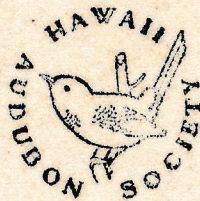


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For the Better Protection
of Wildlife in Hawaii

April 1949

KANAHA POND, KAHULUI (cont'd)

By C. S. Childs

Before the war every winter for a number of years, five Canada geese used to arrive at Kanaha Pond, presumably the same ones every year, but I never got close enough to ask them about that. Since the war, I have not seen any geese. There were also two years when two pair of Hawaiian geese, the "Nene" from which "Puu-nene" derived its name, stayed at Kanaha. I believe these were brought over from the bird farm on Oahu, operated by the Territorial Department of Agriculture and Forestry, and destroyed when World War II broke out because feed could not be obtained. I have not seen any since. There is a period in the lives of ducks and geese when they are moulting that they are unable to fly. One of our prominent citizens of today told me one time about how when he was a youngster he used to fish and play around Kanaha, and one time they started to chase after some geese. By luck (good or bad, depending on how you look at it), it was just during the few days when the geese could not fly so they caught two of them. Roast goose was the result. "Thought," this citizen said, "they tasted kind of fishy." The taste of ducks and geese depends considerably upon what they have been eating.

There are other birds to be seen at Kanaha, but I can't tell you about all of them. There are Kentucky cardinals flashing red in the trees; sparrows, linnets, white-eyes, bar-wing doves, ring-neck doves, ring-neck pheasants, mallard and teal ducks, ulili or wandering tattler, akekeke or turnstone, and once in a while, a flock of beautiful gold, red orange and olive green Japanese hill robins will flit through the trees, filling the air with a beautiful song. Or you may hear one of the shy Chinese thrushes repeating his sweet warbling, winding song over and over. At one time there were three Glossy ibises around the Pond, which came back each year for three years. Whether they went back to the coast, their native land, during the rest of the year, I do not know. But they would stay at Kanaha during the three winter months, during those three years. They are a large bird - two feet or more in body, standing on long legs.

But there is one other native Hawaiian bird that I must tell you about before closing. That is the bird which in Hawaiian lore stole fire from heaven and gave it to humans for the first time - the Alae keokeo or Alaekea, also called the Hawaiian Coot. That is the bird that is in the pond in large numbers the year around and which so many mistake for ducks. He has a white bill and ivory white frontal knob on his forehead. One version of the fire story says that Maui-Mua, angry with the bird for putting out the fire, rubbed the white knob until it bled; another version is that the knob was scorched when the fire was stolen. In this way the red-knobbed gallinule or Alea Ulu was accounted for. I have never seen any of the Ulu (red) at Kanaha; the keokeo chase them away. When the keokeo at Kanaha chase and fight each other they make quite a spectacle with their splashing.

The Community significance of my broadcast this evening is this: Aren't we lucky to live in a Democracy where we walk about freely and enjoy such things even on the old Naval Air Station? Why not take definite steps to keep Kanaha a bird reserve and picnic grounds? The Navy built nice dry runways out into the Pond and left a number of empty ammunition shelters which could be used. It is convenient and it could be made very interesting. Good night!

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SOME SEEDING PLANTS DETRIMENTAL TO BIRDS

By George C. Munro

On March 15, 1948, I talked with Dr. Edward C. Zimmerman, entomologist at the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum, Honolulu. He told of finding a rice bird with its feathers so matted with grass seeds that it could not fly, and another with its wing broken, presumably done in its struggles to free itself. He gave the name of the grass as Setaria verticillata. I know the grass well but it is not in the list of grasses I collected for Mr. Jared G. Smith on the Molokai Ranch in the early 1900s or in the lists of collections I made on Lanai for the Bishop Museum and the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association. It is an introduced grass and had not reached Molokai and Lanai when I botanized there. I think I introduced it to Lanai as it grows luxuriantly in the algaroba forests in the wet season and makes good dry roughage for the cattle when feeding on the algaroba beans in the dry months. The cattle become ravenous for other more bulky food when subsisting on the beans, and this grass seemed as if it would fill a want. Had I known it would be detrimental to the birds I might have thought twice before introducing it. It will not do much harm to birds on grazed land or where stock are turned into it when seeding. In the first instance the animals will keep it eaten down and when dry soon tramp it down. On vacant lots in town it will be more of a menace to the birds.

