave three hours of their time (on a school holiday) to come to the HAS office and stamp 2,500 envelopes with our return address so they would be ready for the annual mailing party on 18 November. They also alphabetized the old donation record cards, which were all kapakahi, and prepared the mailing of invoices to 'Elepaio subscribers.

My deep appreciation to Ester Bermillo, Melanie Duldulao, Genevieve Negranza, Janice Nguyen, Armi Pogba, Shana Toledo, and Leslie Tokuda, and to their advisor and provider of transportation, Mr. Nysten Takahashi.

1991 'Elepaio Index Available

Volunteers Joel Simasko and Susan Schenk recently completed the index to Volume 51 (1991) of the 'Elepaio. Copies are being sent to all institutional subscribers. Others who want a copy are asked to send a self-addressed stamped envelope to the HAS office with your request. Mahalo to Joel and Susan!

Errata

Lance Tanino, the September field trip leader, reports an error that appeared in the field trip report in the November issue. The group did not see 'Amakihi and bulbuls ground feeding on guava. What they did see was a flock of Red-billed Leiostrix feeding on strawberry guava on the ground. Tanino says "the fact that our group was able to approach the birds so closely in the middle of the trail was uncommon." Ed.

Rare Bird Search and Survey Project

by Michelle Reynolds

A full-time team of three ornithologists and two interns are launching field surveys in remote areas of Hawai'i, Maui, and Kaua'i. Searches began on the Big Island and Maui in November and will begin on Kaua'i early in 1996. The search team, which will be operating through May 1996, is recruiting the expertise of botanists, resource managers, birders, and biologists to help find Bishop's O'o, Maui 'Akepa, Po'ouli, Nukupu'u, Kaua'i O'o, 'Akialoa, Kama'o, Puaiohi, and O'u. In their search for these critically endangered target species, survey efforts will emphasize remote areas missed by the systematic Forest Bird Surveys, areas ornithologically neglected due to remoteness of terrain, and areas with suitable habitats where confirmed or unconfirmed detections have been reported.

The team is funded and administered by the National Biological Service (NBS). The NBS is asking anyone who has recently sighted critically endangered forest birds to report these sightings with details of the bird's location, behavior, and distinguishing characteristics to them on Hawai'i island, (808) 967-7396.

Research Grants

The Hawaii Audubon Society makes grants for research in Hawaiian or Pacific natural history. Awards generally do not exceed \$500 and are oriented toward small-scale projects within Hawaii. Special consideration will be given to those applicants studying dryland forests and aeolian systems on Hawai'i.

The deadlines for receipt of grant applications are 1 April and 1 October. For an application form send a self-addressed stamped envelope to Grants, Hawaii Audubon Society, 1088 Bishop Street, Suite 808, Honolulu, HI 96813. For more information, call Phil Bruner, (808) 293-3820 (W).

Come Join the Christmas Bird Counts

Participants are needed to make the annual statewide Christmas counts a success. This is a sincere plea for help. You do not need to be an expert birdwatcher or ornithologist to participate.

Information collected during the counts will be compiled and submitted for publication in *Audubon Field Notes*, a magazine which includes the Christmas count volume and four other seasonal issues reporting bird observations throughout North America and Hawaii. Participants' fees (\$5 per person) go entirely to help offset the cost of publishing the Christmas count issue.

Christmas bird counts in Hawaii have been a longstanding tradition and one of the Hawaii Audubon Society's favorite annual field and social events. Bird counting will be done in towns, suburbs, wetlands, sea cliffs, beaches, grasslands, mountains, and forest.

Following are a list of the counts and the person to contact for more information and to sign up. As of press time some count dates had not been scheduled.

Hawai'i Island

North Kona. Contact: Reginald David, 329-9141 (W).

Volcano, Saturday, 30 December. Contact: Larry Katahira, 967-8226.

Kaua'i

Kapa'a, Wednesday, 27 December. Contact: Barbara Stuart, 826-9233 (H).

