

THE ELEPAIO

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For the Better Protection of Wildlife in Hawaii

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A JOURNAL OF ORNITHOLOGICAL WORK DURING THE SUMMER OF 1937,  
HAWAII NATIONAL PARK

By

Walter Donaghho

June 11, 1937: Sailed at 4:00 p.m. on the S.S. Waialeale, bound for Hawaii to undertake an official bird survey of the Hawaii National Park and the vicinity, working as Student Technician. With me was Harold C. Craddock, also to be employed by the Park for the research. We bought steerage tickets and then calmly walked up to the first class decks, where I stayed for the rest of the voyage. The sea was unusually calm. Birds were sighted now and then; first a few Hawaiian noddies, now a wedge-tailed shearwater, and then an occasional blue-faced or a red-footed booby. There was much excitement when a black-footed albatross started following the ship. Soon two were following us and they continued, far into the twilight. When dinnertime arrived, Harold and I walked down into the dining saloon and ordered the full, seven-course dinner (not bad for our \$7.00 passage!). Then we found a nice cabin below with a private toilet, and prepared for the night.

June 12, 1937: Upon awakening in our lovely stateroom, we dressed and came out on deck to see Mauna Kea with its crown bathed in sunlight, perched up on the "foothill". A lot of snow could be seen on the mountain, and one of its summit cones was covered with two large patches. Mauna Loa was beautiful, wreathed in pink, fleecy clouds.

A Mr. Hyer met us at the pier upon landing, and after driving over to view the town and Rainbow Falls, we drove up to the Park. Mr. Wingate wasn't in, so Mr. Hyer took us into the basement. Here we became acquainted with Governmental Red Tape. A Mr. Underwood thrust four regulation blanks into our faces with instructions (or orders?) to fill them out, herewith and now. After this, to the C.C.C. Camp for our lunch. The camp was on the east rim of the crater, just south of the entrance to Kilauea-Iki, and was scattered about in the open forest. The messhall, recreation hall, and the offices were at the edge of a large clearing, and the barracks and other cottages were scattered here and there in the forest. The apapane flew right in, among the cabins. I also noted amakihi.

We found Mr. Wingate in when we had returned to the Park Office in the afternoon. There was one thing that he wanted most out of us, which was: "Why are the birds becoming extinct; is there any prevention of it; and how might they be protected?" After the interview, down to the basement to continue with the blanks, and then back to camp for dinner. While waiting for dinner, I walked out to the rim of the crater to see what birds I could find. Apapane were flying here and there, ever seeking red lehua blossoms for their nectar. I heard the alarm notes of a hill robin and started imitating a call, whereupon one started to sing. I answered, and soon had it near me.



June 13, 1937: Harold and I started out after breakfast for a hike around Kilauea crater. Upon reaching the rim, I stopped to get a picture of Mauna Kea with its patches of snow glistening in the morning sun. It was clear as a bell. The floor of flowing pahoehoe of the crater stood out in gleaming relief. Here and there, little white wisps of steam curled lazily toward the sky. We descended to Byron ledge, and then following the trail winding its way through the open forest of ohias. Heard and saw a few apapane along the way. The trail brought up under the Waldron ledge, passed it by, and then fed into "The World's Weirdest Walk", which we then followed. After winding over and around mounds of ropy pahoehoe, it brought up to the edge of Halemaumau pit, and we looked nearly a thousand feet down to the eruption scarred pahoehoe floor of the firepit. A koae appeared in the distance, and, descending into the crater, started to fly back and forth along the walls. Then it made a dive toward its hole, coming up to it. But the wind was not right and it flew back, unable to make a landing, whereupon it continued its flying, waiting for favorable wind conditions to give it another chance to reach its nest hole.

Leaving Halemaumau, we proceeded along the road to the Uwckahuna museum. Then, after looking at their fine volcanic collections and exhibits, we proceeded along the Steaming Bluffs trail. The crater was lovely in the late afternoon sunlight, tinted in soft pastel shades. We went over to the Volcano House, then followed the road toward the camp, turning off at the trail to the Kilauea-Iki rim. I noticed a great many apapane, and a list that I took quickly mounted up. Coming to the trail to the Byron ledge, we turned on it and zigzagged down the bluff through a cool dense forest, with trees around 50 feet in height. The trail ran out upon the flat across the entrance of Kilauea-Iki and the trees thinned out a little, and were not quite so high. Harold tried to shoot an apapane. He fired over ten times at it before it finally decided to move on. Once, while firing a shot, he accidentally shook an ohia at the same time, and I saw a bird shoot from a clump of leaves at the treetop and speed away through the forest. Looking carefully at the top, I discerned a nest, and climbed a neighboring tree to see if I could see any eggs, but I was unsuccessful. I then perched on the limb and waited, hoping the bird would return. That was not my luck. Apapane were all about, and I could see little companies fly from tree to tree, where they would insert their beaks into the tubules of the ohia blossoms. Climbing down again, I returned to camp, going by way of Kilauea-Iki. The sides of the vast, deep appearing crater were densely wooded, giving the feeling of great depth and size to the crater. The forest rang with the notes of countless apapane. The cheery songs of hill robins drifted up from far below, sounding unusually beautiful and serene in the peaceful quiet of the evening.

