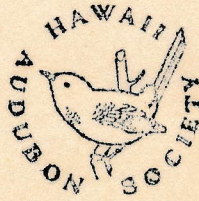


# THE ELEPAIO

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## BIRDS AND THE MIRROR

By

Helen Shiras Baldwin

When we placed the mirror by our bird feeding station so that Mocker (see The Elepaio for October 1947. Ed.), our pet Chinese thrush could have a better look at himself, we little knew what was in store for us. Mocker, of course, was not the only bird to find the mirror.

The first mirror we used was a small easel type, bought at the dime store. We stood it on its own standard on the flat top of the stone and cement wall to the porte-cochere directly in front of the food. This was a mistake, for the birds of all species were frightened away as they lit to feed by the sudden apparition of their moving images so close by. This was almost a reflex action. When we moved the mirror a foot or more away from the food, things were different.

Mocker, as I told you before, soon found the new image and sang and fluttered before it in a frenzy of emotion that was almost painful to watch. His mate, however, said nothing to the mirror bird, but moved about excitedly and, when her nearly grown young accompanied her to the feeding station, was careful to keep herself between the young and the mirror. The female cardinal behaved the same way; so did a parent Chinese dove and a mynah when accompanied by their young. This might be called a typical female bird reaction. Whether or not each recognized the image as that of her own species I could not tell. Their actions might have been the same for any moving object of comparable size at that distance.

The male cardinal clearly thought his image to be something out of the ordinary. He would jump about excitedly before it, advancing and retreating, chirping loudly, but did not sing to it. Perhaps this was because he did not consider the feeding place the proper place for singing, for at no time had we heard him singing there. A mirror placed on the tip of a long bamboo shoot or the telephone pole where he was in the habit of singing, might have had a different effect.

A Chinese dove, which we took to be a male, strutted around before the mirror for some time before he advanced upon it, chest puffed out, but he lost interest in his image unless viewed slightly profile. Instead, he turned his attention to the food images, then the beveled edges of the mirror that caught the light. Unable to go through the mirror like Alice, he ducked around behind it, then back in front again, where his reappearing image so close by frightened him away. He soon came back to repeat the performance with minor variations, but in time was less and less frightened and more and more belligerent toward the near image, though sometimes he ignored it altogether. I say "a male dove", but as we had no bands or other special identification for them, there may have been more than one who acted this way.

Several mynahs came to our feeding station. Some behaved in the usual female fashion for other species. Others were more aggressive. One mynah was so fascinated by the light glinting from the beveled edges of the mirror that he took no notice of the images. Another, whom we called Rowdy, and who habitually spent most of his



time at the feeding station driving other mynahs from their food, found the mirror bird most irritating. He would advance upon it, retreat, advance again, jabbering unprintable things all the while. He would leap up in the air, hover a moment, then dive at his image, striking it with his foot and wings so forcibly that he knocked it over on its face. He then perched upon the upturned standard and cawed triumphantly.

Rowdy did this repeatedly. Apparently he could see both the image of another mynah and the mirrored food for some distance, for the mirror slanted a little upon its standard. He would dive at it from a nearby hibiscus as readily as at the real mynahs feeding quietly before it. There was no question about his recognizing the image as that of a mynah, for we never saw him try to drive other species of birds from the feeding station.

Rowdy and some of his fellows knocked down the mirror so frequently we replaced it with a larger one which we bound with cord to one of the posts of the porte-cochere. The mynahs struck at this one, too, but not so readily, perhaps because of its vertical angle. Maybe, too, there was less satisfaction in striking a mirror which did not fall down.

We placed the small mirror on the ground where the rice birds and sparrows would find it. Neither species paid any attention to their images, but repeatedly tried to fly through the mirror or get the mirror food. The same was true for the Liothrix (hill-robin or Pekin nightingale) at both mirrors, for most birds were not frightened by their images when they approached them gradually. The larger bird species would try to go through the mirror when startled, but none fluttered against it in this vain attempt as much as the sparrows. In time, though, most of the birds learned to avoid trying to fly through the mirror.

