



'ELEPAIO

Journal of the
Hawaii Audubon Society

For the Protection of
Hawaii's Native Wildlife

VOLUME 67, NUMBER 7

OCTOBER 2007

It is with great sadness that the Hawaii Audubon Society announces the loss of a very special associate and friend, Dr. Robert L. Pyle, who passed away in Honolulu on Sunday, July 29, 2007. With our warmest aloha, we dedicate this 'Elepaio issue in memory and celebration of such an exceptional human being.

Aloha e Bob August 27, 1923 - July 29, 2007

Bob Pyle, Elite Birder

By Ron Walker

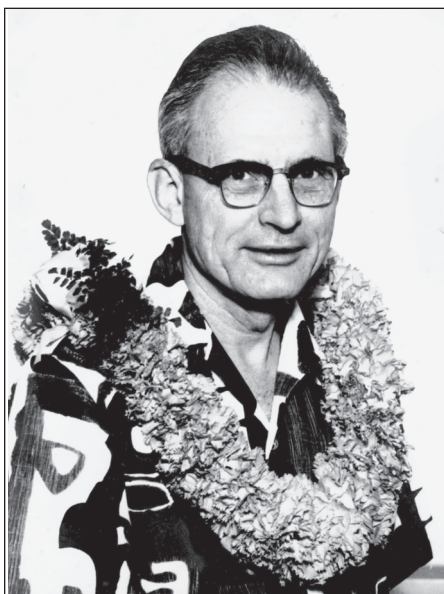
In the beginning, as a child, he became fascinated by birds coming to feeders at his grandparents' homes in Washington, D.C. and near Baltimore. He was to ultimately become known as the world's foremost Pacific Oceania birder in terms of total number of birds recorded, primarily in Polynesia, Micronesia and Melanesia. In Hawai'i, he was the proverbial "legend in his own time" and a fount of knowledge about resident and visitor birds, especially the rare migrants and accidental arrivals. The Hawaii Audubon Society bestowed him with a Lifetime Achievement Award in 1995 and an Honorary Life Membership in 2001.

Dr. Robert Pyle's fascinating story centers on a career in meteorology interwoven with a passion for birding. His academic credentials included a two-year major in economics at Swarthmore College (1942) and degrees in meteorology from New York University (1944), UCLA (1951) and the University of Washington (1958). Work for his Masters Degree at UCLA took place on Maui, where he resided from 1953-1956.

His personal ornithological milestones began with his first real birding trip on April 7th, 1941 when he made his first list of birds seen! Around that time, he was to decide between the pursuit of a career in ornithology or meteorology. Ever practical, he decided on weather forecasting as a way to "earn his supper" and birding as fun and something he "could turn on or off at will."

His career as a meteorologist included time spent in Washington D.C., Japan, and on O'ahu with the U.S. Army Air Corps and the National Weather Service. He became a virtual professional ornithologist when put on temporary leave to assist in the Pacific Ocean Seabird Project of the Smithsonian Institution from 1966 to 1969. It was during the 1950s and 1960s that Bob came to know the birds of the Pacific Basin intimately through sea cruises and island hopping.

During his lifetime, Bob birded in all 50 States and many foreign countries including Germany, Switzerland, Japan, the Galapagos, Tahiti, the Marquesas, Christmas Island, Easter



Robert L. Pyle, 1978. Photo courtesy of the Pyle family.

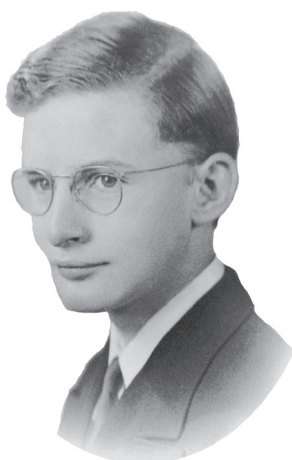
Island, Fiji, the Marshall Islands, the Cook Islands, Micronesia, the Marianas, Melanesia, Australia, New Zealand, Madagascar, Samoa, Trinidad, Brazil, Chile, and Antarctica. He modestly estimated that his life list numbered about 2,000 ("plus or minus 500") species seen, although he was most proud of the approximately 215 birds he had recorded in his notebooks for Hawai'i. He figured he had seen all of the penguin species of Antarctica and South America, but regretted missing those in South Africa. He rated the short-tailed albatross as the rarest migratory bird he had seen, and called the 'i'iwi his favorite Hawaiian bird because of its color, song and habits. He believed that the 'ō'ū on Kaua'i and po'ouli on Maui were the rarest birds on his island list, both of which are now presumed extinct.

