

THE ELEPAIO

Journal of the HAWAII AUDUBON SOCIETY

For the Better Protection of Wildlife in Hawaii

Volume 7 Number 6

December 1946

NOTES ON SOME BIRDS OF KAUAI

By Gordon Pearsall

On September fourth, three of us, Captain Wirth of the U. S. Public Health Service, Kenneth Maehler of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and myself, flew to Kauai to spend a five day vacation and to do some collecting. A sort of bus-man's holiday, so to speak. Captain Wirth made the trip especially to collect Midges for material for a paper on that subject.

Upon landing at Port Allen we found the Lihue Hotel, where we had reservations, was forty miles away in the town of Lihue. This necessitated a taxi ride to the hotel, which gave us a chance to see the country.

The first bird seen on Kauai was the Hawaiian Owl, or Pueo (*Asio flammeus sandwichensis*). It was about nine a.m. and this owl was flying low over the kiawe trees surrounding the airport, in the bright sunshine.

After getting settled at the Hotel we decided to spend the morning collecting about the hotel and to hike to Waialua Falls in the afternoon.

Around the hotel the usual birds were seen. Mynahs, White-eyes, Rice-birds in the open grassy places, Linnets, Cardinals, Brazilian cardinals, Chinese doves, Barred doves and English sparrows.

After lunch we started hiking to Wailua Falls. A friendly Filipino picked us up and drove us to the Falls. The falls was an amazing sight, three columns of water dropping about three hundred feet into a deep pool, thence as a swift stream through a wood canyon, finally emptying into the ocean near Wailua. About a quarter of a mile from the falls on, run-off from the cane fields, drops as a small falls into the stream on the left side and another quarter of a mile farther on a small stream on the right side drops as a small falls into the stream in the canyon. The trees are mostly kukui, guava, mango, pilia and other native flora. Pheasant or Kolahala were common along the road and the edge of the canefields. As we looked down into the canyon we could see six White-tailed tropic birds (*Phaethon lepturus dorotheae*) at the base of the falls. From their actions, I imagined they might be breeding somewhere in the canyon. Apparently there was no way of reaching the canyon floor near the falls and I did not have time to look further for a way down. In the canyon we could hear Hill robins (*Liothrix lutea*) singing and see Elepaio (*Chasiempis sandwichensis gayi*) flitting about.

On the hike back to Lihue several large flocks of Rice birds (*Munia punctulata topula*) were seen and much to our surprise we saw two Western meadowlarks (*Sturuelia neglecta*) perched on a telephone crossarm. It was a

thrill to me as I had not seen a meadowlark since leaving the States. The fact that there are no mongooses on Kauai partly accounted for the numerous bird life.

While at dinner at the hotel I heard what sounded like the song of the Mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*). After dark I heard the same song from the shrubbery behind the hotel. Early next morning I heard this song again and following it up, I found the singer to be a very sleek looking Mockingbird in the heavy shrubbery to the side of the hotel. That evening about dusk we heard another one singing from the shrubbery along the beach at Nawiliwili.

Captain Wirth had made arrangements for us to have the use of a Ranger's cabin at Kokee for three days, which was at the head of Waimea Canyon. We decided to rent a car for the remainder of our stay and to drive to Kokee.

While waiting for our car to be brought to the hotel, I moved about among the shrubbery. I saw several small yellowish birds searching for food. The greenish back, yellow underparts and sickle bill told me it was the Kauai Amakihi (*Chlorodrepanis virens stejnegeri*).

At Waimea, a small town at the entrance of the Waimea Canyon, a stream comes down the canyon from the mountains, emptying into the ocean. Here we saw Black-crowned night herons (*Nycticorax nycticorax hoacti*) fishing in the shallow water, Golden plover (*Pluvialis dominica fulva*) feeding along the shore and some Hawaiian terns (*Anous minutus melanogenys*) skimming the water. About a half mile up the stream a pair of Blue-winged teal (*Anas discors*) were flushed from a fresh-water pool.

