



'ELEPAIO

Journal of the
Hawaii Audubon Society

For the Protection of
Hawaii's Native Wildlife

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Conditions Affecting Birds

by George C. Munro

November 1999 marks the 60th anniversary of the Hawaii Audubon Society and the 'Elepaio. The archives for this journal constitute a unique historical record of conservation issues in Hawai'i. The following article by George Munro, reprinted from the September 1951 issue of the 'Elepaio, provides a compelling perspective on Hawaii's environment half a century ago. Its author "took a foremost part for years in urging better protection for our birds."

Exceptionally heavy rains occur in cycles. In 1889 Mr. Frederick Hayselden reported six solid days of rain on Lana'i. Mr. Henry Gibson used to tell of Hawaiians divine for their sweet potatoes in Palawai Basin on Lana'i, probably after the same rainfall. In December 1890, I saw a reed-fringed lagoon with a pair of wild ducks swimming on its surface in the crater of Tantalus, O'ahu. In 1901, there was a fall of rain on Moloka'i such as had not occurred for fifty years on that island, according to old residents. I saw coots swimming on a lagoon at Papohaku on the west end coast of that island about a year later. About 1903, a director of the Moloka'i Ranch visited Moloka'i and told of shooting ducks the night before in a lagoon in the center of Diamond Head. In 1916, there were three days of exceptionally heavy rain on Lana'i. After the water subsided, I measured the highest point it had reached by the mark it had left on cactus in Palawai Basin - four feet deep.

These lagoons have long been dry, but last year there was the heaviest rainfall recorded on Moloka'i Ranch since I installed a rain gauge there for the Hawaiian Weather Bureau, in 1899. There have been heavy falls, but I think local ones, in 1942 and 1948. On Lana'i in February on this year there was again a lagoon in Palawai Basin deeper than the one in 1916 and which stayed longer. On O'ahu in February 1951, there were heavy falls and the lagoon, covering about 5 acres, appeared again in the crater of Diamond Head and is still there, probably diminished in size, at this writing. I do not know if the lagoons are again at Papohaku and Tantalus but I think they probably are. I understand the Hawaiian Weather Bu-

reau recently forecast a succession of more stormy weather than we have had for some years.

It seems that this will be a favorable time for our shore birds and we would do well to keep a vigilant eye on the creation of sanctuaries and sustained protection of birds some sportsmen would like to see back on the sporting list. Diamond Head should be declared an inviolable bird sanctuary. If the lagoon remains, migratory ducks will frequent it. The feeding range of birds of Honolulu is continually being restricted and the slopes of this mountain provide a great variety of bird food. There is also evidence of a number of species of Honolulu's birds nesting there. Mongooses and native rats abound in the region. Though I have never seen the rats there, evidences of their presence are the runways in the grass, small burrows, too small for the mongoose to enter; as they are night foragers when the mongoose is asleep, the latter never seems to get them. Four newly hatched, naked young White-eyes recently disappeared from their nest on one of the slopes. They were evidently taken by rats, as, though the nest was near the ground, the mongoose could hardly have climbed up the straight, smooth stem of the small tree in which this exceedingly cleverly-built nest was hanging. The nest was left in perfect condition but the chicks were gone. Examination of the droppings of mongooses on the trail reveal no evidences of their killing birds. Their food, with the exception of one bird, probably an old one, is almost entirely insects, principally a small, black cockroach. The exceptional bird feeds on the fruit of *passiflora foetida*, var. *gossypifolia*, which abounds in shrublike form on the rocky open slopes

and furnishes a plentiful supply of bird food. The red-berried *P. foetida* and small fruited *P. subrosa* are present but not common. I saw the red-berried species growing plentifully in the planted forest on St. Louis Heights a short time ago. It will seem a pity if this fine forest is destroyed and the ground occupied by buildings. It is a good bird resort at present.

Boys with BB guns and slingshots sometimes frequent the trail on the western slopes of Diamond Head. Declaration of the mountain as a bird sanctuary would perhaps deter them to some extent from molesting birds. They may not do much harm as the terrain is too steep for much comfort in hunting. They use open ridges as background for practice at shooting a target, which is a good thing if they can be restrained from using birds for this purpose. I think they can be educated to this. In my opinion it is better to train the public to respect birds rather than to kapu places such as sanctuaries and some of the outlying islands. It would pay better to make friends for the birds of picnickers and fishermen rather than make enemies of them by kapus and fines. Some islands, such as the outer part of Moku Manu, off the O'ahu coast, and Nihoa Island, 140 miles northwest of Ni'ihau, should certainly be kept in their natural state and only privileged persons be allowed to land on them. People landing on islands without restrictions are very apt to plant vegetation foreign to the area or remove some of the natural vegetation and so spoil it as a natural living museum. The problem is an intricate one and should have careful study.

