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For the Better Protection of Wildlife in Hawaii

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Endangered Bird Species of Hawaii
(Continued from last issue)
By George C. Munro

The Island of Kauai will lend itself well to this as its forest is compact and runs to 5080 feet elevation. Its birds are under better conditions being most numerous where well away from the influences of human habitation, and above the mosquito areas. I had made trips to the Island of Kauai in 1926, '31, '32, '33, penetrating several miles into the forests at the lower elevations and where there were human habitations at higher elevations and found almost no birds whereas up to a dozen species were found plentifully in 1891 at most places visited. In January, 1936, I visited another location at a little higher elevation and remote from human habitation, where I had collected birds in 1891 and again for two or three days in 1899. At 3800 feet the forest conditions were about the same. The weather was cold and foggy. The large Ohia (Metrosiderous polymorpha) trees up to 100 feet were flowering, the ferny growth was somewhat more dense, from the elimination of wild cattle. It was satisfactory to see that the owners had kept the locality and surroundings in primeval condition and this has gone far, with the remoteness and elevation in saving the birds. Four species were common and six or seven more might have been identified but for the fog and rain. The action of the red birds reminded me of conditions in 1891 and also the beautiful singing of the native thrush, Amaui (Phaeornis). The flycatcher, Elepaio (Chasiempis) was as numerous and friendly as of old.

In 1891 the scarlet Iiwi and crimson Apapane, persistent honey-eaters, were so numerous that "... in their unceasing activity, flying backwards and forwards their wings kept up a continual buzzing..." "This was their repeated calls and several short songs made a very animated scene among the flowering trees".... "Flitting from flower to flower and hopping about amongst twigs and leaves in search of caterpillars".... "From a few feet I have watched the Iiwi sucking honey from the flowers... These beautiful birds darting about and chasing each other, running nimbly along the branches, their scarlet bodies, black wings and tails showing up to great advantage." With foggier weather the Iiwi and other birds come down lower in the trees, but the Apapane keeps more to the tree tops. There in flight, with sprightly movements, and joyous voices they reveal a spirit of gaiety. Fog and rain, a usual condition there, fail to dull their spirits. The songs of the Kauai Amaui and the Kauai Oo or Oo-Aa wakened me early on many a morning in the Kauai woods. I believe these fine singers could still be brought back to that stage if proper measures are taken soon

The green and yellow Drepanids which the red birds persecute in the flowering trees, with other birds of different families, have a habit of congregating when hunting insects. This is much the same as Bates described in the Amazon forests. It was useful to us as the rarer species could often be obtained by following the flocks. The rainfall on Waialeale on Kauai, close on 600 inches in the year, will discourage imported birds from intruding in those forests.

The forests of Maui also offer a good field. It would be worth considerable effort to try and save much forms as Pseudonestor the parrot-like Drepanid, and Palmeria, another odd but beautiful member of the same family. On Molokai and Lanai native bird preservation seems hopeless at present but immunization of a few species to imported diseases may eventually occur as seems to have taken place on Oahu. There is also an isolated plateau from 3600 to 4600 feet elevation far removed from human habitation and seldom visited by man, on Molokai where, judging by the experience on Kauai, the Black Mamo, the Molokai Amaui, the Molokai Oo and other interesting forms may still exist.

Many reasons have been given for the decrease of the Hawaiian forest birds. Perkind emphasizes reduction of forest area, the introducing of cats, rats, mongoose and mynah birds, and specialization, where birds become so closely adapted to special conditions, a slight upset of which may be fatal. "...Entrance of cattle into untrodden forest appears to be alone sufficient to scare away some species"... "Thus on a very rough lava flow on Hawaii in 1892 the Oo (Acrulocercus nobilis) was very numerous, and as many as a dozen of these birds could be seen in a single tree, making, with hosts of the scarlet 'Liwi' and the crimson 'Apapane' and other birds, a picture never to be forgotten. A few years afterwards, on visiting the spot at the same season, although the trees were as before, one mass of flowers, hardly a single 'Oo' was to be seen. The only noticeable change was that the cattle were wandering over the flow and beginning to destroy the brushwood just as they had already reduced the formerly dense forest bordering the flow to the condition of open park land."¹

There never were cattle in the Lanai forests and forest protection was taken up there twelve years before the birds began to decline. There is no mongoose on Kauai and the birds there also decreased. Neither Henshaw nor I have seen evidence of the mynah interfering with native birds.²

Reducing of forest area is of course serious. Specialization and the introduction of predaceous animals are also dangerous, but these cannot account for what has happened to the birds of Hawaii.