The road paralleled the canyon most of the way to Kokee. At one of two places, one could look down into the canyon and see the canyon floor about 2800 feet below. Tropic birds were very numerous in the canyon, sometimes as many as twelve or fifteen being seen at one time. As we ascended higher into the mountains the vegetation changed, giving way to Koa, Lehua, Pilea, Eucalyptus, Lobelia, Sandalwood and other mountain forest species. As we neared the Ranger's home at Kokee, one of the plants that attracted our attention was the Tibouchina or Princess' flower (*Tibouchina semidecandra*), a tall shrub with deep purple flowers.

The ranger took us to the cabin that was to be our headquarters for the next three days. It was situated in a valley on a little mountain stream in an open gale. Soon as we were settled we drove over to Kilohana lookout to do some collecting in the Koa forests. Here Koa, Lehua, Pilea were predominant, being still in bloom, at this altitude of about four thousand feet. The sun had come out and the birds were very noisy. Many of the calls and songs were new to me and I was glad I had my "Birds of Hawaii" in my camera bag. I saw several tiny yellow birds with straight bills, flitting among the Koa blossoms. Their backs were yellow green, underparts bright sulphur yellow. They looked much like our Yellow warbler of the States and they had a song much like that of the Yellow warbler. The straight bill and smaller size distinguished them from the Amakihi with which they were feeding in the Koa trees, along with Apapane. They were Anianiau (*Chlorodrepanis parva*). Next day I saw more of them.

Sitting quietly on a dead log at the edge of the clearing in the late afternoon sunshine I saw both Iiwi and Apapane among the lehua trees. The Iiwi with their brilliant scarlet bodies, black wings and tails, and reddish-colored inch-long sickle bills had calls and songs almost insect-like, and

delivered with a good deal of effort. The Apapane had bodies of rosy crimson, black wings and tails. Their shorter sickle bills and feet were black. A distinguishing characteristic was the white belly and under tail coverts, easily seen when they flew. Young Apapane were brown with buff-colored under parts. Their song was wheezy but more musical than that of the Iiwi.

We had been told that the nights there were very cool and a fire had been laid in the cabin fireplace. Before morning we were hunting extra blankets as it was cool enough that we could see our breath in the early morning air. The next night we put on more blankets.

As the rising sun warmed things up the birds became active. From all sides came the crowing of the Hawaiian Jungle fowl (*Gallus gallus gallus*). They sounded very much like the crowing of young leghorn roosters. Occasionally the cackling of hens was heard. I went down to an open spot in the forest, near the stream which was choked with yellow ginger (*Hedychium flavum* Roxburgh) and wild nasturtiums, and seated myself on a log near a trail coming from the heavy forest. Soon a male and two female jungle fowl stepped into the open on their way to the stream. They foot a good deal like game fowl, being slender, small and neat-appearing. The male had the head and neck orange-brown; comb, wattles and face, red; mantle and forepart of wings, greenish-purple; back deep maroon; tail, metallic-green; wings, cinnamon-brown; breast and underparts, steel-blue; bill, gray; legs and feet, yellowish-white. The females had the dark red on head, shading orange-yellow on neck and mantle, the mantle feathers having a black median line down each feather; upper parts light cinnamon-brown finely mottled with black; underparts light red; wings, brown; face, comb and wattles, red; bill, gray-brown; legs slate-blue. The females were much smaller than the males. Later on I saw two cocks and two hens on the road. From a distance they had a black and brown appearance.

(To be continued)

-----

#### NEW YORK ZOO NOT THE ONLY PLACE IN NEW YORK WHERE ONE CAN SEE BIRDS:

"I have intended to write a note which The Elepaio might use for some time, but now am prompted to do so in rebuttal to Lorin Gill's statement in the October Elepaio that the zoo is the only place in New York where one can see birds.

"Central Park is located in mid-town Manhattan and is completely surrounded by tall apartment buildings. Yet in an area of approximately one third square mile known as The Rambles, the enthusiastic and good-visioned bird lover can see approximately 120 species during the course of the year. During the spring, waves of warblers drop in to feed and rest on their way north, and The Rambles is alive with flashes of colour and the songs of the lovely little birds. In the fall the lakes and reservoir are resting places for many kinds of ducks and gulls.