To satisfy our curiosity, we showed our cat, dog and some of the chickens their mirrored images. None showed much interest. The dog sniffed at his, and since it did not smell right, walked disdainfully away. The cat was more interested in trying to go through the mirror or behind it than in his image. He gave no sign of recognizing it as a cat. The chickens eyed their images curiously, a little suspiciously, but were not sufficiently impressed to investigate further. Mirrored corn they recognized at once and vainly tried to eat.

To complete our experiments, we let our fifteen months old grand-daughter gaze at her image. She at once pointed out various features and called them by name as eye, tooth, button and the like, but when told to "find the baby", did not recognize the whole image. Perhaps the same was true with the birds and animals, for almost without exception they recognized mirrored grain for what it was.

One thing was certain, however. The actions of individual birds in a species were not always identical. All hasty generalizations on the subject are therefore open to question, but certain types of reaction were fairly constant where a considerable number of one species were observed.

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Mrs. Helen Shiras Baldwin, who contributed the foregoing story on Birds and the Mirror as a sort of sequel to her equally interesting and entertaining story of Mocker the Thrush, writes from Hilo that the Manuiki Audubon Society has reorganized and held its first meeting on October 7. Their field trips have been resumed; they hope to take part again in the Christmas bird census for the first time since the beginning of the war; and have resumed their monthly column on bird life in the Hilo Tribune Herald.

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IIWI  
By  
H. Paul Porter

To what fear of gods of fire ingrained  
Into your memory here among Oahu's hills  
Can be ascribed the way your breast with music fills  
Yet makes your burst of melody seem strained?  
It may be that the rippling noted entrained  
Within a stream of ecstasy - your wills  
Burst forth defiance to the flame that kills,  
But Pele glanced your way - and you refrained.

We who come later see your flash of red -  
Hear your glad voices, but the strain is there.  
You sing, with effort though your song be fair,  
Yet Pele and her flame are long since dead.  
Cast off your fears - the gods can do no harm  
Against the brilliant magic of your charm.

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TUAMOTUAN BIRD NAMES, by Kenneth Emory. Journal of the Polynesian Society, 56:188-196, June 1947.

In this article Dr. Emory points out that the native names of plants in the Tuamotu archipelago provide material of promise in tracing out movements of people and culture in Polynesia when compared with names elsewhere. The names of birds when similarly compared, especially the sea birds, also offer opportunities of revealing the course of culture.

No lists of Tuamotuan bird names have heretofore been published. In the present article he has brought together all the data of which he has knowledge bearing upon the native names of birds in the Tuamotus and has made a preliminary comparison of these names with lists from other parts of Polynesia.

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CHESTER FENNELL writes from Seoul in Korea:

"...Had a beautiful, smooth flight across. Twenty-eight hours of actual flying though we stopped for a couple of hours each at Johnston, Kwajalein and Guam. Saw a few noddies and golden plover at Johnston out at the far end of the mat as we landed and took off, but that was all, for the O.D. grabbed my field glasses from me as soon as I stepped from the plane and refused to return them till I boarded the plane again. The only important information I could gather from several fellows whom I asked about the bird was that they were a 'damned stinking nuisance', and that they were destroying all their eggs in an effort to get them to move across to Sand Island, a smaller strip of land about  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile distant. They all heartily regretted the fact that Johnston was designated as a bird sanctuary. One man named the species found there as noddy and sooty terns and moanin' birds. He said the last were black and white - undoubtedly Bonin Island petrels.

"We hit Kwajalein at 11:30 at night in a terrific downpour so that our sight-seeing was fairly well confined to the interior of the mess hall and the latrine.

"We arrived at Guam around 7 o'clock the next morning. Was lucky enough to contact Bob Partridge, who came down to the terminal for a short visit. Saw golden plover again there and a species of rail in the road directly behind the air terminal.



Also a black bird about the size of a mynah. Especially noticed that most of the larger trees were dead, probably from the bombing.

"Flew over Saipan and Tinian... Sighted Miyake Jima and Mt. Fuji simultaneously about 4:00 p.m. Landed at Haneda Airport, Tokyo, at 5:30.