Bob had always been interested in conservation but did not consider himself an activist, preferring to look at birds rather than to sit in hearings and boardrooms. Nonetheless, Bob served the Society as President, first in 1955 and later in 1977, 1978, and 1983, and as a member of the Board of Directors in 1955, 1967-1969, 1976, 1979, and 1981-1983.

Although he participated in his first Christmas Count in Los Angeles in 1944, and another in Japan the following year, his first Hawaii Audubon Christmas Count was in 1953. That year he joined the Hawaii Audubon Society and the Hawaii Trail and Mountain Club. Association with the latter group was fortuitous as he met his wife-to-be, Leilani, on a ridge in the Mokulē'ia Forest Reserve and thus began a joint love of nature and things Hawaiian.

His contributions to the Hawaii Audubon Society go back to 1954 when he produced the first "Green" bird field check card. He dedicated it to Grenville Hatch, longtime leader of Audubon, and the card has seen many updates since. During that time, he served as compiler of the annual Christmas Bird Count and was responsible for including each of Hawaii's annual accounts in the national "Audubon Field Notes" (later called "American Birds" and now "North American Birds"). One of his claims to fame was the ongoing development of the "Checklist of the Birds of

continued on page 50



Bob Pyle as a 1940 high school graduate of George School, Pennsylvania. Photo courtesy of the Pyle family.

Hawai‘i,” which was first published in the *‘Elepaio* in 1977. It has since been updated several times and continues to be an important source of information for birders and ornithologists.

In February 1984, Bob retired as manager of the Weather Satellite Field Station at the Honolulu Airport and went to work part-time at the Bernice P. Bishop Museum in the Vertebrate Zoology Division, which includes bird collections. The Hawaii Audubon Society provided financial support for this work. He developed and maintained a database within “The Occurrence and Status of Birds in Hawai‘i”

which now has almost 100,000 records. Concurrent with this monumental project, he established the “Hawai‘i Rare Bird Photo File” which now includes over 1,700 pictures contributed by field researchers and casual observers. And he was working on a large project to summarize the current distribution and status of the birds of the Hawaiian Islands.

In 1998, Dr. Pyle formally retired from the Bishop Museum but continued to volunteer his time until the very end in support of the Museum’s bird collections and ornithological records. He remained active with the Hawaii Audubon Society, serving as an informal advisor and providing us with an endless supply of expert information and opinion.

Bob is survived by Leilani, his wife of 53 years, his sons Peter and Richard, and daughter Ellen. Respectively, his children work

to carry on his legacy of conservation as a wildlife biologist at Point Reyes Bird Observatory (California) and world-renowned bird expert, an ichthyologist at Bishop Museum, and a plant expert and Bishop Museum volunteer.

John James Audubon said, “A true Conservationist is a man who knows that the world is not given by his fathers, but borrowed from his children.” We know that Bob’s family, friends, colleagues, and fellow Society members will carry on in his spirit.

Aloha e Bob.

A version of this article was first published in the November 2001 ‘Elepaio; it is based on an interview that took place between Ron Walker and Bob Pyle in 2001.



From left to right (with their relation to Bob Pyle): Lisa Privitera and Richard Pyle (daughter-in-law and son), Owen and Cara Mia Pyle (grandson and granddaughter), Ellen Pyle (daughter), Leilani Pyle (wife), Peter Pyle and Rowena Forest (son and daughter-in-law), Suzy Pyle (daughter-in-law, widow of Lewis Pyle, son), Lawrence Ewing (nephew). August 9, 2007 Memorial Service. Photo by Zepher Forest, courtesy of the Pyle family.

Keeping the Legacy Alive Donate to the Pyle Fund

Leilani, Peter, Richard, and Ellen Pyle—with the help of volunteers—will work to finish Bob’s monograph: a comprehensive analysis of the bird sightings data he had compiled over the years. Donations toward the completion of this project are welcome. Please make checks payable to “Bishop Museum” and note in the memo that they are for the “HBS, Pyle Fund.” Send checks to Hawaii Biological Survey, Bishop Museum, 1525 Bernice St., Honolulu, HI 96817.

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Remembering Bob Pyle

Friends and associates recall fond memories of a man who touched many lives.

Allen Allison delivered the following eulogy at Bob Pyle's Memorial Service at Central Union Church in Honolulu on August 9, 2007. Dr. Allison is a Zoologist and Vice President for Science at Bishop Museum's Hawai'i Biological Survey.

Gatherings such as these bring out conflicting emotions. On the one hand we are here in sadness to mourn the passing of Bob Pyle – a dear friend and colleague, a devoted husband, father and grandfather. On the other hand we are here to celebrate a life – a rich and extraordinary life that has touched us all. If anyone followed his dreams and left a world of good in his wake, it was Bob.

