



# 'ELEPAIO

Journal of the  
Hawaii Audubon Society

For the Protection of  
Hawaii's Native Wildlife

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AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 1996

## Disease Threatens Green Sea Turtles

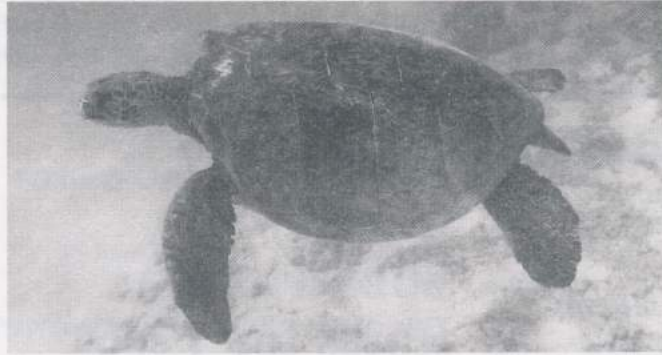
by Stefanie Barrett

When the green sea turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) was listed under the Endangered Species Act in 1978, biologists cited numerous threats to its survival, including habitat loss, human exploitation, artificial lighting on nesting beaches, and incidental take during commercial fishing operations. Since that time, scientists have identified another significant threat—a disease known as green turtle fibropapillomatosis.

This disease may turn out to have a severe impact on the long-term survival of green turtles, and possibly other sea turtle species, throughout the world. Researchers are working hard in a cooperative effort to identify the causes and mechanisms responsible for its spread.

Green turtle fibropapillomatosis was first described over 50 years ago in an adult green turtle found near Key West, Florida, but its significance to sea turtle populations was not realized at the time. Following this discovery, the disease was reported in the Gulf of Mexico and in the Pacific, west Atlantic, Caribbean, and Indian Oceans. A significant increase in cases has been reported over the last decade in well-monitored areas, particularly Florida and Hawaii. For example, since 1989, incidence of green turtle fibropapillomatosis at Kaneohe Bay on the Hawaiian island of O'ahu has ranged from 49 to 92 percent of turtles captured. The disease generally strikes large juveniles, but adults can also be affected.

The disease is characterized by one or more noncancerous fibrous tumors, which are commonly located on areas of soft skin, such as the neck, chin, mouth, eyes, flippers, and base of the tail. These tumors can be debilitating and are often fatal in severe cases. The disease may cause an increased susceptibility to marine parasites, obstructed feeding and swimming, greater vulnerability to fishing net entanglement, disorienta-



**Adult  
Female  
Hawaiian  
Green  
Turtle**

Photo by  
George H. Balazs

tion, and impaired vision or blindness. Similar lesions have been reported in flatback (*Natator depressus*), loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*), and olive ridley (*Lepidochelys olivacea*) sea turtles.

The cause of the disease is unknown at this time, but researchers at the University of Florida suspect it is most likely caused by a viral infection. Through a cooperative agreement with the Fish and Wildlife Service, the researchers have been able to narrow down the possible disease agents, ruling out most bacteria and trematode (parasitic flatworm) eggs. Evidence of a herpes-like virus was found, but researchers are unclear whether it is a primary or secondary infection. Once the cause of the disease is identified, a monitoring program can be implemented to determine an individual or population's exposure, the route of transmission in the wild, potential vectors or disease reservoirs, and the possible role of other environmental factors.

In a recent paper, Doctors L.H. Herbst and P.A. Klein of the University of Florida's Department of Comparative and Experimental Pathology described the challenges involved in assessing the influence of environmental factors on the incidence of the disease. Previous studies show significant variations in its occurrence, even between locations that are relatively close. For example, juvenile green turtles in the Indian River lagoon on Florida's Atlantic coast have shown a long-term average incidence of 50 percent, while a population on the ocean side of the barrier islands, less than a kilometer away, showed no evidence of the disease. Previous studies suggest that turtles

in near-shore habitats with nearby human disturbance (industrial, agricultural, and urban development) have a higher incidence. Some researchers speculate that environmental contaminants may suppress the turtles' immune systems, but more study is required before any conclusions can be made.