"Spent 7 days in Tokyo awaiting flight to Korea. Was confined to the city area the whole time so did all my bird observing in the city parks and the landscaped gardens and grounds around the temples and shrines. Identified the following:

1. Japanese little grebe. Kaituburi (*podiceps rufuolles japonicus*). 8 in the moat surrounding the Palace Grounds.
2. Japanese carrion crow. Hashiboso garasu (*corvus corone corone*). Common throughout the city, wherever there are trees. Very tame.
3. Japanese blue magpie. Onaga (*cyanopica cyanus japonica* Parrot). Group of 5 in tops of pine trees in grounds of Meiji Shrine.
4. Japanese tree sparrow. Suzume (*passer montanus aturatus Stejneger*). Common throughout the city. Like the English sparrow only a bit more refined and less pugnacious and aggressive.
5. Gray starling. Mukudori (*spadiopsar cineraceus Tennminck*). Small flocks on roof of Art Museum in Ueno Park and on roofs of buildings surrounding Meiji Shrine.
6. Black-eared kite. Tobi (*milvus migrans lineatus Gray*). Two soaring over Meiji Shrine grounds and one over Palace Grounds. Very graceful, strong fliers. Soar most of the time like the turkey vulture in the States. White spots on inner bend of wing are very noticeable in flight.
7. Eastern house swallow. Tsubame (*hirundo rustica gutturalis Scopoli*). Common on outskirts of city. Graceful, swift fliers. Very similar to the barn swallow of the Eastern and Midwestern States.
8. Japanese cormorant. Kawa-u (*phalacrocorax carbo hanedae Kuroda*). One flying over moat surrounding Palace Grounds.
9. Japanese white-eye. Mejiro (*zosterops palpebrosa japonica Tenn. 'Schlegel*). Yes, apparently the same as those in Hawaii and just as ubiquitous.

"So much for observations in Tokyo, besides a large flock, about 100, geese seen from an eight floor window far out over Tokyo Bay. A Japanese girl, to whose attention I brought them, called them Kari, which is evidently a general name for all geese. She also said that they appear in the Tokyo area only in the fall and winter months. They may have been either the white-fronted or E. bean species.

"Met the curator, Masao Iwasa, of the Tokyo Science Museum, who kindly gave me several hours of his time personally conducting me through the exhibits and typing up a list of some 360 species of birds found in Korea in 1917 by Dr. N. Kuroda. He also put at my disposal the entire reference library of the Museum, in which I wallowed for two whole days, fairly gulping in all the information I could possibly consume. It was a most unexpected, gratifying find. He also urged me to write him at any time for further information he might possibly be able to give me.

"Arrived in Seoul late Saturday afternoon, October 4th, after a 4½ hour flight via 317th Troop Carrier. Overjoyed to find Korea a highly scenic country with range after range of mountain peaks, open granite ridges and large winding rivers. Especially beautiful at this time of the year with the mountainsides garmented in glowing gold and scarlet of the maples and oaks and set against the deep green of pines and yew. You can imagine the subjects for color film! I've been busy as can be trying to get it all in before the season wanes.

"Climbed a 3000 foot peak, Pukhansan, some five miles to the north of Seoul yesterday. Beautiful, warm day with nary a cloud in the sky. Saw a new bird at the very summit, which I haven't yet been able to identify. Believe it was a species of



thrush. Gray head, nape and breast; rufous back, wings, flanks and tail; wing bar; secondaries and primaries edged with white; lower mandible, yellow. Very tame.

"Other birds around Seoul:

1. Black-eared kite. Same as in Japan. Fifteen over ridge to north of Seoul.
2. Tree sparrow, Korean. Chosen suzume (*Passer montanus dy-bowskii*). Common in small flocks.
3. Carrion crow. Same as in Japan. Common.
4. Chinese magpie. Kasasaki (*Pice pica sericea* Gould). Common.
5. Eastern turtle dove. Kiji-bato (*Streptopelia orientalis orientalis*). Two in pine woods on ridge north of city.
6. Eastern house swallow. Tsubame. Same as in Tokyo. Common. In migration.
7. Japanese great tit. Chosen Shijukara (*Parus major takahashii*). Common all through pine woods. Beautifully patterned with glossy black head, throat and line down center of underparts; white cheek patches and nape; grey back and wings.