Henshaw speaks of the birds that are most likely to avoid inbreeding and decadence. "Such species as the Iiwi, Akakani, Amakiki and Ou are the best examples of this class and they doubtless will survive so long as any forest remains."³

¹ Fauna Hawaiiensis, Aves, page 893

² "Birds of the Hawaiian Possessions", page 180

³ Ibid, p. 13

On the Island of Lanai I saw the Iiwi and Ou dwindle and disappear.¹ Following are quotations from and notes on my reports. Just before the great increase of human population in 1923, I said, "The forest birds of Lanai are holding their own and some species are probably increasing." By 1927 the Iiwi was noticeably decreasing. In 1928 I reported, "Despite the protection of the native forests for the last twenty-five years the native birds seem to be still declining in numbers and it may be only a question of time when they will be all gone except a few of the most resistant species such as the Elepaio and Amakihi." By 1929 the Iiwi had disappeared on Lanai. In 1931 the Ou on Lanai was getting visibly less and was entirely gone in 1932, at least none have been seen since.

Henshaw said in 1902, "The Ou is one of the winged gems of the Island forests and happily is widely distributed throughout the group." ... "At one time no doubt the Ou was as common upon the Island of Oahu as it is now on most of the other islands."² I do not know at the present time where a living specimen of the Ou could be found.

Regarding the Laysan Island Finch (*Telespiza cantans*). I quote from my notes when collecting specimens of birds on Laysan in 1891. "Captain Berry took a great lot of the finches to Honolulu..... They give no trouble in caging and seem as much at home as when free. They will eat almost anything."³ Another quotation from the Honolulu Morning Advertiser August 10, 1938 "From Our Files: Forty Years Ago - 1898 Captain Moser ... brings back several hundred Laysan canaries." None of these birds lived long in Honolulu. The Laysan Island Finch is now very common on Midway where it lives in close contact with the human population. Some were taken there in 1891 and more again in 1912.

Why should *Telespiza* thrive when taken from Laysan to Midway, and die when brought to Honolulu? And why should the Ou, its close relative, die when population increases in its neighborhood? We do not know the answer but my belief is that it is because there are no mosquitoes on Midway to carry the germs of certain bird diseases. There are plenty on the lowlands of the larger islands of the Hawaiian group and the Ou comes down to the lower levels in the forests.

Convinced of the necessity of investigation in regard to the continued decrease of the native Hawaiian birds, the writer decided in 1930⁴ to make a systematic survey of all the forests of the Territory. With the cooperation of local institutions this was accom-

¹ Reports of Associate in Ornithology with the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum for 1923, '27, '30, '31, '32.

² "Birds of the Hawaiian Possessions", Pages 64 and 66.

³ G. C. M. Journal Cruise of the Kaalokai along the northwest chain of Islands June 21, 1891. (Not published.)

⁴ Report of Associate in Ornithology for 1930.

plished in 1935-37.¹ His conclusions were that "...out of twenty-two genera with fifty-two species, but six genera with twenty-one species are likely to survive. The other species may possibly linger on for some time in remote places and a few may take a new lease of life and increase again."² "The decline of the Hawaiian forest birds has been governed by the proximity of human habitation. The birds of Oahu, which was early inhabited by foreigners and without wide areas of forest, were well on the decline in the eighties. Kauai, Maui and Hawaii, settled later and having wider areas of forest though with much water development and forest camps in the nineties and first years of this century, felt the decline later, and seem now, when these activities have lessened, to be gaining lost ground! There is hope that the birds there are increasing again.

"Molokai and Lanai whose population has increased greatly in the last fifteen years, are at the lowest obb in bird life. As human beings, per se, have interfered very little with the birds and are not much feared by them, my conclusion is that introduced bird diseases brought by poultry and cage birds and carried by mosquitoes has been the greatest factor in the destruction of the Hawaiian passerine birds. Other influences to which they were subjected could not in my opinion account for their rapid decline."³

As a result of this report the Hawaii National Park Service has taken up a technical investigation of the matter of introduced bird diseases which promises good results. There is also a movement to bring some of the Laysan Island finches (Telespiza) and the Laysan rail from Midway to the Honolulu Bird Park. If any die, they will be examined by a parasitologist. By this something may be found of the reasons for the decrease of the forest birds of Hawaii.