I first met Bob Pyle nearly 25 years ago. He stopped by to see me to discuss the possibility of retiring from the National Weather Service to take up a part-time curatorial position at the Bishop Museum. We secured a plan with a handshake and Bob joined the Museum in early 1984.

Bob quickly fit in and in effect became the Museum's curator of ornithology. In those days he sported a full white beard and was armed with a pocket protector. He was obviously a serious scientist! Having myself ruined several shirts with leaking pens, I've thought a lot about that pocket protector. It was clear from the get-go that Bob was a superb scientist – rigorous and thorough to the full measure of those words – and a master debater whose command of the English language and precise use of words was second to none. He was also one of the nicest people I've ever met, full of good cheer and always willing to help others.

Bob had a Ph.D. in meteorology and we assumed that having a credentialed weatherman in our midst would prove helpful. Although we did discover that his predictions were invariably right, many of these predictions were – I have to admit – a little general.

"Is it going to rain today?" we'd ask. "Yes," Bob would answer with alacrity, and, after a pause, in a somewhat subdued voice, would add "somewhere." "Is it going to rain tomorrow?" we'd ask. "Possibly!" he'd reply.

At one point in the mid-eighties after more than a week of seemingly continuous rainfall and during a particularly intense deluge that we could clearly see out the window, I had the temerity to ask Bob how much longer the storm was likely to last. "What storm?" he replied. "The one outside!" I responded, incredulously. "Oh that," he said, "that's not a storm." "What is it?" I asked. "It's just unstable air," he responded, smugly.

The word "storm" has a precise meaning to the weather profession and I now know that this term cannot be applied to most

of the inclement weather that we have in Hawai'i. So next time you're walking or driving through heavy rain, don't despair. It is only unstable air! I have that on good authority. This morning, I am happy to report, the air looks to be quite stable.

The Audubon Society – of which Bob was a member of national standing – has a Hawai'i chapter that meets monthly. At the beginning of those meetings those attending are asked to report any unusual bird sightings. Bob kept notes on all reports and invariably followed up to obtain any additional details that he felt were necessary to authenticate the report. He also combed all available literature – newspapers, newsletters, scientific journals – the lot – for additional reports. He was relentless and tracked down every available detail. If you had seen anything interesting and unusual he would somehow find out and track you down. Over several decades he accumulated around 100,000 such reports and began work on a monograph.

While he was readily willing to accept unusual sightings from knowledgeable observers, he always tried to verify such sightings. And thus began the saga of the red-breasted and common merganser. I don't quite remember the specifics, but a merganser was reported from the Big Island. Andy Engilis reported seeing a read-breasted merganser. Bob Pyle later saw a common merganser. They argued about this for months – indeed years. Although they eventually agreed that either species was a possibility, and the sighting was so listed in Bob's checklist of the birds of Hawai'i, we quickly discovered to our amusement that with a few choice words we could easily induce them to re-ignite the debate. It was good theater.

Perhaps Bob's greatest lasting legacy was his ability to work with and gather data from birders of all persuasions – from recreational bird watchers to hardcore professional ornithologists – and to effectively organize these data to address important scientific questions. This brought literally hundreds of

people – most of them recreational birders – into the scientific enterprise and helped connect Bishop Museum to this important constituency.

Bob's monograph, documenting and analyzing all sightings of rare and unusual birds in Hawai'i, is about 80% complete. His son Peter, with help from brother Richard and sister Ellen, will complete the monograph and Bishop Museum will publish it, probably in late 2008.

In closing, I would like to thank all of you, but particularly the Pyle family, and especially his spouse Leilani, and sons Peter and Richard, and daughter Ellen, and the extended Pyle 'ohana for sharing Bob with us. We miss him deeply.



Galapagos, July 1981. Photo courtesy of the Pyle family.

H. Douglas Pratt

Research Curator of Birds for the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences; internationally recognized ornithologist and wildlife artist

I knew Bob Pyle from the time he returned to Hawai'i in the 1970s. Over the years he went from acquaintance to trusted colleague to close friend. His contributions to birding and ornithology in Hawai'i are legendary, but many are unaware that he had a keen interest in the birds of the entire Pacific region, especially Micronesia. Bob accompanied me on three tours of the region (1988, 1991, 1993), and co-authored one paper that reported our significant sightings. Leilani joined us on the 1991 trip, and participated in my most vivid memory from those trips.