There are still many questions about the disease and no proven solutions. However, ways to reduce its incidence and impacts may exist. First, habitat quality can be improved in areas where occurrence of the disease is high. Second, the potential to transmit the disease can be minimized. Handlers of affected turtles should use strict hygienic techniques and minimize the translocation of turtles or contaminated equipment. Third, surgical removal of tumors for the purpose of rehabilitation is a possibility for captive individuals, although not a practical option for wild populations. Experience has shown that tumors frequently regenerate. Researchers may someday develop an effective vaccine, but vaccinating turtles in the wild also would be impractical.

Despite the progress that has been made, there is still a long way to go in the struggle to control the disease's threat to green turtles and other sea turtle species. Through continued cooperation between the FWS, University of Florida, and other agencies and research facilities, scientists hope the gap between the knowns and unknowns of green turtle fibropapillomatosis will steadily close.

Source: Endangered Species Bulletin,  
March/April, 1996



# New Rules for Artists Hunting Duck Stamp Honors

by Mitch Snow  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

New entry dates, new entry fees, and new contest dates have been added to the challenges wildlife artists face in the contest for the top prize in their field — the annual Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest sponsored by the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Rule changes released by the Duck Stamp Office set the entry postmark deadline at midnight, Friday, August 30, 1996, sixteen days earlier than last year's deadline. The

rules also raised contest entry fees to \$100. This increase in entry fees should cover all of the expenses of running the competition, according to Robert Lesino, Chief of the service's Federal Duck Stamp Program.

The species eligible for portrayal this year are green-winged teal, black duck, Canada goose, greater scaup, and northern pintail. The new rules also clarify permissible subject matter. "Designs may include, but are not limited to, hunting dogs, hunting scenes, use of waterfowl decoys, national wildlife refuges as the background of habitat scenes, and other designs that depict the sporting, conservation, stamp collecting, and other uses of the stamp," Lesino said.

Another rule change sets a minimum age requirement of eighteen for contest participation. "The service encourages younger wildlife artists to participate through their schools in the nationwide Junior Duck Stamp Design Program," Lesino said. The new rules also incorporate minor changes to the scoring system used in the contest's second round.

Traditionally held in the beginning of November, this year's contest will be held October 15-17, 1996, to coincide with the service's annual National Wildlife Refuge Week observance. The contest will be held in the Department of the Interior Building Auditorium, 1849 C Street, NW, Washington, DC. The public may view the 1996 Federal Duck Stamp Contest entries Tuesday, October 15, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Judging begins Wednesday, October 16, at 10:30 a.m. and continues until about noon the following day when the winner will be announced.

The dates for the annual Duck Stamp First Day of Sale celebrations have also changed. These celebrations, hosted to honor the winning artist and announce the availability of the new duck stamp, have traditionally been held June 30 in Washington, DC, and July 1 in the artist's hometown. This year, however, the Washington, DC, First Day of Sale ceremony was held June 27 at the National Postal Museum, where a new duck stamp exhibit was unveiled. The artist's ceremony was held June 29 in Basking Ridge, New Jersey, to honor last year's contest winner, Wilhelm Goebel.

Federal Duck Stamps must be purchased annually by all waterfowl hunters sixteen years of age and older; however, they are also purchased by a growing number of stamp collectors and other conservationists as a way to contribute to wildlife and

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habitat conservation. Federal Duck Stamps are on sale for \$15 at most U.S. Post Offices, national wildlife refuges, and sporting goods stores.

From every duck stamp dollar, 98 cents is used for wetlands acquisition for the National Wildlife Refuge System. Since 1934 when the Federal Duck Stamp was created, the stamps have raised more than \$500 million and helped purchase more than four million acres of habitat for the refuge system, which now includes 508 refuges. This vital refuge habitat benefits a wide range of wildlife, not just waterfowl. About one-third of our nation's endangered species find food and shelter in wildlife refuges.

The service commissioned artists to design the Federal Duck Stamp until 1949. Since then, annual contests have been held in which wildlife artists compete to have their design featured on the next year's stamp. The species eligible for portrayal change each year to ensure all species of North American waterfowl will eventually appear on a Federal Duck Stamp.

Although the winner of the Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest receives no cash award from the federal government, winning artists stand to make hundreds of thousands of dollars from the sale of limited edition prints of their duck stamp design, as well as to realize increased value in their other paintings.

For a copy of the 1996 Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest rules, write: Federal Duck Stamp Program, 1849 C Street, NW., Room 2058, Washington, DC 20240; or telephone (202)-208-4354.

