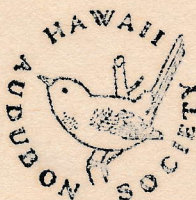


THE ELEPAIO

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For the Better Protection
of Wildlife in Hawaii

July 1947

HIGH ADVENTURE By Chester M. Fennell

The rain swept across the windshield of the Command Car in rushing torrents and through a large rent in the canvas top poured a steady stream of water, which every now and then, gleefully and mischievously directed its course straight down the back of the driver's neck. The ohias and tree ferns bowed and danced fitfully before the driving storm and thirstily soaked up the life-instilling moisture. Signs of bird life were scarce, an indication that the majority of them were remaining in the shelter of the heavier vegetation. Occasionally, however, a flash of red across the road ahead of us betrayed the presence of a more adventuresome Kentucky cardinal.

So began our long awaited climb of Mauna Kea, the highest peak in all the Territory and as we pulled out of Hilo and bumped and jostled our tortuous way up the Saddle Road, not even the heaviest cloudburst in all the history of these fair isles could begin to dampen our spirits. Furthermore, had we not all lived in California at one time or another, long enough to learn how very capricious the weather can really be? How suddenly the heavens can transform their most glowering and menacing countenances into glowing smiles of colorful warmth and splendor? Precisely such a change occurred here and now. For, just before we reached the turnoff at Humuula, the rain ceased, the celestial curtains were drawn apart and the footlights of the western stage illumined the surrounding lava flows and cinder cones in a breath-taking spectacle of color. High overhead a pair of owls also apparently intoxicated with the beauty of the setting and giddy from the rarified atmosphere of the high elevation, momentarily abandoned their normally sagacious behavior and indulged in some of the wildest, strangest aerial acrobatics imaginable. We watched them alternately dive, swoop, soar, tumble and soar again till they disappeared from view altogether in the fast fading light and then turned to stare dumbfoundedly at one another, speechless and hesitating to believe what our eyes had actually beheld.

Turning off the Saddle Road and approaching the grove of tall cypress trees that enfold the buildings of the sheep ranch, the unmistakable din and chorus of roosting mynahs broke upon our ears. Aware that we were now at an elevation of no less than seven thousand feet we could not but wonder at the wide range this hardy species covers. We were even more surprised the following morning to find them in the area of the rest house, Halepohaku, at nine thousand two hundred feet elevation.

Progressing the remaining five miles to the rest house, the road led us through the steadily rising, ever rolling grazing lands of the ranch, profusely inhabited by skylark and golden plover. It was already too dark to see them clearly but their startled cries and calls of alarm all around us left no doubt as to their identity.

The next morning, Palm Sunday, dawned clear and cold and we were off to an early start for the summit. Fourteen long, dusty and rocky miles lay ahead of us - seven up and seven down. No time to squander!

All traces of avian activity ended once the last dwarfed and gnarled mamane trees were left behind. We were impressively alone in a barren sterile world of rock, volcanic dust, drifting swirling fog and a freezing wind. From then on it was only a matter of placing one foot ahead of the other and doggedly gasping for oxygen as we ascended one long ridge after another and surmounted shoulder after shoulder, up, up and up. Now and then we paused to turn and watch the vast panorama of landscape slowly but surely unfolding below us.

At 11:15 we stood on the top-most portion of the rim of the ancient crater and silently exulted in that peculiarly triumphant sense of spiritual joy that only the conquest of a high peak can produce. A light mantle of freshly fallen snow lay on the northern slopes of several nearby cinder cones and scattered remnants of old drifts still survived in the sheltered and more shaded areas of the main peak. Heavy masses of cloud closely encircled the summit and greatly limited the view. Consequently, our eager desire to catch at least a glimpse of Mauna Loa, which rises to a nearly equal elevation far across the saddle, was denied us.

The piercing cold of the constant gale-like wind soon forced us to beat a retreat from off the summit. Slowly and reluctantly we turned our backs on our hard-won goal. With hearts full to overflowing with the strangely mixed emotions of great achievement and almost reverent joy, we jogged our way down, down and down --- down again to the levels where man must carry on his petty struggle for existence.

The following morning we spent in the vicinity of the rest house, carefully searching the flowering mamane groves for birds. However, a strong, cold wind accompanied by low-sweeping clouds, tended to discourage the feathered busyness in general so that our quest was not as fruitful as it otherwise might have been. Amakihi were fairly abundant and strikingly brilliant in their bright yellow-green plumage. A short, fluffed-out grayish-green bird with an orange-yellow spot on the forehead left us utterly baffled as to its identity.

The tracks of quail were plentiful in the moist soil all around the rest house though we actually saw only one individual in that particular area. Plover and skylark frequented the more open clearings and ridges at the same elevation, though in lesser numbers than at the seven thousand foot level.

Final preparations for departure were gradually completed and we haltingly nosed our way back down the road towards the ranch. Two shaggy, wild old rams curiously and intently watched our progress from their rocky and precarious stand high on a ridge to our left and reminded us of a pair of sentinels posted in farewell silhouette against the sombre background of the clouds.