Our group headed across the Chuuk (Truk) Lagoon in a small boat to the group of islands called Faichuk, which includes Tol, to search for one of the world's rarest and most restricted-range birds. *Rukia ruki*, formerly called the Great Truk White-eye and recently renamed Teardrop White-eye by the IOC English Names Committee, is one of those big non-*Zosterops* white-eyes, all dark olive brown with the white eye-ring restricted to a small crescent (teardrop) below the eye. The tiny remnant of original forest that remains at the top of Tol is the only place on earth where one can reliably see it. This was actually Bob's second attempt to see this species because in 1988, Air Micronesia had disrupted our plans by bumping half our group from our Guam-Chuuk flight.

Seeing this bird is a challenge in more ways than one. It has to be done in a day because outsiders are not allowed to spend the night in Faichuk. That means a very early start across the lagoon, and arrival in the heat of the day. We disembarked at a point with no wharf, where we had to wade ashore, boots and all. Then came the hike. The mountain

does not look very high (ca. 300m) from the water, but there is really no trail and the ascent is very steep in places. Add to that the tropical heat and humidity, and it is a daunting prospect, especially for people in their 70s, as Bob and Leilani were at the time. About half way up the mountain, we had finished all the water we had brought (as much as we could carry), and still had the worst ahead of us. We were saved at that point by our local guides, who scampered up some nearby coconut trees and cut down green nuts full of the most refreshing water I have ever had. Thus recharged, we headed up again. At this point, several members of the group decided it was not worth the effort, and headed back down, but not Bob and Leilani Pyle!

The last part of the trek is over large boulders overgrown with vines that hide all the treacherous crevices. But by mid-afternoon, we reached the rainforest, with its canopy of endemic Chuuk poison trees (*Semecarpus kraemeri*). In the forest, walking was easier. We had not gone far when we were greeted by the mournful calls of the Chuuk Monarch (*Metabolus rugensis*), a nearly all-white bird that is also endemic, but more widespread among other islands in the lagoon than the white-eye. At that point we decided to play our recording of *Rukia*, which I had obtained on a previous trip. Immediately, 2 birds responded and perched directly overhead! It was almost too easy considering how hard we had worked to get to that point. I looked around to make sure everyone got a look, only to discover that Bob and Leilani and two others were the only ones who made it all the way! It was then I realized that Leilani was probably the first *haole* woman to ever see the Teardrop White-eye! (Others have seen it since.) We

got back to our hotel at dusk, had a much-deserved good dinner, and slept as well as we ever had. This was entirely typical of Bob Pyle, who never gave up in pursuit of a new bird.



Churchill Manitoba, June 9, 1994. Photo courtesy of the Pyle family.

Dr. Wally and Mrs. Pat Johnson

Kōlea Researchers, Montana State University, Bozeman

Aside from interesting conversations over dinner and other fun get-togethers with Bob and Leilani Pyle, our reminiscences of Bob usually involve the kōlea (pacific golden-plover) for it was this remarkable bird that brought the Pyles and the Johnsons together nearly three decades ago. Many Hawaii Audubon Society members are familiar with the kōlea research project (still ongoing) that we mainlanders began back in 1979. Bob was very interested in our efforts early on and kindly offered to assist in the fieldwork. He (and often Leilani) helped us mist-net plovers many times over the years 1980-1991. Those HAS members who have been kōlea-netting volunteers know that capturing plovers is an early morning adventure starting around

4:00 a.m. and ending when the last bird is banded a number of hours later. Judging by how frequently his name appears in our field notes, Bob lost considerable sleep on our behalf – arising in the wee hours to be on hand at Bellows Air Force Station or the Kāne'ohe Marine Base where he helped erect mist-nets and then jogged about on lawns in the semidarkness to drive plovers into them! Bob's help was invaluable to us and we owe much to his enthusiasm and encouragement.

This past April, Bob accompanied us to the Punchbowl where we talked about the banded plovers there. Although declining eyesight made it impossible for him to see the marked birds, his interest in them never lessened. That kōlea were a part of our last visit with Bob was altogether fitting.

With fond aloha to a dear friend.

You're invited to Hawai'i Audubon Society's
Annual Awards Dinner



Palila

Photo by Tom Dove

Monday, October 15, 2007

6:00 pm to 9:00 pm

Treetops Restaurant,
Paradise Park
(3737 Manoa Road, O'ahu)



Maui Parrotbill

Photo by Eric Nishibayashi

Featuring a special presentation by

ALAN LIEBERMAN

Conservation Program Manager

Center for Conservation and Research for Endangered Species (CRES); Zoological Society of San Diego

**"Hawai'i Endangered Bird Conservation Program:
A Tool for the Recovery of an Insular Avifauna"**

The Hawai'i Endangered Bird Conservation Program (HEBCP) is a unique conservation partnership composed of the Zoological Society of San Diego's CRES program, government agencies (U.S. Department of the Interior and the State of Hawai'i), and Hawai'i's private landowners, working together on the recovery of Hawai'i's most threatened forest birds. The HEBCP manages the state-of-the-art Keauhou and Maui Bird Conservation Centers, with a focus on species such as the 'Alala, Puaiohi, Palila, and others for which captive propagation is critical to their survival and recovery.