## Hawaii's First Federal Junior Duck Stamp Winner Selected

by Barbara Maxfield  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Hawaii's first entry in the Federal Junior Duck Stamp contest in Washington, D.C., will most appropriately be a drawing of one of its unique native species, the Laysan duck. Twelve-year old Viengdaroune Khenmy of Central Intermediate School was named the Best of Show winner with his entry titled "Laysan Duck Among the Waterlilies."

The Best of Show entry was selected by a panel of five judges from sixty entries submitted by Hawaiian schoolchildren ranging in age from six to seventeen years. Eleven first place, nine second place, eight third place and thirty-two honorable mention ribbons also were awarded. Hawaii's Best of Show entry went on to compete with the forty-nine winning entries from the other states in the national contest held at the Smithsonian National Postal Museum on June 25.

Khenmy's winning entry is a colored pencil and black ink rendition of the Laysan duck, an endangered species known only from Laysan Island in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. Its entire population, from 450 to 600 birds, is protected and managed within the Hawaiian Islands National Wild-

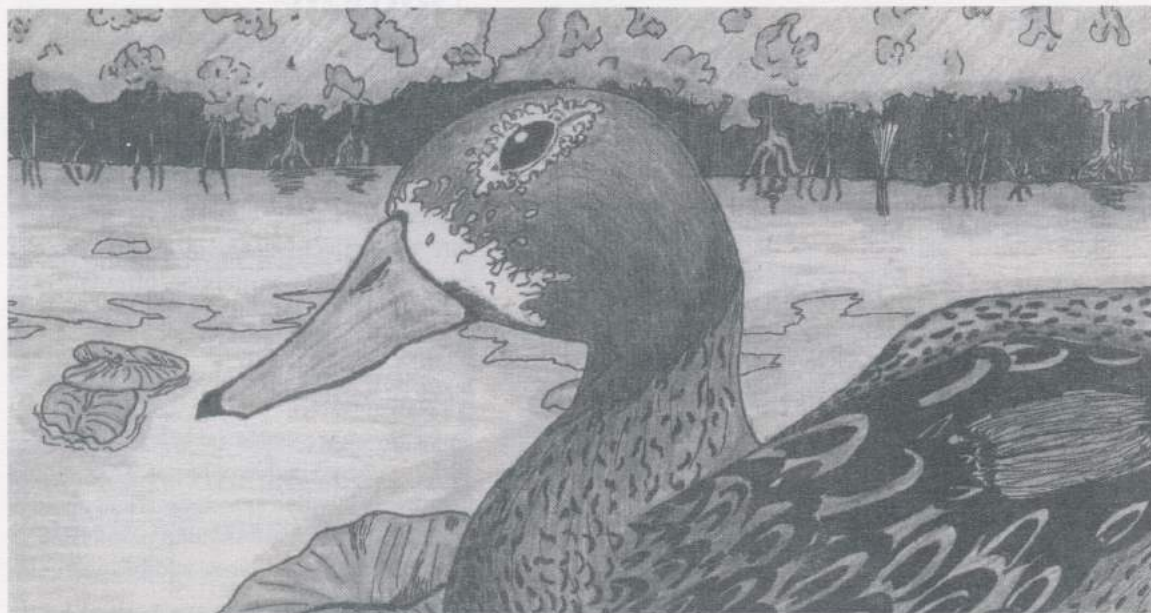
life Refuge. The entry was submitted by art instructor Evelyn-Gail Miike of Central Intermediate School in Honolulu.

The entries were judged by five people representing their field of expertise: Chief Judge Ron Walker is from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Pacific Islands Ecoregion and is a wildlife artist himself; Diana King represented the Hawaii Nature Center, where she is the director of education; Peter Luscomb, general curator of the Honolulu Zoo, represented the host of the contest; wildlife biologist Carol Terry served as the Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources' judge; and Marion Yuen, a retired schoolteacher with thirty years of experience and a fine arts degree represented the Hawaii Department of Education.

"Our judges were faced with the almost impossible task of selecting just one Best of Show entry," said Barbara Maxfield, one of the coordinators of Hawaii's Federal Junior Duck Stamp Contest. "Every time I looked at the entries, I was amazed at the artistic abilities of these young people. Each and every one of them is a winner, and we're very proud of all of our entrants."