The skylarks were in full song on the lower slopes of the pasture lands of the ranch and in spite of thundershowers we frequently stopped the car to get out and stand in the downpour in order to hear and observe their performance to fullest advantage.

A glance back to the slopes, which we had just abandoned, afforded us one last thrill, for they were freshly bedecked with a clean, fluffy layer of gleaming whiteness. Unwittingly, we had narrowly missed a good old "Stateside" blizzard.

With no little chagrin we clambered back into our old trusty conveyance and rattled on our merry route down the Saddle Road towards Kona and new districts to conquer.

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KAPAPA ISLAND BIRD AND PLANT SANCTUARY

By George C. Munro

This article is a start of yearly reports I hope to be able to make on a study of the birds of Kapapa Island. This will principally deal with the wedge-tailed shearwater (Puffinus pacificus cuneatus). The study will be carried on by banding the old and young birds, marking of nesting burrows and noting the action of the birds when at the island. The island and something of its bird inhabitants were described in a previous article on "The Effect of a Tidal Wave on Some Bird Nesting Islands." (Volume 7, number 8, February 1947).

My present plan is to make an intensive study of the shearwaters and any other birds that may come to or establish themselves on the island. Bulwer's petrel (Bulweria bulweri) also nests there. I banded a pair on their nest in a hole in the rock at the western end in 1936. I did not see any this year though several eggs were laid on the surface of the ground under the scaevola bushes, but all eventually disappeared. I also plan to carry on, in a simple way, Mr. Charles Judd's idea of making the island a preserve for native shoreside plants, but this will be presented in separate articles beginning at the end of 1947.

The idea of making a study of the shearwaters on the island did not occur to me until near the end of 1945 when I banded 10 chicks there. I had banded one young bird on the island on December 20, 1944. On March 31, 1946, thirteen adult birds were banded. Twelve of these were mated pairs. Most of them were evidently buried in the burrows the next morning by the tidal wave except some that had left the island before the wave struck. None of the score I found dead, mentioned in a former article, were banded birds. I found two of these (not mates) when banding on the night of June 15-16, 1946. It will be interesting to find in 1947 how many more of these banded birds escaped the tidal wave. I banded 27 adults from June 22 to September 1946. Little could be done with adults during 1946 as I was absent in April and May when the birds were mating and digging their burrows. When I returned on June 1 the birds had left the island and when they returned in the middle of June they were laying their eggs and then incubating them. I tried banding at night but it was unsatisfactory as there were few young birds on the surface and I was alone. It was inadvisable to disturb the sitting birds as there was danger of breaking the egg. In 1947 I plan to work on week ends in April and May when the paired birds will be found in burrows in the daytime. Little night banding will be done except for observation and recording returns. I found that I could handle the birds by myself despite their vicious scratching and biting. I had some strong money bags, 8 x 14 inches, and after some practice was able to control the three feet five inch wing-spread, sprawling legs and scratching claws and get the bird into the bag without hurting it. With my knee on half of the mouth of the bag I reached in and drew out a leg, attached a band and released the bird.

The birds were much disorganized by the tidal wave. A number laid their eggs on the surface and most of these eggs and some in the burrows spoiled, probably being infertile through loss of mates. I measured ten of the beautiful white eggs and found them to vary very little, being about $1\frac{1}{2}$ x $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches in size. About five chicks on the surface survived to maturity. Nineteen chicks were banded from August 7 to November 24. Probably not more than three of these were taken by vandals. A few escaped banding as some burrows were long and impeded by tree-roots and the end could not be reached. Others were inaccessible under large blocks of coral. One young bird was seen and banded on November 24. It was much smaller than the others and very thin. It probably was hatched late and had been left by its mother too soon. One unbanded with down still on its head came out from under a stone on December 1. I thought the birds had all left and did not bring bands that day and when I looked for it on December 8 it had gone. That was the last seen on the island for the season.

Over 100 burrows and surface nests were marked but some were destroyed by the tidal wave, others were not used and the egg spoiled in some. During the hatching period from June 18 to July 31, approximately, I checked number 9 burrow weekly. It was in the open where I could examine the bird easily without danger of breaking the egg or hurting the bird. On June 16 I put band number 41-414423 on the sitting bird. On June 23 an unbanded bird was in the burrow and it was given number 41-414434. Then the numbers ran like this:

June 16	41-414423	was present
" 23	" 34	" "
" 30	" 23	" "
July 7	" 34	" "
" 14	" 23	" "
" 21	" 23	" "
" 28	" 34	" "
Aug 10	" 34	" "
" 11	" 34	" "

The record of August 11th was taken in the early morning when the two birds were together at the entrance of the burrow but one escaped. It will be interesting to find how this works out with other nests in succeeding years. I did not visit the island on August 4 as the chicks would be hatching from the eggs and the sitting birds should not be disturbed. On August 10 some old birds still sat on unhatched eggs. Some chicks were alone but most were accompanied by an old bird. On September 7 the chick in number 9 burrow was banded. It had been examined on each trip and photographed at several stages. On November 17 it was gone. In the absence of the natives some person visiting the island had made a fire at the entrance of the burrow, presumably to smoke out the inmate, and then the burrow was dug out nearly to the end; the bird taken away. I was sorry as I had watched it grow with considerable interest. It, however, had not tamed and still defended itself vigorously when withdrawn from the burrow. The burrow was in the open and excited curiosity. However, there has been extremely little vandalism on the island, though two other well grown chicks disappeared. One chick was raised to maturity on the surface within a few feet of the open back of one of the camps which was continuously occupied for the summer. Another tent was temporarily pitched very close to a sitting bird on the surface under the scaevola and her chick was raised to maturity.