In the 'Elepaio (Vol. 11, No. 6, December 1950), I told of the return of the
continued on page 70

Golden Plover in Kapi'olani Park, and told of three pairs having separate feeding grounds. I may have spoken before of the Plover in the park flying round one in a half and even complete circle, when disturbed. They do this to keep over their own beat and avoid encroaching on the territory of other pairs of birds. For a while there seemed to be a strip of neutral ground between the area of each pair, on which Plover were almost never seen. One pair, slightly different in size, which, for brevity, I call Moki and Mele (Hawaiian names for Moses and Mary), kept well to their own territory most of the time. In January of this year there was some difference in the action of the three pairs. There seemed to be only one at each station and they did not keep so well to their own beat and were either spreading out more or their places were taken by others while they went on to where the army worm was developing. On March 19, after the heavy rains - and there was a large lagoon in the polo field - I saw a group whose actions indicated they were travelers, perhaps starting in their migra-

tion along the Hawaiian Chain. They were in the water and could not take short runs so took short flights instead, but they did not seem to be feeding. On April 6, there were a few in the polo field which flew straight away instead of in a half circle, evidently transients, and one - apparently Moki - was at his old beat. On the fifteenth I saw a pair which might have been Moki and Mele but they were not together and did not act quite as usual. My only notes after April were "no Plover," though when the dew was heavy I did not walk in the park but on the road alongside it. The action of Moki and Mele first noted in September 1949 indicates that the same plover return to their old beats. Next August I shall watch carefully for this pair. One is only slightly smaller and neater in body lines than the other, which necessitates seeing them together before I can be sure they are my favorite pair.

I have never seen an owl near the park but I am sure that in the polo field one devoured a rat which it carried from the south end of the park. At this end there were fully six nests of black rats in the

tops of the kiawe trees, only one to a tree. They probably kept to the tops and fed on the beans till the heavy rains spoiled the beans and brought on a luxuriant growth of portulaca at the foot of the trees. There was nothing but the stomach and entrails of a rat and the droppings of a bird alongside it. I understand that the park employees have destroyed the rats and the nests.

The colony of bees that occupied a hollow ironwood tree in the park either left or was destroyed, which I regret as they were an exceptionally gentle lot. Many times I stood at the foot of the tree, close to the park entrance, and never did a bee protest my presence. There was evidence that they were molested from time to time, but were so well protected by the thickness of the wood that the nest could not be injured without chopping into the tree.

George C. Munro lived from 1866-1963. He became an adviser to the society in May of 1939, as the Society was being formed. From the January/February 1964 issue of the 'Elepaio, here is a brief account of his life:

continued on page 71

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Conditions from page 70

Mr. Munro, a native of Clevedon, New Zealand, came to Hawai'i in 1890, and lived here since then except for a few years back on the family ranch near Auckland.

He left behind him a definite handbook on Hawaiian birds; collections of birds, plants, insects and landshells preserved in Bishop Museum and museums in New Zealand, England, and Australia, and a State park of endemic dry-land plants on the slopes on Diamond Head. He also leaves a long history of Island ranching.

He came here as a member of an expedition to collect Hawaiian birds for the Tring Collection in England. His first job in Hawai'i was at Gay and Robinson Ranch, Makaweli, Kaua'i. He later was

manager of Moloka'i Ranch, and for 20 years manager of the Lana'i Company's cattle ranch under Frank and Harry Baldwin. He continued on Lana'i with the Hawaiian Pineapple Company. Rows of Norfolk pines on Lana'i's ridges are the result of his experiments in water conservation.

All through his years in Hawai'i, Mr. Munro was dedicated to preserving the native birds and flora. Just this February, he became the first person to receive a Conservation Council of Hawai'i award for his services. It was added to an impressive list of awards given Mr. Munro through the years, including the Frances K. Hutchinson Medal of Honor by the Garden Club of America. Since 1945 he had been a member of the American Ornithologists Union, which is lim-

ited to 200 outstanding ornithologists of North America, and since 1960 held the title of honorary associate in ornithology for Bishop Museum.

Perhaps his most rewarding moments, though, came in 1958 when his dream of the State park on Diamond Head came true. Called Na La'au Hawai'i Arboretum, it covers nine acres where Mr. Munro, since moving to Honolulu in 1935, had planted thousands of seeds. The park is on the upper slopes of the crater, and has a bronze plaque dedicated in Munro's honor. As late as his 96th birthday, Mr. Munro, with the aid of two canes, climbed up the rocky path to the park, to inspect his cherished trees and plants and admire the birds that have taken refuge there. On that day, the park was formally dedicated."

Welcome Back, Kolea!

by Linda Shapin

The lovely Pacific Golden Plovers (Kolea) have returned to our islands, as they do every fall. The Kolea weigh about 3-5 ounces, are about 12 inches tall, and have a wingspan of about 15 inches. In winter non-breeding plumage, they are speckled dark brown, gold, and buff, with a light underside.

From about May to August, they nest and rear their young in the summer of the Alaskan tundra. A few weeks before leaving Alaska, Kolea begin to put on weight for their long flight here, sometimes almost doubling their normal body weight!

The adult Kolea leave Alaska in August and cross nearly 3000 miles of

open ocean to get here, making the trip in about 2 days. The youngsters leave about a month later, somehow finding their way despite never having made the jour-

ney before. Fossil records tell us that this migration has been taking place for about 120,000 years.

Most Kolea claim grassy territories which they defend from other birds and mammals, and return to year after year. Kolea eat insects such as beetles, cockroaches and flies, and also some types of berries, seeds and flowers.

They hunt by sight, walking slowly until they see a potential meal, then doing their characteristic dash to capture and eat their prey.

Kolea usually leave their territories at night and roost in flocks, sometimes on rooftops. Their call, a loud "too-eet" is usually heard upon takeoff.