It is not known at the present time how many of the Hawaiian birds are extinct. The little flightless rail of the Island of Hawaii and the honeyeating Kioea were probably extinct in the eighties and also some of the Oahu Passeres, but how many of these birds have gone since the eighties it is impossible to say without a very careful search being made. I base my conclusions as to which species will disappear and which will survive on the experience of the past. The representatives of the species rare or extinct on Oahu in the nineties were still common on the other islands at that time. These in the last thirty years have also become scarce and it seems but a question of time when they will disappear entirely unless something can be done for them. I doubt if it will be necessary to exclude human beings from the forests but their poultry and cage birds certainly should be excluded and the greatest care taken in the introduction of new species to the Islands.

¹ The Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum
Board of Agriculture and Forestry
Hawaii Sugar Planters' Association
Hui Manu (Bird Society, importing birds)

² Report of Associate in Ornithology in 1936.

³ Report of 1937.

The shore birds of the Hawaiian Islands are a duck, koloa (Anas wyvillana); coot, alaekeokeo (Fulica americana alae); mudhen, alaiula, (Gallinula chloropus sandvicensis); stilt, aeo, (Himantopus knudseni); blackcrowned night heron, aukuu (Nycticorax nycticorax hoactli); all endemic but the last. Of the open country and forest there is a goose, nene, (Nesochen sandvicensis); owl, pueo, (Asio accipitrinus sandvicensis); hawk, io, (Buteo solitarius); crow, alala, (Corvus tropicus). The migratory shore birds are five waders, and two or three ducks.

There are twenty-two sea birds that periodically, mostly in the nesting season, frequent the cliffs and mountain tops of the main islands, small islands off their coasts, and outlying islands running in a chain over 1000 miles to the northwest. This latter is the "Hawaiian Islands Reservation". There is great need for a regular patrol of the islands of the Reservation and a resident warden on Laysan. As many of these islands as possible should be kept without imported trees or buildings especially where the albatrosses nest, as many when landing strike obstacles of this kind and are killed.¹ Cisterns and wells left by guano workers should be destroyed or covered, as many birds are trapped in them and starve to death there.²

The small outlying islands offshore the main inhabited islands might be brought within the patrol of the Reservation. Some of these such as Moku Manu, a mile off Oahu, should be kept free of exotic plants. Manana or Rabbit Island, off Oahu, and Lehua, off Niihau, should be entirely cleared of rabbits. Popoia, not a quarter of a mile from the shore at Kailua, Oahu, would lend itself admirably as a botanical garden for rare Hawaiian shore plants and for a study of the 1000 pairs of Wedgetailed Shearwaters that nest there.

Laysan and Niihoa of the Reservation, and Moku Manu, Popoia and Manana, off Oahu, are show islands whose value some day will be appreciated and the birds thereon need suffer no ill by such development.

Much credit is due to the Hawaii National Park Service for its activity in research to preserve the Hawaiian birds. The Superintendent, Mr. Edward G. Wingate, has made some excellent moves in this line of endeavor.

The findings of the survey showed that the forest birds were protected by law and had extensive forest sanctuaries and yet on the whole were decreasing. There seemed but a forlorn hope that anything more would be done for them. There were, however, thirty-seven species mostly of shore and sea birds, needing protection and sanctuaries. Late in 1937 the writer inaugurated and worked on a publicity campaign and protection bill until the end of the legislative session in May, 1939. The bill was pared down to two years protection for ten species, and after a hard fight in which other bird

1. G.C.M. Journal Notes June 1891.

2. G.C.M. Report on Bird Work on the Whippoorwill Expedition to Baker and Howland Islands in 1924.

lovers joined and the help of newly created Audubon Societies¹ the bill was passed as the Session closed and was signed by the Governor soon afterwards.

The opposition was against protection for the Pacific Golden Plover (*Pluvialis dominica fulva*), the Kolea of the Hawaiians. Perkins and Henshaw both, thirty-eight years ago, had strongly advised protection for this valuable insectivorous bird. It breeds in Alaska and Siberia and ranges the whole of the Pacific to the south of New Zealand. Both sentiment and commercial interest should protect it. It is unthinkable that it should, after yeoman service on the upland pasture lands, when it comes to the coastal ponds to drink, be lured by decoys to within gunshot of blinds and shot down. In immense numbers it can do no harm, and in numbers it is of immense value. The Audubon Societies will now take up this battle and it is hoped will not relax until all deserving unprotected birds are cared for by protection and sanctuaries.

The good work now under way with the National Park Service furnishes a brighter outlook for the future of the Hawaiian forest birds.