The Federal Junior Duck Stamp Contest is sponsored by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to heighten awareness and appreciation of waterfowl and wetlands conservation among young people and to spotlight artistic talent among students at all grade levels. It is patterned after the long-standing Federal Duck Stamp Contest used to select the design for the Nation's annual migratory bird hunting stamp.

(See "Federal Junior Duck Stamp Contest Arrives in Hawaii" *'Elepaio*, March 1996:14)



**Best of Show winner:**  
**"Laysan Duck Among the Waterlilies."**  
**by Viengdaroune Khenmy of Central Intermediate School**



# Bringing Back the Birds

by Dee Butler

They said it couldn't be done but more than 1,800 partners under the North American Waterfowl Management Plan are bringing back the birds.

"The plan combines international cooperation in migratory bird and wetland habitat management with voluntary non-regulated public-private partnerships to get the job done," said Mollie Beattie, director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The plan, an international agreement signed by the governments of the United States, Mexico, and Canada, was developed in the early 1980s when waterfowl populations plummeted to record lows. Wetlands crucial to the survival of waterfowl were becoming increasingly scarce. More than fifty percent of the United States' original 220 million acres of wetlands had been lost to agricultural, urban, and industrial expansion. Canada had experienced similar losses.

This loss of habitat, coupled with the fact that the remaining wetlands were literally drying up as a result of the prolonged droughts of the 1980s and early 1990s, put our waterfowl populations into a long downward spiral. From the 1970s to 1985, breeding populations of ten North American duck species plunged an average of thirty-one percent. Particularly hard-hit were the northern pintail, down by sixty-one percent; the mallard, with a fifty-two percent drop; the American wigeon, which fell forty-one percent; and the green-winged teal, down thirty-four percent.

On May 14, 1986, the U.S. Secretary of the Interior and Canada's Minister of the Environment responded by signing the plan, focusing the energies of Canadian and U.S. scientists on thirty-four areas of major concern. The plan called for protecting, restoring, or enhancing wetlands to return waterfowl populations to the levels of the 1970s.

The plan provides a blueprint for partners to design, fund, and implement projects addressing regional concerns and issues in light of international goals. Partnerships are open to federal, state, and local government agencies; businesses; conservation organizations; private individuals — anyone who can donate time, money, goods, or services to help achieve the plan's goals.

"Hunters and birdwatchers, developers and conservationists, private citizens and government officials got right to work developing projects as varied as the partnerships themselves," Beattie said. Partners have managed hundreds of projects across Canada, the United States and Mexico, which signed the plan in 1994. They have contributed nearly \$900 million to protect, restore, and enhance 4.5 million acres of wetland habitats in the United States and Canada. More than 19 million acres in Mexican biosphere reserves are the subject of conservation education and management planning projects.

And the birds? In the 1970s, an average of 36.1 million breeding birds were found in the areas surveyed in Canada and the United States. After reaching a low of 25.1 million in 1985, breeding bird numbers were up to an estimated 35.9 million in 1995. Populations for seven of the ten principal species surveyed are now above the plan's goals.

While habitat availability is important in bringing back the birds, so is Mother Nature. "Following ten years of sustained drought, the past two years of abundant rain and snow triggered a strong recovery in waterfowl. That recovery would not have happened without the millions of acres of habitat restored and conserved in the past decade," Beattie said. "The drought taught us we cannot always depend on good weather. If the recovery of duck populations is to continue, we must rededicate ourselves to habitat conservation efforts. Waterfowl must have plentiful habitat every year, regardless of weather.

"Rachel Carson's observation that animals, like people, need places to live is truer today than when she first said it nearly fifty years ago. Habitat protection is the key to conserving our nation's wildlife heritage. If we can't protect habitat, we can't protect wildlife."

In this tenth anniversary year of the plan, partners across the continent are celebrating what they have accomplished, then it's back to the task at hand. "Nobody knows better than they that more work must be done to bring the birds back and keep them back," Beattie said.

For more information about the North American plan, write to the North American Waterfowl and Wetlands Office, 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Room 10, Arlington, Virginia 22203.

Source: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

# Research Grants Awarded

by Phil Bruner

Three research grants have been awarded by the Hawaii Audubon Society for 1996. The grants were made to J. Lyman Perry, Helen Baker and Mandy Heddle.