The Pacific Golden Plover known in Hawai'i as the Kolea

My First Bird Walks in Hawai'i

by George C. Munro from 'Elepaio Volume 5, Number 3, September 1944 continued from last issue

Tantalus Hill, Pu'u o Hea of the Hawaiians, 2013 feet elevation could be made a easily accessible botanical garden for many remarkably interesting and rare Hawaiian plants. The C.C.C. trail around it, now sometimes used as a bird walk by Honolulu Audubon Society could be extended. It could be carried round the hill at intervals at a easy grade gradually rising to the top. The if the lake formerly in the bottom of the crater could be restored, with its fringe of reeds and native ducks swimming on its surface, Tantalus trails would furnish a still more interesting bird walk. It might not be possible to restore the lake but a wonderful exhibition of plants peculiar to Hawaii could be grown on the slopes of Pu'u o Hea.

The lake had evidently been fed by rainfall, running on the surface to the lowest point, the crater bottom. At long intervals there occurs on these islands a season of excessively heavy rainfalls. The surface soil becomes saturated and the water runs over the surface carrying a fine silt. It accumulates in the low spots and often before drying up deposits a layer of silt on the bottom which becomes waterproof. The water is held as long as there is sufficient rainfall to replace evaporation from its surface. If rainfall is deficient the lake dries up, the silt cracks and crumbles into soil and will not set again. There is no lake till the right combination of rainfall occurs to form it and keep it in existence. I experienced one of these falls on Moloka'i about 1901 and another on Lana'i about 1915. Old inhabitants on Moloka'i said there had not been such a rain for 30 years. A lagoon at Papohaku on that island remained there a long time. Henry Gibson, who was born on Lana'i, when about 50 years old told of natives seen by himself or by story handed down, of that island diving from canoes in the Palawai basin to harvest their sweet potato crops which the flood had covered and was not drying up quickly enough. We thought Henry was stretching the story, but it was quite possible. The fall I saw there, though five feet deep in places in the basin cut

channels straight down through the soil and ran off in that way in a comparatively short time. The rock formation below is evidently very open. It is quite possible that the lake at Pu'u o Hea may be naturally revived again some time in the next quarter of a century or so.

I knew of one trail on the Round Top side and started back the way I came. Three white birds were flying about on the opposite side of Pauoa Valley and I started down to get a closer view of them. There was a trail and under the large trees there was a tangled mass of vines and various kinds of undergrowth "as bad as any new Zealand bush." But there was not a great deal of it and I reached a little valley filled with wild guava and some horses grazing among them. The horses kept the ground more open and there was a trail which I followed down the valley. On the top and coming down I heard crickets chirping but saw none. We were told afterwards that the chirping was made by landshells (snails). Perkins, however, investigated this later and traced the chirping to very small crickets.

Some people still believe that the chirping is made by landshells which often occupy the same class of forest as crickets. The former are conspicuous but the crickets can only be found by careful search. I have great faith in Perkins' investigations and would not question his conclusions without good reason. However, there is nothing to prevent anyone here in Hawai'i with sufficient patience and perseverance from working it out for themselves. I found it a long tramp down the valley and was thankful for the trail and not having to scramble through the vines and underbrush. I saw no more of the white-tailed tropicbirds that day. Near town there were several flocks of ricebirds. Eventually the taro patches were reached, "acres and acres of them: and on out to Nu'uaniu Street. This was my introduction to the pueo, koloa, koae ad ricebird.

On the 20th, I walked out to Nu'uaniu Pali. There were no trees along the road at the pali end. The planting of the present fine forest was done shortly afterward

under the supervision of Mr. David Haugh, who for many years was connected with the Board of Agriculture and Forestry. That probably was his first work in Hawaii. On the road occasionally was met a Chinese with baggy black trousers carrying pole and baskets and Hawaiians on horseback coming over from the Kailua side.

My greatest interest was the hillsides and cliffs in full view on each side of the eastern end of the valley. I was entranced with their beauty and the thin streams running over the cliffs which were turned into spray when halfway down. The wind was not strong enough to blow the water upwards from the top as can often be seen. The stretch of undulating country between the pali and the sea was noted, but being used to country like it, I did not remark on the particular beauty of that scene.

It probably was a dull day and the colors on the water on that side may not have shown at their best. I was not used to seas with bright colors and would certainly have remarked on it if they had. The bunches of long leafed grass on the east slope as the pali is reached were waving in the wind as they do now. Several owls were seen on the way and there were a number of tropic birds flying backwards and forwards along the faces of the cliffs. Some were soaring at a great height, chasing each other and performing aerial evolutions while uttering their harsh screeching cry.

On the trip a close view was had of ricebirds, Mynahs, sparrows, linnets and Chinese doves had been seen before. The sparrows seemed numerous. I was told that the linnets had been common in town but that the sparrows had driven them out. The linnets are grass seed feeders and would naturally gravitate toward the country and the sparrows would stay in town. The linnets, sparrows and ricebirds were all bad on the rice crops.

On the 25th, at 5 p.m. we embarked for Kaua'i. Early in the day with some shipmates I took a walk along the shore by the present site of Moana Park and Kewalo Bay. The whole shore was then a belt of coral rubble about 100 yards wide between the sea and the swamp. Auku'u and curlew were on the beach.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT 1999-2000

The Christmas Bird Count is a coast-to-coast annual bird census. Volunteers count every bird and bird species over one calendar day. Birds are indicators of the overall health of the environment. Christmas bird count data in any given area can provide valuable insight into the long-term health of bird populations and the environment.