March 7, 1940.

Revised, March, 1945.

Since the foregoing was written the Laysan Island rail (*Porzana palmeri*) has become extinct, as related in the Elepaio of February, 1945. So that only two of the five original species of land birds inhabiting Laysan Island are existing today and one of them, the Laysan duck, is in a precarious position. (G. C. M.)

¹The Manuiki (small bird) Audubon Society was organized in Hilo, Island of Hawaii in November, 1938, and the Honolulu Audubon Society in Honolulu in March, 1939.

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REPORT OF THE LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE
OF THE HONOLULU AUDUBON SOCIETY
COVERING THE LEGISLATIVE SESSION
OF 1945

With the closing on May 4th of the 1945 Legislature of Hawaii, after an extension of 3 days, only one bill affecting bird life in the islands was passed and enacted into law. This bill was Senate Bill No. 35, pertaining to the granting of permits by the Board of Commissions of Agriculture and Forestry to take for scientific or propagation purposes, fish, birds and mammals and to issue permits to others to do likewise. The bill passed both Houses during April and was signed by the governor as Act 14 of the Session Laws of Hawaii, 1945. Copy of the act is enclosed herewith for the files of the Society.

Numerous bills pertaining to fish were passed and enacted into law.

Of the bills pertaining to forestation, House Bill No. 460, which grants permits to citizens to hunt or gather plants for food purposes in the forest reserves of the Territory of Hawaii was placed on file in the House and remained so at the end of the session.

House Bill No. 414 (companion bill to Senate Bill No. 179), an Act providing for the acquisition of lands within the forest reserve of the Honolulu-Pearl Harbor area and appropriating therefore the sum of \$1,046,120, was put over for further study by the Hold-Over committee. Inasmuch as the provision for the Hold-Over Committee was later vetoed by the governor, this leaves the bill completely eliminated.

Action on other bills pertaining to birds was as follows:

House Bill 455, calling for the repeal of Section 1167 of the Revised Laws of Hawaii, 1945, pertaining to the ownership of certain wild birds, was placed on file in the House and remained so at the end of the session.

House Bill 623, appropriating \$100,000 for the establishment, stocking and maintenance of a game propagating station in the County of Hawaii was also placed on file and remained so at the end of the session.

House Bill 485, an Act to amend Section 1151 of the Revised Laws of Hawaii 1945, relating to open and closed seasons and bag limits of certain wild birds, passed the House on April 27th and was sent to the Senate. It failed of any further action in that body at the close of the session.

It will be noted from the above that no new action was taken by the present legislature affecting birds other than the enactment into law of Senate Bill 35. Legislation attempting to affect the open seasons or bag limits failed and the status-quo as to bird legislation was maintained.

I might call your attention to the fact that control of open seasons and bag limits throughout the Territory is exercised by the Board of Commissioners of Agriculture and Forestry and more specifically covered by Regulation 9 of its Rules and Regulations, and Mr. Colin G. Lennox, President of the Board, has informed me that the Board intends to modify this regulation in the near future. The regulation as now in force reads as follows:

Section 1. Pursuant to Section 300, R.L. of H. 1935, as amended, and all other provisions of law, the Board of Agriculture and Forestry, for the better protection and propagation of game birds, does hereby declare a closed season upon all game birds in the Territory of Hawaii.

Section 2. The closed season hereby declared shall remain in force and effect until revoked by the said Board.

Under the law, this Regulation cannot be amended until due notice of the Board's contemplated action is given to the public by publication in a local newspaper. This affords all those who are interested an opportunity to appear before the Board at a scheduled hearing to express their views in the matter. The procedure allows the Society its day in court, if interested.

Should the Regulation be amended, it must still be approved by the governor before becoming valid.

Francis Evans,
Legislative Committee,
Honolulu Audubon Society.

Note: Since the above was written, the open hearing has been held, attended by a relatively small group. The open season will be only upon pheasants, doves, and quail, on the island of Molokai only. Regulation 4, establishing a closed season upon wild duck, plover, snipe, turnstone, curlew, stilt and mudhen remains in effect, and Mr. Lennox pointed out at the hearing that these are protected under Federal law, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Further action of the Board on Regulation 9 will appear in the papers.

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Birds of the Southwest Pacific. By Ernst Mayr. Macmillan Co., N.Y. 1945. 316 pages, 3 colored plates, maps. \$3.75.