Don't miss this special appearance!

Buffet Dinner & Silent Auction



Awarding of outstanding volunteers, corporate leaders, and public servants for their contributions to the protection of Hawai'i's native wildlife and ecosystems



Meet the Hawai'i Audubon Society Board of Directors, Staff, and fellow Members!

\$25 per person

Please make your reservations no later than October 10 by calling (808) 528-1432, emailing hiaudsoc@pixi.com, or by registering on our website, www.hawaii-audubon.com.

Mail checks to Hawai'i Audubon Society, 850 Richards St. #505, Honolulu, HI 96813.

Waimea Valley Audubon Center Events

Reservations required for all programs; call (808) 638-9199
Visit <http://waimea.audubon.org> for more information.

Sunday, October 7 Lei Po'ō Workshop

1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Create beautiful head lei using Waimea Valley's natural treasures. Learn the art of twining or haku. Take home your own lei po'ō. For adults, \$3 plus admission.

Saturday, October 20 North Valley Hike

8:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

We'll explore from the ridgeline to the valley floor, traversing native plant pockets and discovering the valley's birds along the way. Approximately 6 miles, moderate to strenuous, may involve shallow, slippery stream crossings. For ages 12 and up (must be accompanied by an adult), \$3 plus admission.

Saturday, October 27 Spooky Splendor

1:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Join us in wonderful Waimea Valley for a day of excitement and exploration in celebration of the spooky splendor of Halloween. Collect mysterious materials from nature to create your own marvelous mask for Halloween. All ages welcome, \$3 plus admission.

Saturday, November 3 Annual Plant Sale & HECO Arbor Day Get a Tree for Free!

9:00 a.m. - Till they're all gone!

HECO/Kaulunani Partnership presents: An Arbor Day Tree Giveaway. Pick up a free tree on Arbor Day (one per family) while supplies last. Then visit the Annual Plant Sale where you can purchase beautiful unique hibiscus, and difficult to find Native Hawaiian plants.

Saturday, October 13 Hakalau National Wildlife Refuge, Annual Open House

9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Guided hikes through a high-elevation rainforest, inhabited by many native and endangered Hawaiian forest birds. A historic 115-year old koa cabin also will be open for viewing. Participants must arrange their own transportation to the Refuge. A four-wheel-drive vehicle is required for the two-hour drive from Hilo, Waimea, or Kona. Reservations are required by October 10. Call the refuge manager's office in Hilo for details, (808) 443-2300.

Saturday, October 20, 2007 Second Semi-Annual Hawaiian Monk Seal Count

10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

The Count will take place on all islands. For more information email Stephani Harrison at Stephani.Harrison@noaa.gov or call David Schofield at (808) 944-2269.

HAS Field Trips

Contact the HAS Office at:
(808) 528-1432, hiaudsoc@pixi.com

Saturday, October 13

James Campbell National Wildlife Refuge with Peter Donaldson, Mike Ord, and Ron Walker

Three of Hawaii's most expert birders will lead you in the viewing of endangered waterbirds and other migratory waterfowl at one of O'ahu's few remaining wetlands. This is a good place for unusual sightings! The walk will begin at 8:30 a.m. THIS TRIP IS LIMITED TO 20 PARTICIPANTS. Register and receive directions by calling the HAS office; please leave your name and telephone number.

Attention Neighbor Islanders and Mainland Residents!

Come to O'ahu for this special tour of the James Campbell NWR, and stay for HAS's Annual Awards Dinner on October 15 (See page 55)! Sign up for both - today!

James Campbell National Wildlife Refuge will be open from October 20, 2007 to February 17, 2008. Public access is only available via scheduled guided tours. Tours last approximately one hour; start times are as follows:

First two Saturdays of each month: 9:00 a.m.

Remaining Saturdays: 3:30 p.m.

Every Thursday: 4:00 p.m.

To reserve a space on a tour, call Pam Gibson at 637-6330 ext. 0. The refuge is closed during the remainder of the year for the protection of endangered birds during nesting season.