This brings to mind other cases of seeding plants and trees and trailing vines detrimental to birds. The birds of course are useful to the plants as seed distributors. I was told some time ago of white-eyes' being found with feathers gummed and stuck among the seeding pods of the papala tree (Pisonia sandwichensis). Also I had word from Palmyra Island during the war that sea birds were bothered by the sticky seeds of this tree or a closely allied species. The birds undoubtedly carry its seeds from island to island. Rose Island on an atoll near Samoa is only about 200 yards long and has trees of this species over 70 feet high, among which are numbers of lovely white tern. It is hoped that few of them get fatally gummed with its seeds. Probably they learn to avoid them. Another instance of plants being injurious to birds was observed by the Bishop Museum "Tanager" Expedition which visited Cure or Ocean Island, the last island on the Hawaiian Chain, in 1923. The Laysan albatrosses coming there to nest were prevented from taking flight again on part of the island by the seaside morning glory (Ipomea pes caprae). When taking a run before taking off in flight they were tripped by the trailing vines. After some unsuccessful attempts they apparently gave up and stayed on the ground until quite starved to death.

I mentioned birds' being useful to the plants by distributing seeds. I once found a seed of the prickly seeded short plant Tribulus with one of its thorns firmly embedded in the sole of the feet of a black-footed albatross, and found

grass seeds entangled in their feathers. I recently gathered seedpods of the maiapilo or puapilo (Capparis sandwiciana) on Popoia Island. I noted that as the seedpod ripens insects are attracted, probably by the smell, and perhaps to eat the sticky gum among the seeds. The insects eat into the pod and it opens up, exposing the gummy seeds. Shearwaters floudering to take wing off the island could easily contact the sticky seed and carry some away. I have no evidence that they do, but it is a possibility. The plant seems to grow mostly in the coral blocks and among rocks on or near the shores of islands. I have never seen it far inland. The name Maiapilo (bad-smelling banana) is from the appearance of the seedpod, which resembles a banana, and its strong smell; puapilo would mean smelly flower.

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BIRD-BANDING ON KAPAPA ISLAND: Mr. George C. Munro writes on February 17, 1949: "For a number of reasons I have been compelled to discontinue my study of the wedge-tailed shearwater on Kapapa Island. But one banding trip was made in 1948 and only 14 birds banded. The numbered wooden pins marking the burrows had all been removed since November, 1947. Why this was done I do not know, but anyway they were no longer needed. In the last two years they had demonstrated that the birds did not return to former nesting places. The tidal wave of April 1, 1946, and the extra heavy seas of January 4, 1947, had eliminated all burrows, though most of the pins remained. These two disasters may have disorganized the birds. They dug new burrows in different locations.

"We had found by the banding that though sometimes the pairs kept together they did not always do so. It was also found that the male and female took turns incubating the egg.

"There seems little use of banding shearwaters unless it can be followed up closely, and I have found I cannot do this. These birds' habit of burrowing in sandy soil wears the numbers off the bands and unless they can be changed not much information can be gained.

"I hope some day to sum up in one article what has been learned of the species in the bandings of 1937 to 1941 and 1945 to 1948."

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FIELD TRIP TO KALENA REPORTED: "Sunday, February 13th was a bright day which brought out bird lovers and shutterbugs eager for the trail. En route to Kalena by car, a Golden Plover and a Night Heron were spotted. We stopped on Kamehameha highway near the little Italian shrine to wait for some of the Audubon members. Our caravan of several cars and about thirty people aroused the curiosity of a police car. I imagine its about the first time an English Skylark has stopped automobile traffic. Some of the group were fortunate enough to see his descent as well as to hear his song.