Harold shot an apapane this evening, which I skinned (my first complete job). I found, freshly swallowed, three caterpillars and a green cricket lodged in the neck.

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#### CORRECTION:

"In the *Elopaio* of September, 1944, volume 5, page 12, I stated that only three specimens of *Ciridops anna* are known. The recent bibliography of Hawaiian birds by Dr. Harvey Fisher ("*Auk*", January 1947) brought to my attention a note by the late Outram Bangs ("*Proc. Biological Soc. Washington*", 1910, pages 67-69) which states that there are two additional specimens in the collection of the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard University. The exact date, name of collector and locality of these specimens is unknown."

Dean Amadon.



## HAVE YOU READ:

"THE BIG PIDGEON (sic) RACE", in Hawaiian Digest, February 1947, p.23, condensed from the Hawaii Herald? It is the story of Honolulu's racing pigeons who forgot (or never knew) the rules and regulations for their race which was to have been staged from Moloakai to Honolulu. It was to have been a night race, but the contestants failed to appear and were all disqualified. Even in the race they had roosted at night and reserved their flights for daylight hours.

Also in Hawaiian Digest, February 1947, p.9, is an article condensed from the Honolulu Advertiser, on THE PROTECTION OF RARE HAWAIIAN SEA BIRDS.

An old but interesting monograph by Joseph Grinnell on THE LINNET OF THE HAWAIIAN ISLANDS: A PROBLEM IN SPECIATION (University of California, Publications in Zoology, vol. 7, no. 4, pp. 179-195, Feb. 18, 1911) has been received at the University of Hawaii Library. Peculiarities in coloration in the Hawaiian birds are noted and the author asks for an investigation to determine the causes. Has any Elopeia reader seen or heard of a study or investigation into the decoloration of Hawaiian Linnets?

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"GREETINGS to you and fellow members of the Hawaii Audubon Society. Am glad to be back in my stone cabin for a few days, a little colder here as a near-by creek was frozen over.

In spite of the cold there are a few birds around, small flocks of juncos and spotted towhees, a robin and a goldfinch were in my garden; a pair of ravens were seen flying over.

From Pearl Harbor several albatross followed us almost to Golden Gate Bridge. One day on the way out four tropic birds followed us for a while. In San Francisco bay several cormorants were seen, and of course the sea gulls. I even saw the gulls walking about in Golden Gate Park.

I have just been reading the November number of the Elopeia and am enjoying it very much. "A Christmas bird census in Hawaii", by Helen S. Baldwin was excellent - there was so much information and so easy to read. Manning Richards' story was very fine; in fact, I enjoyed all I read immensely. The snow here is almost to the base of the Sierras, and that is just five miles away. Next time I come to Independence, California, I hope it may not be in winter.  
Independence, California  
January 3, 1947

Best wishes to all,  
MARK KERR.

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## FIELD NOTES:

Kahuku Pond on February 15th presented a much more pleasing appearance than it did on our last visit in the fall. Cane refuse is no longer being dumped near the main body of the pool, the water of which is now clear. A flock of turnstone, estimated at about 200, was feeding on the spit in the western end of the pool, accompanied by 11 sanderling, six night heron, half dozen coot, and a few plover. The plover were few in number in the fields about, also.

KAELEPULU POND Bird Walk: On the ninth of February, a score of stalwart bird enthusiasts gathered in front of the library at 8:30 in spite of very threatening (and wetening) weather. After a long period of doubt as to our destination, it was decided that our only hope to avoid being bogged down lay in a search for the shore birds of coastal Oahu.

Our first stop was Kuapa Pond where nine of the graceful Hawaiian Stilt were seen. It was raining at this point but not even the rain could detract from the beauty of these long-legged birds. As the rain increased, however, we retreated to



our cars and rode on toward Kaelepulu Pond. As we passed Rabbit Island, a number of red-footed boobies were seen flying about, their white bodies standing out against the blue ocean. We strained our eyes, and our binoculars, to see some of the Hawaiian tern on nearby Kaohikaipu Island, but to no avail.