J. Lyman Perry seeks to discover the impact that the tropical ash (*Fraxinus uhdei*) has on the understory of native forests on Moloka'i. The results of this effort will hopefully lead to effective control measures for this invasive species.

Determining relatedness in extended family groups of Maui creeper using DNA fingerprinting techniques is the focus of Helen Baker's research. She is interested in the "helper at the nest" behavior.

Mandy Heddle will be collecting endemic moths of the genus *Scotorythra* in order to expand our knowledge of Hawaiian lepidoptera and their role in the native forest ecosystem.

As part of the requirements associated with these grant awards, we look forward to a brief report of findings in a future issue of *'Elepaio*. The society thanks all those who applied and encourages others to take advantage of Hawaii Audubon Society grants. Those interested should contact the HAS office for application forms.

# Scientific Articles Sought

We encourage readers to submit their own articles or encourage others to submit articles about research results in fields related to Hawaiian natural science. Reports of observations of Hawaiian birds or bird life are also welcomed. One of the purposes of the *'Elepaio* is to publish original, peer reviewed scientific articles on matters of interest to its members.

Original photographs and illustrations of Hawaiian birds are also welcomed. They may be either color or black and white prints, 3.5 by 5 inches or larger. They should be clearly labelled as to subject and photographer/artist. Please include permission to publish along with your address and telephone number.



# Monograph on Golden Plover Available

by Ron Walker

Johnson, Oscar W. and Peter G. Connors. 1996. American Golden Plover / Pacific Golden Plover. The Birds of North America — Life Histories for the 21st Century, No. 201–202.

"American Golden Plover / Pacific Golden Plover" is one in a series of monographs providing detailed descriptions of life histories of North American birds. Topics covered include morphology, distribution, systematics, migration patterns, habitats, sounds, behavior, breeding, demography and populations, conservation and management, and priorities for future research. There are lengthy references, two color photographs of the two species, distribution maps, vocalization sonograms, illustrations of distraction displays and annual cycles, a table of egg measurements and an appendix of linear and mass measurements for both species. There are several references to Hawaii in the text.

Oscar Johnson has been a frequent visitor to the islands, and has done considerable research on the Pacific golden plover in the field, working with Dr. Phil Bruner at the Church College of Hawaii in Laie.

This project, The Birds of North America — Life Histories for the 21st Century, is the most comprehensive and definitive compilation of what is known about these species to date. The monograph is available from Buteo Books, 3130 Laurel Road, Shipman, Virginia 22971, telephone (800) 722-2460.

**The Society notes with regret the recent death of Charles M. Dunn, one of four founding members and its first Secretary/Treasurer, and extends its sympathy to his family. More extensive coverage of Dunn's contributions to the Society will appear in the next *'Elepaio*.**

## Mark Your Calendar for the Annual Awards Dinner Thursday, September 12, 6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

**Come Join the Hawaii Audubon Society for Dinner at Queen Emma Summer Palace, a Special Program, and the Presentation of Awards to Hawaii's Environmental Stars.**

The Hawaii Audubon Society invites you to join us at our Third Annual Awards Dinner, where we will honor Society volunteers, public servants, and corporate leaders who have contributed to protecting our environment.

In addition there will be a special program on the environment.

To make your reservations, please send your name, address and telephone number to the Society at 1088 Bishop St., Suite 808, Honolulu, HI 96813 along with a check for \$22.00/person and the names of others covered by the check. Please send reservations to arrive not later than September 5th. A confirmation, along with a map locating the Queen Emma Summer Palace, will be sent out to you. Please respond promptly: attendance is limited to forty-eight. (Sorry, no telephone reservations.)

## Local Artist Specializes in Prints and Paintings of Hawaiian Birds

The works of Jan Shima, Kaneohe artist, reflect a concern for preserving endangered species of Hawaiian birds. "Each of my birds speaks a message about the environment and Hawaiian life, and hopefully reveals something of the spirit behind the image to listening ears," said Shima.

Living in Hawaii since 1984, Shima's current works depict the surrounding tropical beauty and wildlife. "Birds constantly fascinate and inspire me with their colors, feather patterns, flight and personalities," she said.