Over 45,000 people from all 50 states, every Canadian province, the Caribbean, Central and South America and the Pacific Islands participate in more than 1,700 counts held during a two and a half week period!

Join our Christmas Bird Counts during the official count period, this year from December 16 to January 3, 2000. If you want to do something good for birds and meet other "bird people," call one of the coordinators to sign up. There is a \$5.00 charge per person to support compiling and publication of the nationwide results. Note: Special information is needed by the coordinator of the popular "Kulani Prison" count, so call the Big Island Volcano coordinator by December 1 to ensure your spot.

<u>Island</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Coordinator</u>	<u>phone #/email</u>
Kaua'i			
Waimea	01/02	Michelle Ho'okano Koke'e Natural History Museum	808-335-9975
Kapa'a		Barbara Stuart	808-826-9233
O'ahu			
Honolulu	12/19	Arlene Buchholz	988-9806 or snovakz@juno.com
Waipi'o	12/19	David Bremer	623-7613
Maui			
Pu'u O Kaka'e	12/18	Lance Tanino	808-280-4195 or ltanino@parsonsuxb.com
East Maui	12/19	Renate Gassmann-Duvall	808-573-0094 or corvusco@maui.net
Moloka'i			
Kualapu'u	12/21	Rick Potts Kalaupapa National Park	808-567-6802
Hawai'i Island			
Kulani Prison (Volcano)	12/18	Larry Katahira Nick Shima Tanya Rubenstein	808-985-6088 808-967-7396 x239 808-985-6197
North Kona	12/19	Reggie David	808-329-9141 or rdavid@kona.net

Year 2000 Federal Junior Duck Stamp Design Contest Kicks Off

Hawai'i's fifth annual Federal Junior Duck Stamp Contest begins this month as all public and private schools receive their Year 2000 contest information and application package in the mail.

"We had 74 entries last year and hope to greatly expand that number in 2000," said Amy Tse, coordinator of the contest in Hawai'i. "We usually have many nene drawings since it's such a recognizable native species, but numerous other waterfowl species may also be depicted."

The national environmental education program is geared toward teaching children the importance of our dwindling wetlands and the waterfowl that depend on them. The Duck Stamp Design Contest is a tool for children to learn about the waterfowl of their choice and to show-

case their artistic talents.

Entries will be judged in four age groups, and a State Best of Show is then forwarded to the national contest in Washington, D.C., to compete for \$2,500 and a free trip to the Nation's Capitol to attend the adult Federal Duck Stamp Contest. Local prizes from organizations such as the Hawaii Audubon Society and the Kilauea Point Natural History Association will also be awarded.

This contest is modeled after the Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest held annually by the Fish and Wildlife Service to choose the design for the Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp (commonly known as the Duck Stamp). Duck stamps are a required annual \$15 purchase for hunters on the

mainland. The \$5 Junior Duck Stamps are not mandatory, and all proceeds from sales go directly back into the conservation and educational program.

All entries must be postmarked no later than March 15, 2000, and sent to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Pacific Islands Office, Box 50088, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96850. For more information contact State Coordinator Amy Tse at (808) 541-2749 or log on to: <http://www.r1.fws.gov/pacific/wnews/fjds.html> for more information.

source: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service News Release dated 10/06/99

contact: Amy Tse, (808) 541-2749

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Pacific Islands Ecoregion Enters Cyberspace!

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Pacific Islands Ecoregion has joined the worldwide web community by publishing a web site.

Learn about fragile island ecosystems, what threatens endangered species, and how you can help. Filled with colorful photos, the Pacific Ecoregion web site offers a glimpse of rare wildlife and plants, and remote National Wildlife Refuges. Go ahead and indulge - take a vacation through our site!

The Ecoregion web site contains five sections:

- Organization: The Pacific Islands Ecoregion headquarters is based in Honolulu, Hawai'i and has offices and National Wildlife Refuges spanning as far away as Guam.

- Endangered Species: Threatened by

introduced animals such as rats, mongooses, and invasive plants such as banana poka, Pacific island native species are very vulnerable. This section contains all federally listed endangered species of Hawaii and the Pacific islands. Some threatened species are also included.

- National Wildlife Refuges: Sixteen refuges in the Pacific Islands Ecoregion provide protected habitat for many threatened and endangered species. Some refuges are open to the public for activities such as bird watching, hiking, and educational forums.

- News and Information: This section contains news releases, project highlights, and information on the Federal Junior Duck Stamp Design

Program for students from kindergarten through high school.

- Partners in Conservation: Saving threatened and endangered species is not an easy task! Lucky for us, volunteers, many private and nonprofit organizations, as well as other government agencies aid in our mission to conserve and protect wildlife and habitat in the Pacific islands.

LOG ON! <http://www.r1.fws.gov/pacific>

source: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service bulletin received 09/10/99

more info: Amy Tse, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Honolulu 808-541-2749

Reminder: It's Annual Mailing Time Again!!

Saturday, November 20th, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the HAS office

Can you spare a couple of hours to stuff and seal envelopes so that you and your fellow members can receive 1999 HAS ballots, local membership renewals, and the President's annual report/appeal?? Last year we finished this task in record time (about 5 hours) with the help of about 12 volunteers.