The island is under the Navy and its officers have spared no pains to maintain its welfare and in the protection of its birds and plants. Warning signs have been erected and the writer has been given a free hand in his studies. Now at the end of 1946 the island is a pattern of cleanliness, a great contrast to what it was when I visited it in 1936. Much credit for this is due to the native and part-native fishermen who spent most of the summer on the island and cooperated in every way in conservation of the birds and plants and in keeping the island clean. They also assist in directing casual visitors who might thoughtlessly do injury. Numbers of people visit the island and boats come in repeatedly during the week-ends. Some camp for the night, others lunch and leave, and others fish from the shores.

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FIELD NOTES: "The trip planned for the Society for the Poamoho Trail on the 11th of May was canceled, after the clan had gathered, because of inclement weather. Not to be defeated completely, however, the group hiked the Tantalus Trail with some success in spite of the intermittent rains and the several dogs that ran advance guard for the party. Several elepaio, white-eyes, and Kentucky cardinals were seen by the group generally, and Mrs. Rockefeller, Mr. Hamilton and Mr. French were fortunate in seeing Japanese hill-robins. Mrs. Rockefeller and Mr. Hamilton, who turned back early, saw what they believed to be several young hill-robins.

"Mr. French, who is an exchange instructor from Massachusetts at the Punahou School, is preparing to return to his home, and was especially anxious to see a hill-robin on this trip.

"While waiting at the Library of Hawaii for the arrival of the Society members, David Woodside saw several mynahs visiting the nests of English sparrows before the Library, and later the group found two fledgling sparrows on the ground, somewhat the worse for wear, having apparently been pushed from the nests by the mynahs. They were taken home by one of the group who intends to hand-feed them."

Paul Porter

"On Decoration Day, May 30th, David Woodside, Chester Fennell and Ruth and Paul Porter walked the Poamoho Trail to the summit, with a very damp excursion to Poamoho Stream in the valley. The writer does not, unfortunately, have a copy of the census taken on that trip, but the following birds were seen and recorded: Apapane, white-eye, Japanese hill-robin, amakihi, female ring-necked pheasant with one young bird, linnet, ricebird, lace-necked dove, and owl.

"About a half-mile above the beginning of the trail, we saw, in the valley below us, a group of olive-brown birds, with white-tipped tail feathers, white throat and cheeks, and bright rufous underbody. Our attention was immediately riveted to these birds by the sound of their clear flute-like song; the song being a cadenza of very musical quality, and a short call that sounded much like the playing of two harmonious notes (double-stopping) on a flute, if such were possible.

"In an effort to get a closer view of the birds we headed down the side of the mountain, but by the time we found a way to the stream, the birds had flown. The writer, however, counted twelve birds, and it is believed that there were at least two or three more in the trees. They were first seen in guava, later in a clump of dead tree-fern, and finally in ohia lehua.

"They were tentatively identified by David Woodside as Collared Thrush (Garrulus albogularis, Gould), but a better view would be necessary to make the identification positive.

"Oh yes -- all four of us fell in the creek when we got to it!"

H. P. Porter

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HAWAII AUDUBON SOCIETY STANDING COMMITTEES: 1947

BIRD WALKS: Miss Unoyo Kojima, Chairman. David Woodside.

LEGISLATIVE: Mr. Francis Evans, Chairman.

PROGRAM: Miss Euphie G. M. Shields, Chairman. Miss Margaret Clark.

PUBLICITY: Mrs. Ruth Rockefeller, Chairman.

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The Editor of The Elepaio will welcome any contributions, comments, questions (to which we will attempt to find answers), field notes, from readers.

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JULY ACTIVITIES:

BIRD WALK: July 13th, to St. Louis-Woodlawn. Meet at the corner of Waialae and Kapahulu at 8:20 with a transfer for the St. Louis Height bus.

MEETING: July 21st, 7:30 p.m. in the auditorium of the Library of Hawaii.
A film of Birds of Midway, loaned by Captain H. P. Riebe, USN.

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HAWAII AUDUBON SOCIETY: President, Miss Grenville Hatch, 1548 Wilhelmina Rise; Vice-Presidents, Mr. Francis Evans, 132-A Royal Circle; Mr. E. B. Hamilton, 528 17th St.; Sec'y-Treasurer, Mrs. Blanche A. Pedley, 3770 Sierra Drive; Editor, The Elepaio, Miss Charlotta Hoskins, 3212 Loulu St., Honolulu, Hawaii.

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