The war has resulted in many demands for information on Pacific birds. Dr. Mayr's book covers the area from Samoa to New Caledonia and north to Palau and the Marianas. The Solomon Islands are included but not New Guinea, or the Bismark Archipelago, although the book would be of considerable value there. Mayr has collected and observed birds in the Solomons and other islands and is the author of many scientific reports on Pacific birds. In this handbook he has made very effort through the use of keys, illustrations and geographical arrangement of material to aid the beginner in identifying

birds in this region. Since there are relatively few birds on any one of these far flung islands, this goal could be accomplished. The colored plates by F. L. Jaques and the black and white sketches illustrate many of the more characteristic birds. There is ~~an~~brief description of each bird and notes on habits. Little is known of the latter in most instances, and every amateur can make valuable observations. A few such have already found their way to the pages of the Elepaio and other suitable outlets.

Dr. Mayr has listed every species and race of bird found in the area. This makes his book an up to the minute check-list that will be of great value to scientists. We are glad to learn that he and Captain Delacour are preparing a handbook of Philippine birds, with another on Japan a possibility. Mayr is the author of a standard check-list of New Guinea birds. A popular account of the amazingly rich bird life of that island would probably run into several volumes and so could scarcely find a place in the service man's jungle kit.
D. Amadon.

oOo

MAKIKI VALLEY BIRD-Walk-May 12, 1945.

The day was beautifully clear and the upper reaches of Makiki valley appeared very inviting as a group of the society began their first bird walk of May. Previous to meeting Mrs. Gill, our guide for the day, we introduced several new hikers to the rice bird, which seems always to be feeding on the lawns near the beginning of the Round Top Road. Two of these individuals put on a fine show as they jumped about in the grass just a short distance from the car where we were watching.

The twisting road rising up the slopes of Tantalus always affords an enjoyable ride and it was especially interesting on that afternoon. Far below the city stretched out before us and the view of the ocean was impressive.

After suitable trail clothing was donned by several service men the walk began. The trail led down into the valley ~~through~~ large groups of Australian pine and then into an area predominated by koa. Before long the songs of hill robins, cardinals and elepaio were heard. White Eyes were seen frequently and their excited notes followed us down the entire trail. Frequent squeaking failed to call the elepaio down within sight, so it was decided that they were busy raising their new families and couldn't bother putting on a show for us at this season of the year.

A cool drink from the Makiki stream was enjoyed before we started back up the trail. Our return trip out of the valley was high-lighted by an excellent view of a pair of hill robins, which entertained us during a welcomed pause. Another fifteen minute period of walking brought us to the end of the trail and the end of another day of enjoyment on an intriguing adventure in birding.

Ti-Leaf Slide - May 20, 1945.

The efforts of those who braved the steep, short climb above Woodlawn were splendidly rewarded by finding an unusually large number of apapane and amakihi among the lehua trees close to the top of the ridge. The group lingered here for some time, listening to the sweet, rather monotonous call of the apapane, and delighting in the beauty of these birds as they flew from tree to tree, very close to us. The makihi were not so numerous, but seemed to display unusual brilliance of plumage.

The trip down was quickly made, thanks to finding an ample supply of ti leaves.

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We are pleased to share with our readers the following letter from Charles A. Harker, of Koloa, Kauai.

"I thought that you might like to know that I had the rare pleasure of seeing and listening to the full song of a Kauai thrush, shortly before the war, the last time that we could roam the mountains freely in quest of birds. My wife and I heard them in the rain forest at about 4000 feet and finally I spotted one only 40 feet away on a dead lehua branch singing his heart out to the heavens. I brought him 'into my lap' with my binoculars, and for a matter of minutes watched this drab little bird sing and sing and sing the most beautiful liquid notes that I have ever heard come from a bird. A truly unforgettable experience.

Also of interest is the increase in meadow larks in the Knudsen Gap of Kauai in the last year. It used to be a rare event to see and hear one, but now several can be seen on puhala branches and fence posts, adding a joyous note of California spring to an early morning drive through the Gap. Here, of course, they know no season."

oOo

Walks for July:

July 14th. Meet at the upper junction of Woodlawn and Alani streets, at 2:00 P.M., for a trip up the valley. Take Woodlawn bus.

July 22. Meet at the end of Paty Drive, at 10:00 A.M., for the ti-leaf slide. Take Woodlawn bus to Seaview Drive, (the end of the run) then walk mauka to Paty. The climb is steep, but our last trip was so successful that a repeat seems advisable.

oOo

HONOLULU AUDUBON SOCIETY

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