YOU WILL BE REWARDED with PIZZA, refreshments, good company, and endless gratitude!

Please call Linda Shapin at the HAS office - 528-1432 and let her know when you can come by on that day.

MIGRANT BIRDS ON ROTA ISLAND, COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS (CNMI), FALL 1997/SPRING 1998

By Lance T. Tanino

Rota (14 degrees 10' N, 145 degrees 12' W) is the southernmost island in the CNMI, just north of Guam. It is surrounded by coral reefs and limestone cliffs, with rather little beach, mudflat, and freshwater habitats available for shorebirds. I was a field research assistant on the Mariana Crow Recovery Project (Ecological Services) at Rota Island Field Station, and made periodic and incidental observations of migratory birds on Rota from 31 October 1997 to 29 March 1998. The project involved mainly nest searches and monitoring, resighting banded birds, behavioral observations, radio telemetry, and mist-netting. Most of my observations were made at two larger reservoirs and two small mitigation ponds within the Rota Resort wastewater treatment plant (WTP). Frequent visits were also to the large grass fields at the entrance to Rota International Airport and surrounding its runway.

During this five month period I identified 22 migrant species including a new record for Rota (Stinson, et al 1995, Stinson et al 1997, and Wiles, et al 1993). I also included notes on three additional species that were difficult to identify in the field and other noteworthy observations on the Common Moorhen, Great Frigatebird, and Sooty Tern. The nomenclature and order follow Reichel and Glass (1991) and Pyle (1997).

SPECIES ACCOUNTS

Wedge-tailed Shearwater (*Puffinus pacificus*): A Wedge-tailed Shearwater was seen before sunset on 21 December flying low over the water heading northeast off As Matmos Fishing Cliff at the northeast corner of the island. Although lighting conditions were not ideal, I was able to observe its shearwater-jizz as it banked over the waves and exposed its pale underwings and undersides.

Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*): A Cattle Egret was seen on 31 October and 1 November foraging along the roadside to the Rota Resort. It was a small white egret with yellow bill and dark legs and

feet.

Green Heron (*Butorides virescens*): A possible Green Heron was seen 21 February and 10 March at the Rota Resort WTP. The bird was difficult to approach and it flew away before I could get close enough to make a positive identification. It was small in size (larger than Yellow Bittern), had a dark green back, and yellow legs.

Green-winged Teal (*Anas crecca*): A female Green-winged Teal was seen on 2, 11, and 13 November at the Rota Resort WTP. It was smaller than Northern Pintails nearby and had a green speculum and white underwings (seen in flight).

Northern Pintail (*Anas acuta*): Seven to nine female Northern Pintails were seen from 2 November to 13 November at the Rota Resort WTP. They were large mottled brown ducks with paler heads and gray bills. A male Northern Pintail was present from 18 January to 2 March at the Rota Resort WTP. It showed the distinctive plumage of male pintails with brown head, white neck and breast, and gray bill.

Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*): A female Tufted Duck was seen on 6 and 11 November at the Rota Resort WTP. It had a dark brown and rounded head with a short crest, blue-gray bill with black tip, and white patches on both sides of bill base with no sharp borders.

Gray Frog-Hawk; formerly known as Chinese Goshawk (*Accipiter soloensis*): At 0630 hours on 6 November, a pair of Gray-Frog Hawks was seen soaring together along the limestone cliffs at Pali'i. They occasionally chased each other acrobatically with talons extended. Both birds had pale unmarked underwings, breast, and belly. They were too high to notice any barring on tails. On 2 February at 0856 hours a single bird was observed soaring along the limestone cliffs at Agatase (approximately 1.0 km west from previous sighting at Pali'i). It also had pale unmarked underwings, breast, and belly and a barred tail.

Eurasian Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*): A small falcon with pointed wings, long-straight, barred tail, light brown body with dark streaks on underside was seen briefly from a distance of less than ten meters on 12 November at 0649 hours. It flew over a dirt road in Mochong passing through forest and was being chased by one or two Black Drongos (*Dicrurus macrocerus*). The bird was seen again by Brigid O'Neil in nearby Lalayak between 0830 and 0900 hours. It was observed diving from a tall grassy clearing into the forest edge, which elicited vocalization by a Mariana Crow. The Eurasian Kestrel observations makes it a new record for the island of Rota.

Falcon sp.: An unidentified falcon (possibly Peregrine Falcon) was observed on 10 November at 0945 hours soaring along the limestone cliffs at Agatase. It was seen diving after smaller birds (possibly Black Drongos). It was a large bird with pointed wings and narrow tail, but was too far away to distinguish other characteristics.

Pacific Golden-Plover (*Pluvialis fulva*): Pacific Golden-Plovers were counted on three visits to the Rota International Airport. On 10 January, 7 February, and 11 March; 245, 237, and 167 golden-plovers were observed respectively. They were also seen at the Rota Resort WTP on three occasions. On 25 February, 11 and 29 March; 14, 17, and 3 golden-plovers were observed respectively.

