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BIRDING IN JAPAN
(Continued)

By Chester Fennell

We arrived at Nakabusa at 8:30 that evening, tired, dusty and starving. To my amazement, there stood a hotel on the bank of the river, picturesquely surrounded by tall pines and enveloped by rising clouds of steam coming out of the ground all around. The smell of sulphur hung heavily in the air, and I stopped short in my tracks fully expecting *Die Walkure* to come charging out over the treetops on their white steeds to welcome us to this veritable Valhalla. What a perfect setting for a production of the Ring! The river for Das Rheingold, the steam and smell of sulphur for Die Walkure and the towering cliffs, peaks and forest for Siegfried and Die Gotterdammerung. It's made for it. Wagner would approve it upon first sight. Just procure Melchior, Flagstad and the supporting Metropolitan cast and the peak of the music drama would be attained. It all flashed into being as I stood there in the trail and breathlessly beheld the set stage.

But instead of the warrior maidens, out of the hostel shuffled the little old toothless innkeeper all smiles and bowing his welcome. We shook off our heavy packs and removed our shoes with sighs of welcome relief and were led up a flight of steep stairs to a corner room spotlessly clean and softly matted. We removed our muddy, wet clothes, for it had rained along the trail off and on, and slipped on some warm, heavy Japanese robes with which our host provided us. Sinking down on pillows around a small table with green hot tea which had been brought in, we relaxed in sheer luxury and a little later ravenously gorged ourselves on soup, rice, fish, seaweed, daikon and napa. A waterfall behind the hotel filled the room with music and the pipings of avian vespers were frequently audible.

The scattered remnants of the evening repast cleared away, we sat yet a while sipping sweetened coffee then repaired downstairs to the hot baths. The naturally hot water is piped directly from the springs outside into deep tubs within the hotel, one tub for women, another for men. All strip and bathe at the same time. Four men were already in the tub when we arrived so that we were a total of seven. Soap is not used since the water must be kept as clean as possible for the next bathers. The water was just about as hot as one could tolerate it and we splashed and wallowed around in it for nearly half an hour. It was wonderfully relaxing and we retired among thick, quilted comforters on the matted floor of our room with rice hull pillows tucked under heads wholly at peace with the world and with visions of the high country to be entered on the morrow.

At five o'clock sharp the following morning, our host awakened us with a tray of hot, steaming coffee and a side dish of sweet-sour appetizers. We hastily dressed, gathered together our cameras, field glasses and the like, downed our frugal breakfast and were soon on the precipitous trail which led straight up the side of the gorge behind the hotel into the clouds and snow-capped peaks above. I believe Nakabusa lay at an elevation of approximately 4000 feet while the peaks above rise 9500 to 10,500 feet in height so that this trail rises nearly straight up some five to six thousand feet. It's just a series of steps and sharp switchbacks up and up and up till you begin to think it'll never, never end. Heavy forest covers the

entire slope and gradually the surely changes in type as different levels of elevation are attained. First it's principally a species of pine, then it changes to spruce with handsome displays of large rhododendrons profusely scattered thruout followed by a stately stand of hemlock just below timberline and finally a stunted, matted growth of pine not more than three feet high reaches up to the very base of the barren, granite peaks. A species of birch is also well mixed in with the spruce and hemlock growths and adds a lovely contrast to the dark, somber greens of the conifers.

Long, grayish-green fronds of staghorn(?) lichen, apparently identical with that which I observed in the Sierras of California, hung from the branches of the spruces and hemlocks and lent a deep feeling of hidden mystery and eeriness to the scene. A heavy, damp fog oozed in among the tree trunks and condensed on your hair to drip down into your face. Moss was often a foot thick underfoot. At one place where we paused to rest a frail, pure white lady's slipper lifted its delicate head to gently nod its tender greetings. It was the only orchid I found and I couldn't resist the temptation to collect it in spite of all its fragile beauty and the glory of its habitat. So today it rests in my collection along with the other alpine species a constant and very tangible reminder of that wonderful adventure.

Suzuki, one of the boys, gave up the fight about half way up the gorge and returned to the comforts of the hotel. Takasaki and I continued on and were well rewarded when about 9:30 the fog and clouds parted just for a moment and presented a magnificent expanse of range after range of snow-bedecked peaks. There they lay already within arm's reach so it seemed and we doubled our efforts to top the present ridge and gain a free, unobstructed view from above the tree line. Once clear of the forest the fog bank continued to fill the gorge on our right but stopped short at the crest of the ridge and permitted a clear, open view of the summits on our left. Huge, spectacular cloud masses writhed and settled over the panorama only to lift for a few seconds and then again drew their heavy folds over the faces of the crags. It was truly a highly dramatic scene and for several minutes we stood silently on the crest of the ridge catching our breaths and watching the play unfold.