HAWAII ISLAND

Saturday, October 20

North Kona Shoreline and Wetlands Birding Tour with Reggie David

Be a part of this long awaited HAS Big Island outing! Former HAS Board member Reggie David will lead you on an exploration of the birds of Kaloko Honokōhau National Historic Park, Kealahake Sewage Treatment Plant, and the Natural Energy Lab of Hawaii. Bring plenty of water, lunch or snacks, binoculars, hat, sunscreen, and a scope if you have one. Be prepared for heat or wind or both, plus walking in deep sand and on wet pāhoehoe. The group will meet at 7:15 a.m. at the First Hawaiian Bank at Lanihau Center in Kailua-Kona. Call Noreen Chun at (808) 883-2118 or Joan Carroll (after 10/8) at (808) 883-9845 to register.

Friday, November 2 HAS Board Nominations Due

Are you interested in becoming more involved with the Society, or know someone who is? This is your chance to run for elected office! Please submit a letter of interest and brief resume of your background and activities (in and/or outside of HAS) to the attention of the Nominating Committee at the Hawaii Audubon Society's address by November 2, 2007. Call (808) 528-1432 or email hiaudsoc@pixi.com with questions.

Remembering Bob Pyle

Arlene Buchholz

*HAS Board Member and Veterinary Medical Officer for the
Hawai'i State Department of Health*

Bob was the person who encouraged me to start coordinating the Christmas Bird Count and helped me with the maps and contacts for the counts on all the islands. He went on the Count almost every year, even when his vision was not as good. Of the more than 50 Christmas Bird Counts for which he was a participant, compiler, and/or Regional Editor, the following is a record of his final Count.

Honolulu Christmas Bird Count

December 17, 2006

Observers: Leilani and Bob Pyle

Covered Central Union Church grounds, Pawa'a Park, Department of Agriculture grounds on Ke'eaumoku Street, and walking from One Kalākaua Senior Living condominiums to these parks and return.

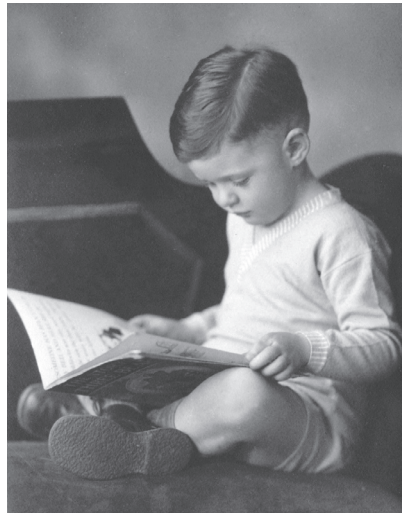
7:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.

2 hours on foot, all walking, covered one mile

Species recorded:

16 White Tern
9 Pacific Golden Plover
15 Rock Pigeon
50 Spotted Dove
198 Zebra Dove
4 Rose Parakeet
7 Red-vented Bulbul
4 Japanese White-eye
41 Common Myna
3 Red-crested Cardinal
9 House Sparrow
6 Java Sparrow

348 individuals
12 species



Robert Pyle 1927; A Lifelong Learner. Photo courtesy of the Pyle family.

Rob Shallenberger

*Hawai'i Island Conservation Director for
The Nature Conservancy and former HAS President*

I first met Bob shortly after I arrived in Hawai'i to conduct my doctoral research on seabirds at Rabbit Island. I took several groups of Audubon Society members and others on tours of the Island. Bob was very knowledgeable about the birds that nested on the island and could easily have led the tours himself. I recall that Bob was on a tour on the day that I decided to spice up the trip a bit. I made two foam rubber models of a mountain lion's foot and mounted them on the ends of two sticks. Before the Audubon group arrived at the island, I made a series of lion footprints in the sand at the south end of the beach. As we approached that spot on the beach, I lagged a bit behind so that Bob and the others could "discover" the footprints. It was only after Bob measured the prints and asked someone to photograph them that I cracked up. He was a great sport, but I don't think he ever forgave me for that one.

I also recall the night that Bob spent an evening with me, Rick Coleman and Tim Burr catching and banding endangered waterbirds at James Campbell National Wildlife Refuge. I don't think that Bob enjoyed slogging through the mud in pursuit of stilts and coots. However, for a guy who spent every daylight hour away from work looking through a spotting scope, it must have been a life-changing experience to hold these birds in his hands while we processed them for data.

I accompanied Bob on many field trips into the Ko'olau Mountains and at least two trips into the Wai'anae range. He was an enthusiastic birder who cared little about his creature comforts in the field. Most of all, I will remember his probing scrutiny of every unusual sighting, regardless of the alleged expertise of the observer. He nailed me first when I reported a peregrine on a Christmas Bird Count at Kawai Nui Marsh. He nailed me again after I reported an O'ahu creeper in North Hālawā Valley and a "gaggle" of 'i'iwi on Poamoho Trail. Bob's ruthless pursuit of credible sighting info made me and, I believe, many others better birders as a result.