"For the New Yorker who wants to go a little farther afield, there are many other rewarding spots. Jones Beach, about 25 miles from the city, is an excellent place to observe shore birds on their migration, and Point Lookout is the home of a large Tern colony.

"In the fall many birders go to Van Cortlandt Park - also in New York City - to watch the flights of hawks which come down along the ridge on their way south.

"My brother who is a more knowing birder than I am, tells me that an active person who devotes a reasonable amount of time to bird walk, can see between 250 and 290 species of birds in and around New York City in the course of the year.

"One recent event of considerable interest was the successful nesting of two duck hawks on a ledge on the sixteenth floor of the St. Regis Hotel in the midst of Manhattan's skyscrapers. Two young birds were hatched and safely removed.

"So you can see that New York City is not completely devoid of interest to the bird lover."

Sincerely,  
ROGER B. ORESMAN.

-----  
OCTOBER BIRDWALK.

Everything looked so refreshed after the rain, and especially, on October 13th, the trees, flowers, insects, and birds seemed happy. On this day twelve very fortunate individuals met at the Library to go to Kaelepulu Pond to see some sea birds. It was an ideal day to be outdoors. Even the city birds were very cheerful and peaceful. As we sat along the cement curb at the Library, we saw mynahs, English sparrows and barred doves feeding on the Library grounds. Barred doves are always so peaceful and friendly. They were busy minding their own business as though to tell us humans to do the same if we want to be happy and peaceful. This harmonious atmosphere so conveniently attracted our attention that all of us got into the respective cars with the feeling of gratitude to be able to enjoy such scenes.

The drive along upper Nuuanu Avenue was exciting - the most beautiful drive-way with waterfall and ponds, whiff of ginger fragrance, and occasional chirping of cardinals, sparrows, and mynahs, and very faintly, the most wonderful symphony of the cooing of the barred doves, the rustling of the leaves, and the rippling of the water.

The majestic Pali always looks good. She gives strength and a wonderful feeling of being alive. The birds flying in the valley as we looked down from the top of Pali Road seemed to be at home without the army tents.

After some confusion we lost only two persons. We hoped that they had had just as wonderful birding as we did.

As we approached Kaelepulu Pond we were quite concerned about the filling in of the surrounding areas and the lack of birds until we saw our first Kolea, Golden plover. It was feeding in a pasture. As the car approached, it took flight, uttering its alarm whistle, and alighted a few feet away out of danger.

Everyone was excited and watched for more birds. The kiawe or algaroba, coconut and hau trees were full of barred doves, English sparrows, mynahs, and Kentucky cardinals. As we went into the pasture toward the dam we heard a loud cry. "Do you hear that?" "Coot?" "What is it?" "Oh! There he is - a very interesting looking bird. STILT." Two of them were walking along the shallow water looking for something to eat. It's always exciting to see the stilt's black and white body with long pink legs. A black-crowned night heron came rushing out of the bushes and scared them away. With a loud alarm call they flew gracefully away to a more secluded spot.

As we approached the mud flats we were thankful that we saw over 100 stilt, but quite disturbed about the very few plover. We hoped that nothing serious had happened to their migration. We were so much interested in the flights of the turnstones and the flocking of the coots that we almost missed the bird in the air. How can anyone miss such steady, graceful flight as that of the frigate bird! It soared across the sky with motions of contentment. We watched it until it flew behind the mountains.

"No tattler?" Everyone was combing the flats for a sight of a tattler, then, behold, a duck! No one was able to identify it. We looked carefully for others, but it seemed to be enjoying the solitary life among turnstone, stilt, coot and tattler. Yes, we heard the Ulili whistle. We looked toward the direction of the call and sure enough, there it was, a solitary wandering tattler.