Black-winged Stilt (*Himantopus himantopus*): Black-winged Stilts were seen at the Rota Resort WTP on 16 different occasions between 31 October and 21 February. A mean of 3.25 birds were present per visit. Low counts of two birds were made on 31 October and during February. A high count of seven birds was made on 1 November. All birds observed to be in juvenile plumage based on gray plumage on their necks and their juvenile-type (high pitched) calls. The stilts were the largest shorebirds seen at the Rota Resort WTP with their long

continued on page 76

Rota from page 75

bodies, black wings, whitish-gray necks and heads, thin, straight, black bills, and long pink legs.

Common Greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*): Two Common Greenshanks were seen 2 November at the Rota Resort WTP, and one was there regularly until 17 November. It was a large shorebird with relatively long, greenish-gray legs. A white wedge on the back, white rump, and white tail with some gray-black markings towards the center were seen during flight. Loud and clear teu-teu-teu calls were made in flight.

Wandering Tattler (*Heteroscelus incanus*): Wandering Tattlers were heard regularly along the coastal barrier reefs.

Gray-tailed Tattler (*Heteroscelus brevipes*): Gray-tailed Tattlers were occasionally seen along the coastal barrier reefs. One individual was seen on eight visits to the Rota Resort WTP from 1 November to 26 March. It had a pale gray body, unbarred undertail coverts and belly, and a superciliary that met at the center of the forehead.

Common Sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*): A Common Sandpiper was briefly seen on an afternoon in March. It flew low over tide pools on a barrier reef along Teneto village. It showed the wing flutter flight characteristic of this genus.

Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*): Six to 16 Whimbrels were seen during six visits to the Rota International Airport from 15 December to 26 March. The highest numbers of birds (14 and 16 birds) were seen 10 January and 7 February, respectively. A similar trend in abundance has been reported on Saipan, where peak numbers occurred between January and March (Stinson, et al, 1997).

Bristle-thighed Curlew (*Numenius tahitiensis*): The call of a Bristle-Thighed Curlew was heard 22 December, the day following the first Rota Christmas Bird Count, in the Lalayak/Mochong area in the northwest part of the island (Tanino, 1998). The "chiuit" call was heard following a series of whimbrel calls.

Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*):

Thirty to 45 Ruddy Turnstones were seen during six visits to the Rota International Airport from 15 December to 26 March. Eight turnstones were seen at the Rota Resort WTP on 11 March.

Sanderling (*Calidris alba*): A Sanderling was seen at the Rota International Airport on 21 November feeding in a grassy field with a flock of eight Sharp-Tailed Sandpipers. It was in its typical winter plumage; white underparts, grayish upperparts, black shoulder, and prominent wing bar.

Pectoral Sandpiper (*Calidris melanotos*): A single Pectoral Sandpiper was seen 1 November at the Rota Resort WTP and 16 November at the Rota International Airport. Both birds had a clearly demarcated breast, pale bill base, and rufous cap, and yellow legs.

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper (*Calidris acuminata*): A small flock of Sharp-Tailed Sandpipers were seen twice at the entrance to the Rota International Airport. Six birds were seen on 16 November and eight birds were seen on 21 November. They had buffy breasts without a sharply demarcated breast, a brown cap, and yellow legs.

Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*): Two adults and a possible juvenile were first seen at Taiapu on 10 November hawking along the roadside on the edge of a cattle ranch and limestone forest. They were reliably seen for about a week.

OTHER SPECIES

Great Frigatebird (*Fregata minor*): Great Frigatebirds were counted at the Red-Footed Booby colony at Saguagaga on five occasions after 1230 hours from 26 February to 5 March. Numbers ranged from 21 to 57 birds. The number of frigatebirds always increased during the late afternoon between 1745 and 1842 hours.

Common Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*): Moorhens were first observed on Rota soon after mitigation ponds were built for the Rota Resort (Worthington 1998 and pers. comm.). Moorhens were seen regularly during 19 visits to the Rota Resort WTP mitigation

ponds from 1 November to 29 March. A high count of seven (three adults, one subadult, and three chicks) was made on 10 March. Three chicks were seen on 10 March and one on 26 March.

Sooty Tern (*Sterna fuscata*): Sooty Terns were heard calling at night (about 2000 hours) over Teneto village on 13 February (>1 bird) and on 21 February (1 to 3 birds). At about 1730 hours on 5 March, more than 18 probable Sooty Terns were seen about 0.3 kilometers northeast of island based on black and white flashes during flight.

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Special thanks to Gary Wiles and Robert Pyle whose comments greatly improved this paper. I'm also grateful to Brigid O'Neil for her field observations. Also, I would like to thank Sheldon Plentovich and John Morton at the USFWS Rota Field Station for their support.

REMINDER! DON'T MISS HAWAII AUDUBON SOCIETY'S 60TH ANNIVERSARY AWARDS BANQUET AND ART UNVEILING!

WHAT: A sumptuous three course dinner, 60th Anniversary art unveiling, and Annual Awards presentation

WHEN: Thursday, November 18, 1999, from 6:00pm to 9:00pm

WHERE: Sarento's Top of the I at the Ilikai Hotel

Please join us as we hold our Annual Awards banquet and 60th Anniversary celebration! Internationally renowned artist Richard Pettit will be on hand to unveil his original painting featured on our commemorative poster, as well as other original works featuring the birds of Hawai'i.

The cost for HAS members and their spouses/significant others is \$30.00 per person, and includes dinner (see menu choices below), dessert, and a deluxe quality open edition HAS 60th Anniversary commemorative print (1 print per couple) by Richard Pettit.