"The grade up to the ridge was fairly steep but not difficult climbing. Elepaio were numerous and several amakihi were observed. The song that intrigued us the most was that of the Japanese bush warbler. After reaching the top of the ridge I was one of the lucky few who were rewarded with a good study of the elusive little fellow. For he was hunting insects on a crooked branch that was partly in direct sunlight where we could see his round little body. The lehua

trees up in the Waianae were not in bloom that day and consequently the frequent flashes of red made it easy to detect many apapane. The iiwi came in their daring scarlet and black in such numbers, I'm sure all the group must have seen them.

"The descent was gay for the koa leaves made the trail, well blazed with shoes discarded earlier, quite slippery, so that more than one style of locomotion was resorted to."

Ruth Birch

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THOMAS M. BLACKMAN, of Honolulu, has written an article on the fairy tern which appears in the December, 1948, issue of Natural History. Observers have long been puzzled by the ability of this bird to hold a dozen or more small fish lengthwise in its beak while feeding them to the young one by one. Mr. Blackman advances the theory that the tongue is used to hold and manipulate the fish. The article is beautifully illustrated with Mr. Blackman's photographs, which show the steps in the feeding process, as well as a tern about to light upon its egg, which rests precariously in a tree crotch.

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BOOBY COLONY: Miss Ruth Dingus visited the booby colony a few days after the storm of January 16th, and reported a total population of three young birds and two adults. Shotgun shells, and dead birds in varying stages of decomposition added to the desolation. It seems probable, however, much as we deplore such wanton destruction by man, that the chief cause of the exodus was the storm. Two weeks later not only were there no birds save those previously mentioned at Ulupau, but Moku Manu seemed deserted--some six or eight boobies and four frigate birds in the air constituted the only bird life observable through binoculars. It will be recalled that both Ulupau and Moku Manu were virtually deserted after a similar storm last year. The booby colony was revisited about the first of March at which time some 125 boobies were found which may indicate that the colony will be fully reestablished in the future.

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DR. MAX DE LAUBENFELS of the University of Hawaii addressed the Hawaii Audubon Society at its February meeting and discussed the compilation of his life list and something of the physiology of birds. He explained that his interest in birds began with the acquisition of a pair of field glasses which opened up a whole new world to him: "My first scientific paper was published in the field of ornithology, and though I later turned to the sponges for technical research, I still find a wonderful source of pleasure in bird study - it is good to get out in the fields with congenial people and look at birds.

"I began my life list as a boy back in 1913. My first entry was the English sparrow because I realized I had seen it since birth. The second entry was a white-breasted nuthatch. Each time I saw a new bird I recorded it. That was the way I kept my first life list, in the order in which I saw the birds, with the date and place, and later I separated them by states in which seen, and whether they were seen in winter or summer, migrant or year around. We also found that we saw different birds or more of them in the early morning. The thrill of seeing the wild things in their home attitudes, not only in a cage but when they do not know you are

watching them, is paramount. One morning within six miles of Chicago city limits on a prairie, now covered by factories, I heard something that sounded like a little boy with a drum. Since this was not possible, I parked my bicycle and wiggled over the grass and there had the unusual opportunity to see the courting dance of the prairie chicken. The females make a circle with the males in the center, going around and around to the rhythm of their drumming; as some tire, others step into the circle taking their places. The sight is one never to be forgotten. The peculiar drumming sound accompanying this dance, together with its rhythm, must have given the American Indians inspiration, because the same beat is repeated in some of their dances.

"The relation between Indians and the wild life around them is of great interest. If you observe the Navajo Indian in some of his dances, one of the very peculiar rhythms I found to be based on the call of a spotted screech owl. It was many years before I was able to relate the two, for the spotted screech owl is a very rare bird, very secretive. It must have impressed the Indians in past eras as being some rare spirit of the night, leading them to imitate its call.