Sheila Conant

*University of Hawai'i at Mānoa
Zoology Department Chair*

I think I was 19 or 20 when I first met Bob Pyle. I was just getting interested in Hawaiian birds. I recall his enthusiasm on Audubon field trips, especially if we were at Waipi'o Peninsula and there were some interesting shore birds—I never did get very good at identifying all those "peeps" but Bob always figured it out. I think it was in the late 1970s that Bob accompanied me on a trip to Hanawi Natural Area Reserve on the Northeast slope of Haleakalā in search of po'o-uli, parrotbill and 'ākohekohe. Rain, wind, cold and mud did not diminish his enjoyment of the birds one iota. Some years later, I think in 1983, Bob found his way to Laysan Island, where I was sharing a tent with Wayne Gagne for

6 weeks while we studied Laysan finches and insects. Bob was terribly excited about seeing Laysan finches, Laysan ducks and Tristram's storm-petrel. The finch and the duck were easy, but the petrels could really only be seen and heard at night. Earlier in his life Bob had suffered some serious inner ear damage and since then had depended on vision to keep his balance. All the way to the colony we clung to one another to prevent either him from falling or getting off the path. The excitement and thrill that were so obvious when he got to see and hear these sweet little petrels will always be a fond memory for me.

If you asked Bob, ever the reserved meteorologist, for a weather prediction, he would invariably look up to the sky and say "there's going to be unstable air." I never did figure out what he meant, but it sounded very scientific to me. Aloha Bob.

Remembering Bob Pyle

Mike Ord

Expert birder and former HAS President.

Wrote and illustrated the first edition of Hawaii's Birds.

I first met Bob in 1967. The Hawaii Audubon Society had just completed the first edition of *Hawaii's Birds* and it was in process of printing. We sure could have used his expertise in putting the details together. In those days, the number of active birders could be counted on your one hand so it was a delight to have another keen birder on hand.

In early 1968, Bob and I decided to go to Kaua'i. I wanted to show him the areas where I had been lucky enough to see 'ō'ū and 'ō'ō during the early 1960s in the Alaka'i Swamp. We took our wives along and stayed at the Koke'e State Park Lodge. As it turned out our timing could not have been worse - the weather was atrocious, the streams were like flooded rivers and impassable, and my wife was not a birder, so we had to be content to bird around the State Park.

Shortly thereafter my company transferred me to Guam and it wasn't until the middle 1970s that we caught up again. These were the hay days of the O'ahu Sugar Company. From late July thru April of the next year we would be down at the filter ponds checking out migrant birds practically every weekend. We had a plus in that we both had permits from O'ahu Sugar Company to go on their land and, as for those of you who bird O'ahu know, we had good days and we had some not so good days.

We also used to cover the north shore in what is now James Campbell National Wildlife Refuge. I recall one humorous encounter when Bob and I were scoping out the ponds near the old runway near Ki'i. A naked, rotund man drove up on a three-wheeler and wanted to know what we were doing. We told him bird watching and asked what was he doing? He became very excited and told us we were on private property and that we were in a nudist colony. We told him if no one was wearing feathers

then we wouldn't be looking at them. At this point he boiled over and took off at high speed.

Probably one of our best trips was to Attu Island, Alaska in 1982. Bob had become aware of Attour, Inc. run by Larry Balch. It didn't take much persuading to get me to go along. We had a fabulous two weeks on Attu, followed by a week at St. Paul with a final two days in Wales, western Alaska. The day before arriving in Wales a polar bear had wandered through the village - its skin was hanging out to dry as you entered the village. I often wondered what the story would be like if we had arrived one day earlier.

When the Black-tailed Godwit turned up on Maui, Bob and I debated whether or not to go and see it. We had both seen them in other parts of the world and while we dithered the Black-tailed Godwit came over to James Campbell. It was about this time that I became aware of Bob's failing eye-sight so I would line the birds up in the scope and Bob would then be able to see them.

More recently we took off to Kaua'i for three days trying to find the Baikal Teal. Look as we did we never could find it but then after returning to O'ahu it was reported once more. As we had both seen the bird elsewhere we didn't go back again.

Our last big trip together was last year to fly over to Moloka'i where Arlene Dibben-Young kindly picked

us up at the airport and took us to see the Bewick's Swans. Even with the scope Bob had difficulty in seeing the bird other than thru movement but he was happy to be there and participating.

If Bob was available I would always take him on the field trips that I led at James Campbell. He had a far greater patience than I with some of the participants and he was always most willing to share his knowledge with them. Field trips to James Campbell just won't be the same this year.