The first course of the dinner features your choice of Minestrone soup or Caesar salad. This is followed by your choice of entree: Salmon Alla Boscaiola (sauteed with Portobellos, tomatoes and capers in a garlic white wine sauce), Chicken Marsala (sauteed in Marsala wine with Shiitake mushrooms), Fusilli Alla Venezia (sauteed beef tenderloin, Cremini mushrooms, sundried tomatoes in a Barolo wine sauce), or Pasta Primavera (fresh vegetables served on a bed of linguine in Marinara sauce). Dessert will be Raspberry Sorbet, and coffee or tea is included with your meal.

We look forward to seeing many of you on this wonderful occasion! Please make your reservations by calling the HAS office (528-1432) before Wednesday, November 10th, or mail your checks to the office, P.O. Box 4714, Honolulu, HI 96813

Log On and Be Counted for Great Backyard Bird Count 2000! Audubon and Cornell Need Families and Classrooms To Put Their Bird Sightings on the Map

The National Audubon Society and the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology urgently need the help of North Americans of all ages to count birds this winter. By participating in Great Backyard Bird Count 2000, February 18-21, bird watchers, regardless of skill level will help scientists document the status and health of our winter bird populations at the turn of the millennium at the start of spring migrations. Taking part is as easy as 1, 2, 3. The Cornell Lab <http://birds.cornell.edu> and the National Audubon Society www.audubon.org, ask everyone - kids, adults, seniors, families, classrooms, and community groups - to count birds they see at their backyard bird feeders, local parks and other areas. Participants then enter their reports online at BirdSource <http://birdsource.org>, a user-friendly, state-of-the-art website developed by the Cornell Lab and Audubon. (note: some earlier versions of Netscape and Microsoft Explorer will not be able to find the website without "www" in the address. If you experience this problem, please use the following web address instead: <http://www.birdsource.org>)

Widespread citizen participation will assist scientists in both the short and long term. "By helping us count birds, people from subtropical Florida to Arctic Canada and Alaska (*yes, Hawai'i too!*) will help us to understand better the effects of changing weather, and the landscape on our birds' health and movement patterns," said Frank Gill, Senior Vice president for Science at National Audubon. "Last year, some 42,000 reports - triple the number of reports from the previous year - tallied more than three million birds of 350 species."

"We're excited to see what this year's snapshot of bird distributions and densities will reveal," said John Fitzpatrick, director of Cornell Lab. "Each year of the count is vital to establish an accurate picture of bird populations. Over time, our results become more critical to understanding the environment. This count, the largest Internet-based bird census ever conducted, enables us to ensure our common birds remain common and tells us when to take protective measures for those species in decline."

Audubon and Cornell stress that amateurs can contribute essential information to this and other studies. "Birdwatching is the fastest-growing outdoor recreation in the U.S., and is enjoyed by millions. As information needs

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grow, the observations made by those who care about birds become increasingly important to conservation. It is vital to use this hobby to aid science," said Audubon's Gill. "With the cutting-edge Internet technology of BirdSource, the real time compilation of citizen-science reports fulfills that need."

In order for the count to be a success, Cornell and Audubon invite the estimated 60-million Americans who feed or watch birds to take part. "It's important for birdwatchers everywhere to tell us that they're seeing. We need people to help by spending as little as 15 minutes - on any or all days of the count, recording the numbers and kinds of birds they see during their morning coffee breaks, while driving to work, taking a stroll, or while purposefully out birdwatching," said Cornell's Fitzpatrick.

Participants tally the highest number of each species seen at one time (so as not to count the same birds more than once).

Observers go to BirdSource to report their sightings by clicking on their state of province. Within hours, they will see how their reports combine with others across the continent and other areas to create a "snapshot" of birds. This count has the added benefit of helping BirdSource assess the value of backyards as habitat and evaluate the species of birds that depend on them.

About 75 percent of American households now own personal computers. Those without Internet access can enter their results at local libraries, schools and during a break at work.

"We're especially enthusiastic about the potential of citizen science through the Internet," adds Audubon's Gill. "It means we'll have that many more eyes out there scanning the North American, Latin American, and Pacific landscapes, counting birds. We need every U.S. zip code and Canadian Postal Code to be represented on this year's maps."

Great Backyard Bird Count is a perfect family or youth group activity. Last year, classrooms all across the U.S. logged on. The updated site features a "Let's Talk About Birds" list of words associated with birds and their environments; "Bird-Brained Bibliography" suggests reference books, field guides, and novels

for educators, students, and beginning birders. New additions include "How to Birdwatch," an introduction to birding, using binoculars and field guides; and "Where in the World Were These Birds?" a geography/research lesson. Site visitors can view colorful bird images, hear bird vocalizations, and see trend data from last year's backyard count and other citizen-science projects, such as Project FeederWatch and Christmas Bird Count.

To participate, go the Birdsource <http://birdsource.org> and click on Great Backyard Bird Count. Directions are provided at the site. Participation is free. No registration is necessary. For more information, prospective counters can call toll-free 1-800-843-BIRD (2473)

(Editor's note: I called to find out if Hawai'i counts were welcome - Hawai'i counts are ESPECIALLY ENCOURAGED!!)