"These are the only species I have identified as yet. Intend getting out along the river and rice paddies next Sunday for shore birds, ducks and cranes...

"...Hiked out along the Han River to the west of the city last Sunday and saw my first cranes. Thirty-seven of them all told, divided into two groups. The first flock of 23 flew directly overhead, going upstream in a single file, follow-the-leader manner, white necks outstretched and long legs a-trailing behind. Only the leader occasionally uttered short harsh cries of probably admonition, which sounded strikingly similar to the creak of the sculler poles of the junks plying the waterway below. The rest of the flock uttered nary a sound but silently followed along in a far reaching wavering line. Truly, it was a most beautiful, exciting sight and my heart fairly leapt at the moment - all I could do was freeze in my tracks and stand with mouth agape till they were lost from sight in the haze of the distance. Indeed, I almost forgot to use my field glasses on them. The other group (14) were all quietly resting on a large sandbar far out in the middle of the river, and though I watched them for nearly a half hour from the top of a high hill, they never once shifted positions. That is, 13 of them remained motionless, while the fourteenth, just plumb full of the old mischief, was having himself a time flying low over a large flock of mallards resting in the water and faking all sorts of crazy power dives, javelin thrusts and wing sweeps, driving the poor mallards into a frantic, splashing uproar trying to keep out of his way. Every few minutes, apparently tiring of the fray, the lolo crane would come to his feet on the sandbar, stiffly survey the results of his efforts for several moments, and then proceed to parade back and forth in front of the bewildered gathering, lifting his feet very high and precisely in a great effort to impress all onlookers with his majestic bearing and dignity. It was surely a highly comic, ridiculous scene and I fairly laughed myself sick watching it all.

"Of the five species of cranes which are found in Korea, I cannot yet definitely say to which species these belonged, though I strongly believe they were the Manchurian crane (*grus japonensis*). C. W. Campbell in his 'List of Birds Collected in Korea', says of this species, 'The first icy blasts of wind bring the Manchurian crane down in small numbers from the north. This seems to be generally in October. Later on large flocks may be seen travelling in much the same formation as geese, though more slowly and irregularly, and at a great height. The piercing cry of these birds is often heard before they themselves are visible.'

"During the winter many are snared for export to China and Japan where they are held in high estimation as birds of ornament."



"The mallards were strung out in one large flock along the river for a distance of nearly  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile. I counted a total of 410. They remained well out in midstream and appeared to pay little or no attention to the numerous junks and smaller craft frequenting the river.

"A long grebe, too far out to definitely identify, continued to submerge and surface as long as I was in the vicinity.

"Other bird life in the Seoul area at this season is fairly well limited to carrion crows, Chinese magpies, Japanese great tits, Eastern turtle dove, Korean house sparrow and the Siberian black-eared kite. Getting awfully anxious to get out into the countryside of the provinces to the south and see what they might offer in the way of avian life..."

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#### FIELD NOTES:

On November 23, a clear bright day with scarcely a cloud the full length of the Koolau Mountains, David Woodside, George Sonoda, the Jeep and the Porters birded the lower third of the Poamoho trail. A late start was made due to Ruth's inability to distinguish the slight difference between 3758 and 3857, which made David more difficult to locate than most extant Hawaiian species. After numerous delays, not the least being the loss of 25 feet of the Poamoho road by a landslide, the trail start was reached.

The midday silence was first broken by a linnet. Hill robins called from valleys on both sides of the ridge. One white-eye wandered by and two others were heard in the tree tops. Another period of stillness broken only by distant calling. Clouds were gathering along the summit but no zephyrs strayed down to trail level. Someone tentatively identified an amakihi glimpsed far out over the valley.

Another lull broken only by requests that lunch be eaten immediately, or soon, or at least by noon, or anyway before going home. Mutiny was averted at this point by Paul's getting his glasses focussed on an apapane in a tall koa tree. The field glasses were passed along and each one saw double the birds of the preceding viewer. When the last impatient soul got the glasses, there were 8 apapane in the tree. All of the birds were in easy range of the unaided eye, though observation through the glasses was more enlightening.