Those of us who were fortunate enough to be with Dave Woodside were in for an added treat, as we visited a small stream near Bellows Field and sighted the rare koloa leading six of her ducklings to the brake on the other side. Any sign of an increase in the numbers of this interesting species, which was nearing extinction, is welcomed by all bird lovers. We were within a hundred feet of the mother and her brood and plainly noted her characteristic markings. A search for the drake was without success but as we neared the spot where the koloa had disappeared, a raucous squawk made us look about just in time to see a pair of gallinules fly for cover in the surrounding grasses, their blazing frontal plates standing conspicuously against the green background.

When Kaelepulu Pond was finally reached, there was noted a vast number of coot feeding and resting upon the surface. An estimate of 1000 was generally agreed upon. One of the more venturesome members waded out toward the center of the pond to determine the species of a number of ducks. They turned out to be pintails and to number from 20 - 26 birds. A pair of black-crowned night heron, and numerous plover and turnstone were also observed, the latter being easily differentiated by their notes, that of the plover being a liquid whistled "queedle", while that of the turnstone was a harshly uttered series of notes that sound not unlike the Hawaiian name for the bird: akokeke. As we were leaving the area, two birds created a mild furor among the clan, but they turned out to be nothing more than the familiar white-eye in particularly good voice.

A visit to Kawainui Swamp for possible koloa was unsuccessful, but a few more gallinules were added to our count. As a parting sight, a ring-necked pheasant was seen gliding over the fields and we headed home after a wet but successful day.

Richard Kleen.

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#### THE WHITE-TAILED TROPIC BIRD

By George C. Munro

In the October number of the "Elepaio", mention is made of the white-tailed tropic bird being seen recently on Oahu, above the Sacred Falls and in upper Manoa Valley. Enquiries are made as to whether these birds nest at either of these places. The white-tailed tropic bird without doubt originally nested in all the cliffs on Oahu. I saw a number of them in Nuuanu and Pauoa valleys in December, 1890. I saw one or two on the west side of the Waianae mountains in the 1930s. There is a specimen, collected on January 24, 1939, in the Bishop Museum of a young bird that was too weak to fly after leaving nest probably in the cliffs above Heeia, Oahu. They have been reported flying around the island of Mokolii, off the east coast of Oahu in the last year or two. This is where William Alanson Bryan collected the specimens which he mounted in the beautiful group in the Bishop Museum when he was taxidermist there. It will be interesting if anyone sees birds of this or the red-tailed species around Mokolii or Mokumanu will record the date and instance in the "Elepaio". If they are nesting on either of these islands it will ensure local birds against the mongoose which has undoubtedly killed all on this island that were in accessible places. They will of course survive on the main island when they nest only in the high and steep cliffs.

I was told on Niihau in 1939 that the white-tailed tropic bird was not common there. It nests in the cliffs there and should be safe. It is still common on Kauai in the Waimea Valley, its branches and other places. There are no mongooses there to molest them. I recently saw two places on Kauai where I studied this bird nesting in the 1890s. I am told that it still nests in one of these well up in the Hanapepe Valley in a small cliff in the middle of a steep hillside grass pasture. The other was a low rock on the bank of the Mahinauli Valley not far from the



Olokele Sugar Mill and now surrounded by canefields. I don't think any nest there now. A young specimen came into my hands which was found in a driveway at the sea in Lawai Valley, Kauai, on November 6, 1940. Like the Oahu bird it was extremely thin. Both specimens were in perfect feather, white, thickly spotted with black on the back. Each tail-feather of the Kauai specimen had a black spot near the tip. The two middle tail feathers were only five inches long. When the bird is adult these feathers would be 10 inches longer. The white feathers of both were badly soiled but when washed with soap and water and dried in plaster of Paris they made beautiful specimens. An effort was made to save one. It would swallow shrimps but refused fish. It was hopeless to keep either of them alive as they were too weak to fly and could not be kept in food until strong enough to release. However, there are some species of this order of birds, the Pelicaniformes, that can be tamed, such as the fishing cormorant. I have also heard of the black booby and the frigate bird being tamed. This, of course, takes much patience and opportunity to procure the right kind of fish to feed them on. Their parents had probably left them too soon and they became too much reduced in flesh before being fully fledged and were too weak to fly on leaving the nest. They made some miscalculation or neglected to give the young explicit directions. All is not known about the actions of some sea birds and some migratory waders toward their young. The general supposition that young birds whose parents have apparently left them, follow the old birds after a lapse of time without guidance, I very much doubt. Instinct may account for many things but it does not explain all in long overseas migrations. Birds I am sure are conscious of some things that are not appreciable to us. Instinct or ingrained transmitted habit evidently carries birds far but there are limits to its effectiveness. I have spent a great part of my life breeding and raising animals and have found their habits a very interesting study.