For some reason we had failed to bring along anything to eat, whatsoever, and by the time we reached tree line Takasaki was beginning to complain bitterly of extreme hunger. I, too, felt the gnawing emptiness but had allayed it to some extent by chewing wads of young, succulent grass of which there was a plenty along the trail. I tried to induce Takasaki to do the same but without success. Grass just wasn't his idea of a satisfactory mountain climber's breakfast. Within thirty minutes of the summit of Mt. Tsubakuro, our ultimate goal, he lay down on a large bank of snow and said he would wait there for me while I went to the top. I hesitated but a moment and then hastened on to the jagged, granite-studded summit.

Patches of wildflowers, the species of which I was wholly unfamiliar with, grew all along the trail right up into the otherwise barren, sterile slopes of decomposed granite. A pure white, star-like flower grew in masses up to the highest elevation and strongly reminded me of pictures I had seen of the edelweiss in the Swiss Alps. I have not yet confirmed this suspicion but still believe it to have been at least a very close relative of that famed species.

Bush warblers were common all along the open ridges at timberline and a little below and an occasional Japanese nutcracker (*nucifraga caryocatactes japonicus*) boldly took his position on a dead branch along the trail to roundly scold us in jay-like raspings. They were fairly common all along the trail from the elevation of Nakabusa up to tree line and naturally reminded me of the Clarke nutcrackers I had seen at the higher elevations in the Sierras. Actions were very similar tho they were streaked in appearance and didn't have the striking black and white color pattern of the California species.

I attained the summit of Mt. Tsubakuro at 10:30 A.M. and spent about half an hour shooting color film of the glorious cloud masses and alpine scenery spread out before me. It was the treat and thrill of a lifetime and the joy and exultation of it all left me not a little bit weak and limp-like.

Reluctantly, I finally turned and wended my way back down the summit, roused Takesaki from his snowy bed and together we started our return trip to Nakabusa - to food and another good, hot bath.

At four o'clock that afternoon we bade our host a fond farewell, shouldered our packs and were off on the 15 mile return to Azume-Aiwake and the train station.

As you may readily see, I didn't have very much time to do a great deal of actual birding either on this trip or the Mt. Fuji hike but rather concentrated my efforts more along the hiking and climbing lines. This was partially due to my limited two weeks allowance of time and also to my great urge to keep on climbing once I am on a mountain, be it Mt. Fuji, Mauna Loa or Mt. Washington. I have promised myself several more excursions into the Japanese Alps region, however, and at least one more exploration trip on the rich lower slopes of Mt. Fuji so that I shall eventually learn the flora and avifauna of the two districts to a far more satisfying degree. After all, one must first become familiar with the lay of the land and learn what to actually expect before he can settle down to any serious observation work.....

Received my "Elepaio" yesterday and was extremely interested in the listed returns of some of the bandings. Also in the note of the hill robin find at Lake Waiau on Mauna Kea. You wondered at their range in their native surroundings. Apparently they do not occur either in Korea or Japan so that I won't have the opportunity to observe them first hand. However, the Caldwells in South China Birds have this to say of the species: "We have found this bird abounding in the underbrush from water level to several thousand feet altitude along the Min basin." Range. - "Mountains of western and southern China. Recorded from Hupeh and Szechuen, resident at 800 to 2,000 meters in summer, 75 to 1,400 in winter..." So, apparently, the species is naturally accustomed to covering a very wide range of elevation.

Saw approximately 500 or more streaked shearwaters (*puffinus leucomelas* (Temmind)) just outside the harbor of Pusan the morning I crossed the Korean Straits from Pusan to Hakata, Kiusiu. They were all flying low over the water alternately flapping their wings and gliding and generally moving out to sea. They reminded me of the large flock of wedge-tailed shearwaters which Dave Woodside and I observed off the Kalalau Valley coast on Kauai on the morning of July 7th., last year. They appear very similar to the wedge-tail while over the water at least: brown above, darker on the head, white underparts, and pink feet and legs which were plainly visible as they rose from resting positions on the water's surface. The large flock was observed at 7:30 A.M. and by 8:30 had fairly well disbanded though straggler individuals and small groups were seen thruout the twelve hour crossing. I still haven't determined on just which islands in the Straits they breed nor have I yet had any luck in finding a Korean fisherman willing to run me out to any of the offshore islands....