That tree set the pace for every turn of the trail brought us to more apapanes. A very few showed some dark immature shading, but the vast majority were in full red plumage. They were frequenting the koa buds. Examination of one of the unopened flower heads revealed numerous insect holes. The inhabitants of these no doubt contributed to the koa's popularity at that time.

The climax of the day's birding for the three novices was when one of the red birds, odd bits of which were visible around a limb and through an ieie vine, proved to be an iiwi. It was indeed fortunate that one of the exposed portions was the long down-curving rose colored bill. Later, Ruth had an unobstructed view of one perched at eye level. The stream of apapanes was interrupted by two more amakihis and a bird which was probably an Oahu creeper. An elepaio joined the group for a time. He carefully observed each one in the party, then left, no doubt after making four additions to his life list.

The piteous cries for food could no longer be ignored so as soon as a ledge with the proper number of ants was located, time was called. After lunch, each member of the group recommended that the other three go on to the top. The results were negative. All four started back to the jeep.



On the entire circuit only 3 or possibly 4 amakihi were sighted. Even more surprising was that on this same distance which yielded in May, 20, and in June, 14, white-eyes, only 3 were seen.

Later in the day white-eye were seen in great numbers in the plantings of silky oak (*Grevillea robusta*) on the lower slopes of the Waianae Mountains.

There, too, a Chinese thrush was singing, while as is frequently the case, one of his fellows, or maybe his wife was almost drowning out the call with a series of chortlings. Another elepaio was recorded there.

In addition to the usual field birds: doves, English sparrows, mynahs, 2 golden plover, one night heron and flock after flock of ricebirds were seen.

The four birders arrived home after eight hours in the field, without being rained on once, which is probably a record for November.

Ruth Porter

On November 28th, a trip to Ulupau Head showed the red-footed boobies to be back again in numbers. It was estimated that over 500 were present in the crater and along the slopes of the headland. Most of these were adults, only a few showing the brown plumage of the immature. The majority were nesting, and a large number were incubating eggs.

A small flock of sanderling, about twelve in number, were surprised along the road leading to Fort Hase - an unusual sight in that area, since it is some distance to the sea. Stilt, noddy terns, plover and turnstone were observed, as usual, in the shallow pools close to the entrance of the military reservation. Frigate birds, all females, were flying over the entire Ulupau area, and one observer returned to town, to find a lone frigate bird circling high over Kaimuki.

Grenville Hatch

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#### BLOND MYNAHS AGAIN:

On November 15, The Honolulu Advertiser reprinted the comment in the November Elepaio by E. Shields and C. Delamere on a blond mynah seen on the University campus. On November 21, the following letter appeared in the Advertiser:

"Editor, The Advertiser: Just a word in regard to your editorial on the Blond Mynah. While I was at Pepeekeo Sugar as engineer for 33 years, there was a white mynah that was in a flock around the mill and was seen by many quite frequently, including myself. This was about five years ago."

Hilo, November 16.

J. W. Kennedy

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ELECTION of officers for the Hawaii Audubon Society took place at the December 15th meeting. The officers for the coming year will be: H. Paul Porter, President; Mr. E.B. Hamilton, Miss Grenville Hatch, Vice-Presidents; Mrs. Blanche A. Pedley, Secretary-Treasurer.

As a result of the election, we welcome as our new president H. Paul Porter, whose keen interest in birds and the Society presage a successful year. Mr. E.B. Hamilton and Miss Grenville Hatch will remain in office as vice-presidents, while Mrs. Blanche A. Pedley will continue to serve as secretary-treasurer.

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#### JANUARY ACTIVITIES:

BIRD WALK: January 11th, to Kawaihoa. Meet at the Library of Hawaii at 8:30 a.m.  
MEETING: January 19th, at 7:30 p.m., at the auditorium of the Library of Hawaii.  
Mr. Paul Brese, Director of the Zoo, will speak.