In a series of paintings called "Secret Places" Shima depicts birds in their own little world, usually hidden from our view. "It's a peek into their private lives from their perspective," she said. "I received a lot of inspiration from secluded places of wonder and mystery which I found and photographed while hiking through Hawaii's forests and gardens such as Hoomaluhia and Hilo's botanical gardens. I also learn from my own birds which accompany me in my studio and teach me every day."

Many of the artist's works are commissioned by hotels in Hawaii and may also be found in local art galleries and private collections throughout Hawaii and the U.S. mainland.

Source: South Seas Design, P.O. Box 4646, Kaneohe, Hawaii 96744



## Update on the 'Alala Lawsuit

### NAS and HAS sign stipulation with Kai Malino Ranch

by Linda Paul

On May 29, 1996 the Hawaii Audubon Society and the National Audubon Society entered into a stipulation with the owners of Kai Malino Ranch and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service pursuant to the lawsuit filed in March 1996 by HAS and NAS. (see *'Elepaio* 56(4):30-31) The Kai Malino owners have agreed to submit an application to the FWS for an incidental take permit pursuant to Section 10(a) of the Endangered Species Act and to temporarily stay all timber harvesting activities on the 5300 acres of essential habitat of the endangered 'alala (Hawaiian crow) located on the ranch. In return HAS and NAS have agreed to withdraw without prejudice their motion for a preliminary injunction to prevent logging on those acres and to stay all litigation until the FWS issues a decision granting or denying the Kai Malino application.

The core remaining 'alala habitat for breeding, nesting, and foraging is located on 5300 acres of Kai Malino Ranch in the south Kona District on the Island of Hawai'i. This area is also essential habitat for at least three other endangered forest birds, the 'akiapola'au, 'akepa, and Hawai'i creeper, and "important" habitat for the endangered 'io (Hawaiian hawk). The ranch is the site of ongoing recovery efforts begun as a result of a prior lawsuit brought in behalf of the 'alala in 1991 by HAS and NAS. To date there are fourteen or fifteen birds in the wild at Kai Malino Ranch and twenty birds at the Peregrine Fund's captive flock facilities at Keahou and Olinda, including seven adult males, eight adult females, five chicks and one egg.

The 5300 acres that make up the core 'alala habitat are first on the FWS's national acquisition list to add to its National Wildlife Refuge system, but the purchase was delayed by the 1996 budget standoff in Washington, D.C. Purchase negotiations have now resumed. The Hawaii Audubon Society would like to thank all those who have given and who continue to give support to the ongoing effort to save the 'alala from extinction.

## Do You Want A Say In How Your Society Is Run?

### Nominating Committee Seeks Candidates For Board

by Susan Elliott Miller & Wendy Johnson

If it's summer, it is time to find Society members who are willing to serve on the Board. The bylaws call for six officer positions and from three to ten directors to serve two-year terms with half elected each year in the fall with new terms beginning in January.

However, as a result of resignations and of Board members being elected or appointed to fill unexpired terms, the following positions are now open for nomination: President, Second Vice President, and Recording Secretary (two-year terms); Treasurer and Corresponding Secretary (complete second year of term); five Directors (two-year terms); two Directors (complete second year of term).

The HAS Board is a dynamic group of committed individuals whose energy and expertise involve many aspects of environmental protection in Hawaii from fund raising to education, and from birding to habitat cleanup.

All members of the Board are expected to attend two-hour monthly meetings and to be active on one of the Society's two standing committees: Conservation and Education. Persons interested in serving on the Board are encouraged to attend a Board meeting; the next one will be August 12th at 6:30 p.m. at the HAS office.

If you want to be a candidate, please submit a letter of interest and brief résumé of your background and activities (in and outside of HAS) to the attention of the Nominating Committee at the return address on this journal by August 31, 1996. For an information sheet giving more specific information regarding responsibilities of officers and directors, please leave your name and address on the office codaphone (528-1432).

#### 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.

## Short-tailed Albatrosses at Midway Atoll

by W.L.N. Tickell

In his 1994 report on the status of the short-tailed albatross at Midway Atoll (*'Elepaio* 54(6):35-36), Scott A. Richardson cited a private letter from Professor Harvey I. Fisher to Dr. Hiroshi Hasegawa dated 15 May 1983 in which it was said that a pair of short-tailed albatrosses had successfully fledged chicks on Midway in 1961 and 1962. The nest site had been blacktopped in a Laysan albatross control program the following year and the birds were not seen again.