Thanks, Bob, for the memories - its been a great forty five years of friendship.



Bob weighs a plover (the bird in a pillowcase pre-banding) at Bellows in spring 1985. Photo courtesy of Wally Johnson.

Wendy Johnson

HAS Second Vice President and former HAS President

On Tuesday, May 8, 2007, Bob Pyle was interviewed on the local television news regarding possible sightings of a white-tailed eagle and/or osprey on Kaua'i and O'ahu during the previous weeks. Bob had a lot of wise and informative things to say about these birds, and about observations of the birds, but while he was being filmed at his home, he casually reached into his bookshelf and grabbed a copy of the HAS publication, *Hawaii's Birds*. The voice-over by the TV news anchor contained

relevant discussion of the newsworthy aspects of the story, but the visual image showed Bob holding his copy of the book mere inches from the lens of the news camera. *Hawaii's Birds* filled the screen for several seconds of prime time news coverage. No one could have planned a better promotion for the Society and its premier publication! I contacted Bob by e-mail the next day to thank and congratulate him for his public relations expertise, and he admitted that "It was fun."

Bob firmly believed that wildlife conservation should be an enjoyable pastime for everyone involved. He lived that philosophy every day, and it really was a joy to be associated with him.

The Story of Lāna‘i by George C. Munro

A Book Review by Ron Walker

On June 28th, 2007 the subject book was “launched” at a reception at the Bishop Museum, hosted by Richard M. Towill, grandson of Mr. Munro, and his family. Mr. Munro’s major work in progress when he died in 1963 in his ninety-seventh year was “The Story of Lāna‘i” and now, 44 years later, it has been published thanks largely to the efforts of Mr. Towill and his son, Rick.

The book chronicles Mr. Munro’s tenure as resident manager of Lāna‘i Ranch between 1911 and 1930. It is profusely illustrated with photographs of that era, mostly from the Munro family collection, and includes an original map by Robert Hobdy showing place names in the back flyleaf. With a forward by Richard M. Towill and a preface and introduction by Mr. Munro, the book is organized in chapters entitled “Natural Features”, “History”, “Lāna‘i Ranch”, “Meteorology”, “Agriculture”, “Vegetation”, “Wildlife”, “Ranch Livestock”, “Sea Shore”, “Water Supply”, “Legends”, “Life on Lāna‘i”, and an epilogue, “What Does the Future Hold”. It also includes family trees of Lāna‘i Hawaiians, an appendix with tributes to Mr. Munro, a list of plants mentioned in the text, and a glossary of Hawaiian words.

Although Mr. Munro speaks about the relationships of plants and animals in other parts of the book, of special interest to readers

of the ‘*Elepaio* is the chapter on wildlife. He describes himself as a naturalist and hunter; therefore he always had a plant press and rifle with him when he traversed the island on horseback. He talks about wild cattle, sheep, goats, deer, dogs, cats, and pigs in the context of his management role on Lāna‘i.

Writing in 1913 he said, “The most common birds in the forest I would say are: ‘amakihi, ‘apapane, thrush, ‘i‘iwi, and ‘ō‘ū. The first four are very numerous.” He describes his collecting activities and the gradual decline of the native forest birds during his tenure on the island. Although he notes that the common water birds were not present, he once heard a curlew and saw an ‘auku‘u on two occasions. Of interest are his references to the “brown-rumped petrel” (‘ua‘u), wedge-tailed shearwaters, Bulwer’s petrel and Bonin Island petrel as nesting on Lāna‘i. He also describes the many game birds present including peafowl, pheasants, turkeys, doves and the “Sino-Japanese quail”.

“The Story of Lāna‘i” is written in a first-person, anecdotal manner often laced with little vignettes of incidents that colored his life there. But it serves also as a documentary of life on the island in the early 1900s and is recommended especially for anyone who has lived, visited or worked on Lāna‘i.

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The HAS office seeks a new (or preferably used but “modern”) copy machine. Call (808) 528-1432 to donate or with questions. Mahalo!

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Calendar of Events

Saturday, October 13
James Campbell NWR with Ron Walker *See page 54*

Saturday, October 13
Hakalau NWR Annual Open House *See page 54*

Monday, October 15
HAS's ANNUAL AWARDS DINNER
Get your tickets today! *See page 53*

Saturday, October 20
North Kona Birding Tour with Reggie David *See page 54*

Saturday, October 20
Hawaiian Monk Seal Count (all islands) *See page 54*

Friday, November 2
HAS Board Nominations Due *See page 54*

Saturday, November 3
Waimea Valley Audubon Center's
Annual Plant Sale and Arbor Day Tree Giveaway
See page 54

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