On March 18, 1891, when riding along the sand from Mana towards Kekaha I saw the shadow of a bird on the ground beside my horse. Looking up I saw a tropic bird. I took a long chance shot off the horse with the choked barrel and to my surprise, brought it down. It was a young bird, a beautiful glossy white, spotted with black on the back, a black band across the secondary wing feathers, and another across the quills. Only one of the two center tail feathers was fully grown. It was white, with the midrib black above to within three-quarters of an inch of the webs, and toes black; the bill yellowish gray tipped with brown. The upper mandible was slightly longer than the lower but it probably had been broken. Its extreme length was 28 inches, bill  $1\frac{3}{4}$ , center tailfeather  $16\frac{1}{4}$ , the feathers next it 4 inches. It was a male with remains of small fish in its stomach. It was the only tropic bird we saw in our expedition around Mana and Kekaha and the first specimen of the species we collected.

I have no notes at hand of the white-tailed tropic birds I saw when I lived on Molokai from 1899 to 1906, and when visiting there from Lanai in after years. But on August 1, 1936, I counted a half dozen flying about the steep sides of Mokuhoniki Island off the east coast of Molokai. Near the top of the island on a ledge under an overhanging rock a pair were sitting by their egg. They and their egg looked very pretty together. I passed them by without disturbing them but when I returned they were gone, and I took measurements of the egg. On Lanai it was common in Maunaloa Valley. The only nest I found on Lanai was on the pasture land on the north side of the island. When climbing up a steep rocky hillside I was startled by a loud harsh cry at my feet and there in a hole in the rock was a partly fledged young tropic bird. The situation seemed quite exposed but the nest was well hidden in the hillside and I would never have noticed it though I passed almost over it had the bird not given its loud squawk. But the young bird with its strong sharp bill could protect itself from cats attacking it from the small opening even if its harsh cry did not frighten them. A mongoose could no doubt circumvent it.

Donaghho saw the white-tailed tropic bird at Midway Island. I saw it about five hundred miles north of that Island. The only place I saw it dive was to the north of Kauai when returning from Midway in the little schooner Kaalokai in 1891.



It was at one time common in the crater of Kilauea, Hawaii. I read of one flying in the crater being overcome by fumes from the crater and falling into the molten lava.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY OF HAWAIIAN BIRDS SINCE 1890, by Harvey I. Fisher, appears in the "Auk" for January 1947, as Mr. Amadon points out (see p.57). In the introduction, Dr. Fisher says that publications on the Pacific dating from the early exploring expeditions to the present time are scattered in various journals all over the world so that a bibliography such as this one will be of great aid to workers in the Pacific field. Because the monographs of Rothschild, and Wilson and Evans include most, if not all, of the publications on birds up to 1890, Dr. Fisher includes no papers prior to 1890. He has annotated briefly the more important and more ambiguous titles. He has, for the most part, omitted popular articles in travel books, magazines and newspapers. Articles on the migratory birds or birds introduced here are included only if they treat of these birds within the Hawaiian Archipelago. Other islands, though under the governmental control of the Territory of Hawaii, are not included. There are included 422 titles. Dr. Fisher hopes that any omitted titles will be brought to his attention.

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MIKE THE MYNAH, by Louisa Clark Williams and Francis X. Williams. Reviewed by Edwin H. Bryan, Jr. (from a book review in "The Sunday Polynesian".) In a picturesque cottage in Honolulu live a scientist and his artist wife. Into their lives, one day, Fato, in the person of a Japanese yardman, brought a bedraggled little mynah bird. The couple adopted the bird into the family and christened him "Mike".

This is the story of Mike and his associates in the tropical garden. It is presented with all the accuracy of the scientist and the artistry of his wife. Like the text, the drawings are a blended product.

Everyone who has had dealings with mynah birds, whether in Hawaii, Fiji, New Caledonia, Malaya or other regions into which these members of the starling family have found their way, know that these cocky individualists have a distinct personality all their own. You may dislike their noisy chatter and their capacity for devouring small fruit, but you can't help admiring their intelligence and spunk, and they certainly deserve a vote of thanks for their ability to make 'way with undesirable grubs and caterpillars.

Residents of many Pacific Islands and service personnel and other visitors to their shores will enjoy this description of the antics and habitat of a bird concerning which they have wondered much. The book will bring back to them happy memories of tropical islands in the mid-Pacific.

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#### APRIL ACTIVITIES:

BIRD WALK: April 13th, to Pa Lehua. Meet at the Library of Hawaii at 8:30.

MEETING: April 21st, 7:30 p.m., in the auditorium of the Library of Hawaii.

Mr. Colin Lennox, President of the Territorial Board of Agriculture and Forestry, will talk on the proposed legislative program for that department. This is a program of vital importance to each of us, and all members are urged to be present.

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