We wanted to stay here longer, but Kahuku was calling us. After a leisurely lunch watching the mynahs and barred doves in the coconut trees and listening to the plover and stilts calling from the flats, six of us drove through the numerous picturesque spots of windward Oahu. We heard gun shots as we approached the pond and were quite concerned. It was wonderful to count 216 coot and 26 stilt among turnstones, tattlers, plovers, barred doves, and mynahs, but most touching sight here was to watch two gallenules and two coots pruning and enjoying their monopoly of two small islands. They were having a splendid time unaware of a wounded stilt on one of the islands. Its left wing was broken. At first we did not notice anything for even with this mishap it was so graceful and quiet that after we noticed that it had not moved for quite some time, we looked carefully, and sure enough it was suffering from a broken wing. We felt so helpless standing there watching the bird. Our only hope was that the injury was an accident and not a deliberate shooting of the hunters.

The time was creeping up on us, so we reluctantly got into the car and headed for home. We enjoyed the beautiful drive along Waimea and Waialua Bays. At Wheeler Field we stopped to listen for skylarks, with no luck.

Who can ask for a better way of spending a Sunday? We were all thankful and happy to have had this opportunity.

-----

HOWARD L. COGSWELL writes: "Here at long last is going to be a letter from someone you thought had forgotten about the Islands, I'll bet. Really, I haven't though..."

"First off, we all went on a tour of the country this summer - like so many thousands of others - but for one definite reason: I had a scholarship to the Audubon Nature Camp in Maine and the Audubon Nature Center in Connecticut, both provided by the National Society plus their local Los Angeles Branch. We paid for Bessie (Mrs. H. L.) to attend the same sessions and so are now a pretty well informed couple on conservation as it is practiced in New England, at least. The Maine camp, especially, was pretty wonderful and we had one swell time there besides learning a lot of worthwhile things. Paid our first visits to breeding colonies of oceanic birds on islands in Muscongus Bay. There on the North Atlantic coast the commonest bird is the Herring Gull with a "yuckel, yuckel, yuckel" call note, perfectly imitated by bird instructor Allan D. Cruickshank. Then there were Great Black-backed Gulls, Common and Arctic Terns, Laughing and

Bonaparte's Gulls, Loons, Ospreys and the American emblem bird - the Bald Eagle - and hundreds of Black Guillemots. Shearwaters and petrels, so common in mid-Pacific are rarities in the area we visited, but I did help band some half dozen or so Leach's petrels on one rocky islet.

"In the woods of spruce and fir around camp there were at least six varieties of warblers feeding well grown young out of nests when we got there. Most of them were not in song, and some fall migrants were already coming south along the coast; but we craned our necks upwards to the tree tops until they were sore trying to identify them just the same. A singing hermit thrush and a drumming Ruffed Grouse were two of the things I wanted to see as well as hear; the first I was successful in, the second I was not. And so went the two weeks, almost before we knew it.

"Then we went to New York City for two days and on to Greenwich, Conn., just over the York state line for another two week course. This Center is more educational - less recreational in aspect - and the course we took was particularly strong in field research methods; but nevertheless we had a good time in those green Eastern woodlands. California, you know, is sere and brown after about July; but the frequent summer rains back East keep everything green with luxuriant undergrowth. We did get tired of not being able to see off to great distances, though, for there are no mountains worthy of the name until you get south into Virginia or north into Vermont. We passed through both of those going and coming, but still the broad open plains of Texas looked good to us when we finally started across them on the way home in September..."

-----

#### DECEMBER ACTIVITIES:

BIRDWALK: December 8th, to Tantalus. Meet at the Library of Hawaii at 8:30 A.M., or at Punahou and Nehoa Streets at 8:45.

MEETING: December 16th in the auditorium of the Library of Hawaii at 7:30 P.M. Election of officers for 1947. All members are urged to be present and to take part in the formulation of plans for the coming year. Plans for the Christmas count, the date of which has tentatively been set for the 29th, will be completed.

HAWAII AUDUBON SOCIETY: President: Mr. Gordon Pearsall, 322 Green Street; Vice-President: Miss Grenville Hatch, 1548 Wilhelmina Rise; Mr. Francis Evans, 132A Royal Circle; Secretary-Treasurer: Mrs. Blanch A. Pedley, 3770 Sierra Dr., Honolulu 17; Editor, The Elepaio, Miss Charlotta Hoskins, 3212 Loulu Street, Honolulu 54, Hawaii.

Dues \$1.00 a year