Waimea, Saturday, 30 December. Contact: Kate Reinard, 335-9975 (W).

Maui

Pu'u O Kaka'e. Contact: Fern Duvall, 572-1584 (H).

Moloka'i

Kualapu'u, Contact Nature Conservancy on Moloka'i, 553-5236.

O'ahu

Honolulu, Sunday, 17 December. Contact: Tony McCafferty, 523-1940 (H).

Waipi'o, Tuesday, December 19. Contact: David Bremer, 623-7613 (H).

T-shirts for Sale

The Hawaii Audubon Society has a stock of T-shirts designed to spread the Audubon message. Not only are they attractive personal apparel, but they make excellent presents as well.

T-shirts bearing the Society's 'Elepaio logo are available in blue spruce and oatmeal with a black design and in forest green with an ecru design. In addition, the "hot" Kolea (Pacific Golden Plover) T-shirts are also available. This T-shirt is white with a three-color design of the Kolea and native hibiscus. Proceeds from the Kolea T-shirt go to help HAS fund research on shorebirds in Hawai'i and elsewhere in the Pacific region.

T-shirts are \$12 each, plus \$2.00 per shirt for postage. They are available in medium, large, and extra large adult sizes only. When ordering T-shirts, be sure to list size and first, second, and third choice of color. To order T-shirts send your check, payable to the Hawaii Audubon Society, to Yvonne Izu, 1957 Alai Place, Wahiawa, HI 96786. Don't forget to add \$2.00 per shirt for postage. Insufficient postage will delay your order until the proper amount is remitted. T-shirts are not available at the HAS office.

11 December Annual Meeting Features Bird ID Help for Christmas Counts

by Linda Paul

Thinking about participating in the Christmas counts but feel as if you would like a refresher on the birds you might see? Come to the combined Hawaii Audubon Society annual meeting and December program meeting at the Bishop Museum, Monday, 11 December, at 7:30 p.m. for the slide presentation by former HAS President and Kailua-Kona photographer Reggie David.

(Everyone who attended his presentation last year felt so confident that afterwards they all signed up for the count!)

Also congratulate the 1996 Board members and officers, who will be announced that night, and do some Christmas shopping: *Hawaii's Birds* and HAS T-shirts in all varieties will be available for purchase.

See you there!

Calendar of Events

Education Committee Meeting

Monthly meeting of the Education Committee, 7:00 p.m., Burger King, University and Metcalf. To join and for December and January dates call Emily Gardner, 734-3921 (H). The Committee is actively seeking new members to work on this season's Paradise Pursuits program.

Conservation Committee Meeting

Monthly meeting of the Conservation Committee, 6:00 p.m., at Bale Sandwich Shop in Manoa Marketplace (near Safeway.) To join and for December and January dates call David Hill, 941-4854 (evenings).

Monday, December 4

HAS Board meeting, 6:00 p.m., at the office.

Monday, December 11

Annual Meeting. Election results and program on how to identify birds you will see on the Christmas Bird Counts. Bishop Museum, Paki Conference Room, 7:30 p.m. Refreshments will be served. See story on page 59.

December 17 Through December 30

Christmas Bird Counts. See story on page 59.

Monday, January 8

HAS Board meeting, 6:00 p.m., at the office.

Sunday, January 28

Whale watching hike at Koko Head from 9 a.m. to 12 noon. Hike will loop around Nono'ula and 'Ihi'ihilauakea Craters with panoramic views of the east coast of O'ahu, the Moloka'i Channel, and, if the day is clear, the islands of Moloka'i and Lana'i. The hike will take place during the peak of the humpback whalewatching season and this is a great opportunity to watch for the whales that winter here. There will be some loose rocks so wear sturdy shoes, and bring binoculars, water, sunscreen, snacks, etc. Everyone is to meet at the corner of Nawiliwili St. and Kalaniana'ole Highway in Hawaii Kai at 9:00 a.m. (see map in the yellow pages). If you need a ride call David Hill, the hike leader, at 941-4854 (H). Suggested donation: \$2.00.

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