"To skip over a lot of years I filled an entire sheet of foolscap with different species and then experimented with loose leaf pages as a means of keeping my life list. That method did not seem satisfactory. I also found in these years that I was going to have to delimit my area. To include every country I visited would be too much, so I decided to limit my list to birds found in the continental United States. This time I took a sheet of paper and listed all the birds that occur in the United States in the order of the American Ornithological Union check list. At first I tried to include subspecies but in recent years some ornithologists have added so many that a lot of people including myself felt a sort of revulsion and threw out the subspecies. My list, then, includes only species, of which there are 617 possibles in the United States. Then I enter the year, month and day that I first saw each bird and in what state or states I saw it. In building up this life list I have visited every one of the 48 states. That is one of the good things about an ambition like this, to see all the birds. You get to be very honest with yourself too - you come to lean over backwards to prove the identity of a bird before you check it on your list.

TO BE CONCLUDED.

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NATURE IN KAPIOLANI PARK

By George C. Munro

As birds cannot be killed in the park and their crops examined, one has to watch carefully to determine for certain on what they are feeding.

Before the recent park water system was established in the latter part of 1947 the runways of ants on the surface of the ground were much in evidence. They threw the soil out on each side of the runway making a clean groove. I paced a number of them and found twenty feet quite a common length. Sometimes two or three runways radiated from one nest site. I was much tantalized by these runways as I never could distinguish an ant in any of them. They evidently retired to their underground nests as soon as light appeared. Anyway, in the uncertain morning light I never could see an ant on the surface till the winter rains started. After the first kona rain on January 10 of this year some mynahs were picking at the ground on a bare sandy patch. I disturbed them and saw both queen and worker ants running

on the surface. They had been flooded out of their subterranean nests and the mynahs were evidently feeding on them. After the next kona storm January 16 and 17 I searched among the flood debris and collected queens, soldiers and worker ants. Dr. Elwood C. Zimmerman kindly identified them for me as Pheidole megacephala, a very destructive ant of other insects, making collecting of the native insect fauna almost fruitless below certain levels. On the morning of February 9 after the rain of the 8th, the mynahs were alighting on the ground before it was properly light. They were evenly scattered over the surface unusually active, picking at the ground. They are generally deliberate and not greedy feeders. I examined a bare spot where several mynahs were at work and saw a winged queen ant on the surface.

I think from these observations it is fairly safe to assume that the Pheidole ant furnishes food for the mynah and probably other small birds in the park. Whether the ant itself is useful or harmful there, is another study necessary to be made at night when the ant is active. If it climbs the trees and attacks the monkeypod caterpillar it may prove useful.

Since the rains, runways can no longer be seen but almost every bare spot has its series of ant mounds like little craters.

February 28, 1949.

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APRIL ACTIVITIES:

BIRD WALK: April 10th, to Kipapa. Meet at the Library of Hawaii at 8:30 am. Bring lunch and car (if possible). Kipapa trail, 6 miles, is one of the well kept, wide trails on the Koolau Range. The trail starts on the ridge above Kipapa Gulch and follows the ridge to the top of Koolau Range to connect with the south end of the Summit Trail, one mile south of Waikane Trail junction. Birds are plentiful. On our previous trips many of us have been fortunate enough to see iiwi, apapane, amakihi, Chinese thrush, Japanese hill robin, elepaio, white-eye, and linnet. The deep valleys with very thick growth of koa, lehua and ferns give one a restful and comfortable feeling. This trail is one of our favorite bird walks.

Unoyo Kojima, Chairman.

MEETING: April 18th, Library of Hawaii Auditorium, at 7:30 PM.

We have been most fortunate in securing as a speaker Mr. Edwin H. Bryan, Jr., formerly curator of the Bishop Museum, a leading naturalist of the Territory. Mr. Bryan will speak about the bird groups of the Pacific Ocean Area and where they may be observed, including the Bishop Museum collections.

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