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NATURE IN KAPIOLANI PARK

By George C. Munro

For many years I have been interested in the preservation in life and availability for students and sightseers of our native birds and plants. When starting morning walks in Kapiolani Park early in September 1947, it occurred to me that there was an opportunity to move for a botanic garden of the shore-side and mid-country

Hawaiian vegetation. I wrote to one of the daily papers and found response and encouragement from a member of the Park Board, who unfortunately is not now a member of the Board. Recently when exploring parts of the park away from the route previously followed I noticed the kaluha sedge growing in the water in the old stream-bed, or a ditch taking its place, at the east side of the park. It occurred to me "Why not dig out a site for a small lake for the shore birds and dedicate it with an island and surrounding ground as a refuge for Hawaiian Wildlife?" I returned home and wrote a descriptive letter to the Editor of the Honolulu Star-Bulletin and a more sentimental one to the Editor of the Honolulu Advertiser. The Editors were kind and published the letters at once. The response from influential people has been very encouraging. The officers of the Hawaii Audubon Society are taking the matter up with the Parks Board and other institutions and persons interested.

I would advise to ask for three acres and to have the sand scooped out to a depth of about six feet at the deepest. To leave a considerable amount of shallow water, sloping banks and several very small islets. At the northeast corner of the old polo field, taking in a piece of both fields is an ideal site for the lake. A small patch of akulikuli kai at the site would make an island nesting place for the mudhen and Hawaiian duck if left just as it is. The plants have been recently cut but are growing nicely again and will reach to three feet or more high. Close by is a patch of akulikuli, the plant now covering parts of Popoia Island with a lovely green carpet which if covering a small island in the refuge might prove an attraction to the stilts to come and nest there, or a bare island might be left for that species. By the bird park is a pond with tall reeds which could be drawn on for a patch in the water among which the coots would anchor their nests. These four species could there hatch their young safe from cats and mongooses. In the watercourse by the site is the kaluha, a tall sedge, a patch of which would furnish additional material for the coot's massive floating nests as well as shelter for the swimming birds. The native seaside heliotrope, used medicinally by the Hawaiians and the yellow flowered nohu also grow in the vicinity to add easily to the vegetation part of the refuge if it can be got going before these plants are destroyed in the improvements now going on in the park.

If the lagoon and islands are made the birds will come to them. The coot and mudhen in recent years inhabited ponds close to the Moana Park. The aukuu will certainly come to small fish in the pond. Dragon flies will lay their eggs on the reeds and the stilts will be attracted by their larvae in the water. I have just learned from Mr. Ward Walker, Assistant Manager of the H.C. and S. Co. that 26 stilts were seen in No. 10 reservoir at Puunene on Maui. They visit the different reservoirs there. This species had long deserted Maui but as they are increasing on Oahu and their feeding grounds are being restricted they are spreading to other islands. Small fish could be released in the pond and an underwater plant upon which the coots feed could also be established there. The kolea will congregate on the shore and in the shallow water in the evenings and probably roost on the bare islands. They inhabit the park in the daytime. The pintail and shoveller migratory ducks and other straggling species will rest safely in the refuge. The nene has been mentioned. It could also be kept there if the lake is fenced which may be necessary anyway to keep dogs and vandals at bay. The bird life of the pond will be increasingly interesting. The plant life should be exclusively Hawaiian and there are many shore-side and mid-country trees and plants that will grow there and that few people see at present.

BIRD WALK:

November field trip: The shore birds drew us to Kahuku again on November 14th. We repeated the usual pattern of our trip in that area, walking from the air strip across the sands to the pond. Shooting had been going on, and the birds were much more wary, and less easy to study than they had been in September. Unoyo picked up a wounded plover, which Mr. Dunn and Nathalie later took to the Honolulu Zoo for care. (At last report the plover was doing well, and seems contented in one of the cages.) At the pond we were delighted to find a flock of pintail ducks, as well as coot.

After leaving Kahuku, Ulupau Head was visited. The boobies are nesting again. Three nestlings in down were observed, and a large number of immature birds were noted. We watched from the edge until the lengthening shadows warned us of the distance still to be traversed.

Red-footed booby.....	500 (estimate)
Coot.....	300 (estimate)
Pintail.....	200 (estimate)
Ruddy turnstone.....	34
Pacific Golden Plover...	20
Stilt.....	18
Night heron.....	15
Ricebird.....	9
Frigate bird.....	4
Wandering tattler.....	3
Gallinule.....	2
Sanderling.....	1

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JANUARY ACTIVITIES:

BIRD WALK: January 9th, to Pa Lehua, Waianae Range. Meet at the Library of Hawaii at 8:30 a.m.

MEETING: January 17th, 1949. Library of Hawaii auditorium, at 7:30 p.m. Program to be announced later.

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