Professor Fisher died in 1994 but his field-books had earlier been deposited at the Los Angeles Museum of Natural History. They are comprehensive and meticulous records of his activities and observations of all species. He visited Midway 25 June — 4 August 1961, 1-15 December 1961, 15 June — 2 August 1962 and 30 November to 21 December 1962. Fisher wrote that he did not report the breedings in order to avoid disturbance and in anticipation of future observations. Although his notebooks contain many confidential entries, in neither year were there the written records of short-tailed albatrosses that any scientist would feel impelled to make concerning such significant discoveries, especially if he were contemplating future study.

Although Midway Atoll (28°N. 177°W) lies far to the east of the main breeding ground of short-tailed albatrosses at Torishima (30°N. 140°E), there are only two degrees difference in latitude, so the dates of any breeding at Midway may be similar to those at Torishima. The mode laying date at Torishima is about 2 November (range ca. 26 October — ca. 12 November, n=95) and most chicks hatch between about 28 December and 12 January (n=46) (Hasegawa, H. 1980. *Iden* 34(10):91-98). Fledglings leave the island in June (Hasegawa, H. 1982. *J. Yamashina Inst. Ornith.* 14:16-24).

Fisher himself was not on Midway at the expected dates of laying in 1961 or 1962. It would have been possible for him to have seen a short-tailed albatross on an egg in both years, but an egg that could well have



been laid by a black-footed or Laysan albatross; that happened in 1939 (Hadden, F.C. 1941. *The Hawaiian Planters' Record* 45:179-221). There are no measurements of a suspected short-tailed albatross egg in his field-books. If he saw a chick before he left the islands on 21 December 1962 it could only have been newly hatched and since he had never previously seen a short-tailed chick there would have been a problem of verification. Photographs of chicks were not published in Japan until several years later (Fujisawa, K. 1967. *Ahodori, Diomedea albatrus*. Toko Shoin, Tokyo). In the late June of both 1961 and 1962 he could conceivably have seen a fully fledged short-tailed albatross among the fledgling black-footed albatrosses departing at that time.

On my way home from Torishima and Midway in 1973, I visited Professor Fisher and we talked about short-tailed albatrosses. He thought there may have been one present in 1961, but he said nothing about pairs or breeding at any time.

For a pair to have bred successfully in 1961 both male and female must have visited the island for two years previously; most albatross pairs are together for several years before breeding. In those years the US Navy airbase on Midway was fully operational and biologists of the Fish and Wildlife Service were working on the albatrosses at the same time as Fisher's research student. They did not see short-tailed albatrosses and are convinced that with so many people moving about Sand Island such distinctive birds would have been seen and reported.

Harvey Fisher was a good scientist responsible for outstanding research on Laysan albatrosses between 1959 and 1973; but, in the absence of corroborating evidence, doubt must now attach to his claim, made more than twenty years after the event, that short-tailed albatrosses bred successfully at Midway in 1961 and 1962.

*Author Scott A. Richardson wrote that he had seen an earlier version of the Tickell correspondence and had sent comments directly to Tickell: a copy of that correspondence follows.*

November 13, 1995

Dear Dr. Tickell:

Beth Fling forwarded your proposed 'Elepaio article concerning Harvey Fisher's purported short-tailed albatross nesting at Midway Atoll. When I prepared my status

review I was perplexed by the lack of knowledge about Fisher's observations. Now it is appropriate to publish some characterization of the claim's plausibility.

When last I wrote, I was planning a visit to the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History. In January I made that visit. I leafed through the three-ring binders that held Fisher's field notes for the following dates and found not a single mention of short-tailed albatross.

25 June 1961 to 4 August 1961  
Notes: Summer 1961

1 December 1961 to ~5 December 1961  
Notes: Winter 1961

15 June 1962 to 2 August 1962  
Notes: Summer 1962

30 November 1962 to 21 December 1962  
Notes: Winter 1962

22 December 1962 to 2 February 1963  
Notes of Robert D. Klemm

The presence of notes for June of 1961 and 1962 contradicts a statement in your paper, which you may wish to modify; this will also strengthen your position of doubt concerning the alleged nestings. You also give an ending date of 15 December 1961 where I was unable to determine a certain date of departure. Perhaps you have seen complementary materials giving the date as the 15th.