Federal Court Reaffirms Landmark Endangered Species Act Decision Protecting Endangered Palila (*Loxioides bailleui*)

On October 13, 1999, United States District Court Judge Samuel King rejected the most recent attempt by Big Island hunters and the Hawai'i State Department of Land and Natural Resources ("DLNR") to end court-ordered eradication of sheep in the critical habitat of the endangered palila (a finch-billed honeycreeper that feeds upon immature seeds in pods and other parts of the mamane tree) on Mauna Kea. The hunters and DLNR sought to have the mountain revert to a game management area for sheep hunting.

In a landmark decision resulting from litigation first brought more than twenty years ago by the Sierra Club, National Audubon Society, Hawai'i Audubon Society, and Alan Ziegler, the court found that the state was violating the Endangered Species Act by refusing to remove the introduced sheep, which push the palila closer to extinction by browsing on mamane shoots and trees, upon which the palila depends for its survival. DLNR has therefore been required for years to remove all feral sheep and mouflon from the bird's critical habitat, which it generally has done with aerial hunts from helicopters. Earlier this year, hunting advocacy groups Wildlife Conservation Association of Hawai'i and Sportsmen of Hawai'i asked the court to revisit its earlier rulings and end the sheep removal, arguing that the sheep do not harm the palila and are needed to reduce the threat of fire on the mountain. DLNR joined in the fray and asked to be allowed to maintain a herd of at least several hundred sheep.

Earthjustice attorney Paul Achitoff, who represented the plaintiffs in opposing the effort to reverse the court order, said: "We are elated that the court has reaffirmed that preservation of the palila has priority over the desire to hunt introduced sheep wherever they may be found. As Judge King observed, while 'mouflon sheep can always be reintroduced on Mauna Kea,' 'palila once extinct are gone forever.' The State's efforts would be better spent on setting aside areas for hunting that are not critical to the survival of Hawai'i's endangered species."

Source: from a news release by Earthjustice Legal Defense Fund dated 10/15/99 Contact: Paul Achitoff, (808)599-2436

Don't Miss the December Program Meeting!

Dr. Eric VanderWerf is an 'Elepaio researcher and expert who just finished his PhD in Ornithology at UH Manoa. He will be speaking to us about the conservation of O'ahu 'Elepaio, specifically about the distribution and ecology of this small Hawaiian forest bird, and the effects of diseases and of removing introduced predators on the population biology.

HAS' field trip in May to see O'ahu 'Elepaio was lead by Eric, in an area where he had been conducting research on predator control (in particular, rat control). It was a truly fascinating and



O'ahu 'Elepaio

photo by Dr. Eric VanderWerf

educational trip.

The program meeting will be from 7:30 to 9:30pm at Bishop Museum's Paki Hall Conference Room. Refresh-

ments provided. HAS publications, tapes, patches, T-shirts, and our new map, "Treasures of O'ahu" will be available for purchase.



NOVEMBER 1999

'ELEPAIO

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Calendar of Events

Thursdays, November 4 and December 2: Education Committee monthly meeting, 7 p.m. at BaLe Sandwich Shop in Manoa Marketplace (near Safeway). For more information, call chairperson Wendy Johnson, 261-5957.

Mondays, November 9 and December 6: Conservation Committee monthly meeting at the HAS office at 5:45 p.m. For more information, call chairperson Dan Sailer, 455-2311.

Mondays, November 9 and December 6: HAS Board meeting, always open to all members, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at the HAS office.

Thursday, November 18: HAS' 60th Anniversary and Annual Awards Dinner, with art unveiling by Richard Pettit. See article, page 77.

Saturday, November 20: Field trip - Visit the 'Ewa Plains limestone sinkholes with Dr. Alan Ziegler to look for fossils of extinct Hawaiian birds. Dr. Ziegler will lead us on a short walk from Barbers Point Deep Draft Harbor to the sinkholes, sharing information about the geology of the area along the way. Call Mary Gaber at 247-0104 to sign up and for more details.

Saturday, November 20: Annual Mailing Party! Those of you not going on the field trip can join us at the HAS office for our Annual Mailing Party from 10-4. Lunch, refreshments, and gratitude will be served. Call Linda Shapin at the HAS office, 528-1432, to let her know you'll help.

Monday, December 13: Program Meeting and Annual HAS Members Meeting Election results will be announced and the 1999-2000 officers and directors will be introduced. Dr. Eric VanderWerf, 'Elepaio expert, is our speaker. See page 79 for details.

December 16 to January 3, 2000: The annual Christmas Bird Count will be happening on all islands! See page 73 for more detailed information on how to participate.

Table of Contents

Conditions Affecting Birds.....	69-71
Welcome Back, Kolea!.....	71
My First Bird Walks in Hawai'i.....	72
Christmas Bird Count 1999-2000.....	73
Year 2000 Federal Junior Duck Stamp Design Contest Kicks Off.....	74
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Pa- cific Islands Ecoregion Enters Cyber- space!.....	74
Reminder: It's Annual Mailing Time Again!.....	74
Migrant Birds on Rota Island, Com- monwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), Fall 1997/Spring 1998	75-76
Reminder! Don't Miss Hawaii Audubon Society's 60th Anniversary Awards Banquet and Art Unveiling.	77
Great Backyard Bird Count 2000...78	
Federal Court Reaffirms Landmark Decision.....	79
December Program Meeting.....	79