I am concerned, also, that although Fisher spent portions of more than fifteen years at Midway, totaling at least thirty-six months, these are the only notebooks at the Los Angeles County Museum. Certainly he kept additional notebooks. If you have inspected them as well, and found them lacking any short-tailed albatross record, I suggest stating this in your paper.

In recalling your 1973 visit with Fisher, you write that he mentioned seeing a short-tail in the spring of 1966. However, in his 1983 letter to Hasegawa he indicates the year as 1965.

Fisher's certainty about his observation is reflected in this passage from a letter he wrote just prior to his death:

"You note that finding the letter (to Hasegawa) was startling news. Think I published the record somewhere. I did send pictures to F and W Service and to the Japanese friends for certain identification. Particularly wanted the Japanese to know for they were working on the Shortails (sic) in the Ryukyus. Chan Robertson (presumably Chandler

Robbins) was out on Midway for a while each season, primarily to band, but I'll bet I told him about it."

I have also just reread your letter from a year ago in which you quote Earl Meseth as remembering Fisher's reported discovery of a nesting pair.

What a confusing affair! I hope corroborating evidence is forthcoming from other reviewers or from contemporaries of Fisher.

Meanwhile, what do you think of incorporating Fisher's own words into the article? This would allow the reader to form an opinion based on more than interpretation. An excerpt from his 1983 letter would help readers become less mystified by our secondary references to the words that started this puzzle.

I commend your efforts to cast sufficient light on this situation to allow a clearer understanding of the history of short-tailed albatrosses at Midway. My inclination is to dream of the day someone rooting through the cabinets in Honolulu will come upon a yellowed envelope which, when opened, reveals a photograph undeniably showing a short-tail chick with its parent near the runway on Sand Island.

...Sincerely,

*Richardson included the following update in correspondence to the 'Elepaio, May 9, 1996:*

I expect you plan to publish Tickell's remarks and I am supportive. Given that two years have passed since my summary, it might be useful to accompany Tickell's letter with an update on the Midway short-tails. Ken McDermond recently told me that another egg (again inviable) was laid and that the cast of short-tails at Midway has changed.

## 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).



# Calendar of Events

## Mondays, August 12 & September 9

**HAS Board meeting**, (always open to all members) 6:30 p.m. at the office. The August 12 meeting will focus on a discussion of current conservation issues (in lieu of the August Conservation Committee meeting).

## Monday, August 19

Learn about Hawai'i's only land mammal – 'ope'ape' a – at the next **bimonthly program meeting**. Dr. Ben Okimoto, veterinarian at Honolulu's Zoo, has just returned from a conference and workshop at Bat Conservation International (BCI) on the mainland. He will show slides and discuss 'ope'ape'a (Hawaiian bats) as well as bats in general.

HAS Board member Mary Gaber will also show a short slide show from BCI: "Bats: myth & reality."

Join your fellow HAS members at Paki Hall Conference Room, Bishop Museum, 7:30 p.m. Refreshments provided; HAS books, T-shirts, and tapes available for purchase.

## Sunday, August 25

A very special **Excursion!** Linda Santos, Bird Specialist at the Honolulu Zoo, will

take ten lucky members behind the scenes to see the Zoo's recently "opened" (but not to the public) native forest bird propagation project. The 'apapane are successfully raising chicks – come see who else is there. Meet at Zoo at 1:30 p.m. at the main gate. Make reservations by Wednesday, August 21 with Mary Gaber at 247-0104.

## Thursday, September 5

Monthly meeting of the **Education Committee**, 7:00 p.m. at BaLe Sandwich Shop in Manoa Marketplace (near Safeway). All are welcome. For more information, call chairperson Wendy Johnson, 261-5957.

## Saturday, September 21

A rugged, all-day **Field trip** on 'Aiea Ridge trail will be led by Tim Walker, who has seen 'apapane & 'amakihi on this trail. Meet at the upper parking lot of Keiwa Heiau State Recreation Area at top of 'Aiea Heights Drive at 8:30 a.m. Bring water, lunch, and rain gear, and wear good hiking shoes. Limit 12 people. Reserve your place by calling the HAS office (528-1432, voice mail box 4) by Tuesday, September 17. Questions? Call Tim at 523-5376 (work).

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