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NATURE IN KAPIOLANI PARK

By George C. Munro

My attention in the park during December has been mostly taken up with the proposed Hawaiian Wildlife Refuge there. Some progress has been made with this. The idea has found favor with heads of departments in the park and there seems a probability that about five acres can be secured for this purpose. The Hawaii Audubon Society is having plans made for the pond and surroundings to be placed before the Park Board when completed. Opinions have been expressed that the pond be large, up to an acre or more. This of course is very desirable, as giving room for a fair sheet of water and islands. An island, or better, several islands, is a necessity. A small pond would certainly need to be fenced but this might not be necessary with a large one.

One island could be built up somewhat and covered with pili grass (*Andropogon contortus*). In this the native duck (*Anas wyvilliana wyvilliana*) might be induced to nest as it does on Mokulua Island, off Lanikai, Oahu. Some pili grass still growing in the park could be used to start this cover. A bare flat island with some scattered rocks on its surface would be an inducement to the Pacific golden plover (*Pluvialis dominica fulva*) and the ruddy turnstone (*Arenaria interpres interpres*) to gather and roost there as they do on islands off the coast of Oahu. Low swamp weeds in shallow water and some rocks along the shore would attract the wandering tattler (*Heteroculus incanus*). The sanderling might also find a stretch of sandy shore attractive.

In 1946 I spent a few weeks in Sacramento, California, and took walking exercise in the beautiful William Land Park. It was interesting to watch the wild ducks and other wild birds on the ponds there. There were several large broods of mallard ducklings, just hatched, and one brood was on a quite small pond. The ponds were unfenced and the birds unafraid and evidently unmolested. I think our young people could be trained not to molest the birds in the pond. If other communities can do it we can.

It is hoped that the Hawaii Audubon Society can be allowed some latitude in the selection and distribution of the native plants in the surroundings of the pond. Its members by their bird walks have become familiar with the habits and needs of the birds and have gained insight into the kind of plants surrounding lagoons and seacoasts. If the Hawaiian Wildlife Refuge becomes an accomplished fact and the Audubon Society is given some say in the conduct of the Refuge, it will need a consulting botanist to give advice as to what plants are native and what are not. I advise that Miss Marie C. Neal and Miss Constance E. Hartt be invited to act in this capacity.

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A great change has taken place in Kapiolani Park since September 1947. It was then dry and parched, suffering from neglect inevitable during the war. The other parks nearer town naturally received first attention when the war ended.

When a new water system over the park was put into operation the surface quickly changed. This followed by the winter rains has brought all parts not too deeply shaded a good covering of green vegetation which is periodically mowed. The grass surface on calm mornings loaded with heavy dew presents in itself a pretty sight.

The row of trees between the two open fields has been removed. This from the south end of the old polo field has opened up a beautiful scenic view of the Koolau Range beyond. Looking across the level dew-covered grassy flat, over the fringe of Round Top with Pacific Heights in the distance, the view is very fine. But on a clear morning under the light of the rising sun the serrated summit of the Koolau Range stands up conspicuously silhouetted against the sky; the tops of Mt. Olympus and Puu Konahuanui showing above the lesser peaks enhance the picture, making it altogether a sight to be remembered.

The rainfall of the storm of January 16 and 17, 1949, was remarkable in many respects. First, the amount of water that lay on the open field for several days. Second, the almost complete absence of silt deposited by the standing and receding water. Third, the dryness and firmness of the surface of the ground as soon as the water left it. The last two are wonderfully fine conditions for a lowlying recreation park.

The prospective site of the Hawaiian Wildlife Refuge was not injured in any way by the water. It indicated that this part is about the lowest in the park and this is rather to its advantage than otherwise. The lone algaroba tree at the site shared the fate of several others at the south end of the park which were blown down in the storm. It was a fine thornless kiawe. If it had stayed it might have made a day roosting place for the aukuu that might frequent the pond. The only foreign trees now left at the site are two or three date palms.

The effect on the feeding and other habits of the birds by the improvements in the park and the late storms will be gone into later.

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KANAHA POND, KAHULUI, MAUI

By Clinton S. Childs
(A Tuesday Evening Forum Broadcast from KMVI
January 25, 1949)

Good evening KMVI listeners! This evening I bring to you another kind of Community problem with a suggestion out of which I hope you can get a great deal of personal pleasure even though you do not have to worry, or join anything, or do anything to do so. We talk a great deal about public beaches and parks and recreation grounds. We form committees to study the problem and write reports about the money needed and how much good more and better recreation for the public would accomplish. But I wonder how many people have thought about the ready recreation there is right in front of us which can be had by going out and getting it. For instance, the things that may be seen and done at Kanaha Pond, Kahului, with a little cooperation.

Kanaha pond used to be a bird reserve before the Pearl Harbor incident; its owners, H. C. & S. Company saw to that. Whether or not hunting goes on there now, I could not say, although I have heard gun shots from that vicinity recently. If

restrictions were taken off with the departure of Naval control and taking over by the Territory, it should be easy to get them put on again. How many people take glances at the bird-life there as they drive or walk by, or stop their cars and watch a while, instead of speeding up to 50 miles an hour to take advantage of the fine boulevard that runs past the Pond? Right now there are some very interesting birds to be seen there and some fine opportunities to gain very entertaining information about our feathered wild-life and the geo-economics of their existence. Here is recreation that is pleasant, costs nothing and can be enjoyed by a little study or deeper study if you become deeply interested. Rich and poor, and the forgotten man (sometimes known as the middle class), can all enjoy this opportunity without cost.

Let me illustrate what I mean. If you will walk around the pond or look through a pair of field glasses you will soon see one of Hawaii's very beautiful native birds. He will be standing on a pair of long, thin, pink legs which are about ten or twelve inches in length themselves. Above this handsome pair of legs you will see a long oval body covered underneath with feathers so white that they could be called "China white." This whiteness will extend upward on the underside of a fairly long neck atop which will be a round head with a black bill, $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 inches in length. Contrasted with the sheer white of the breast and underparts will be the blackest of black feathers covering the wings, back, head and neck, except for a thin line of white from head to tail which can only be seen when the bird is in flight. The tail is smoky gray; around the eye is a white ring. There must be a hundred of these birds at Kanaha pond now, judging by the number of them I saw last Sunday. The name of this handsome gentleman and his wife, is "Hawaiian Stilt," and he really walks about on a pair of stilts - pink ones. He has a couple of Hawaiian names too: AEO, or Kukuluaeo, referring to "one who walks on stilts."

What did I mean when I used that big word, "Geo-economics," a moment ago? A simple thing - the bird's relation to the land and its economics. Mr. Stilt and his family are very useful birds economically although they never heard the word; to them it's a matter of filling the ever empty "tummie." But in getting their vitamin A's and B's and C's, roughage and what not, Mr. and Mrs. Stilt and all the little Stilts eat up thousands of the beetle larvae which in turn eat up the food of the pond mullet. So, more Stilts, fewer beetle larvae and beetles, and more pond mullet. Here is the sorry part of Mr. and Mrs. Stilt and family. There aren't many of them left because they are a game bird and allowed to be shot in their nesting season. This in spite of the fact that the bird has a very "fishoily" flavor when eaten and is not very palatable, unless one has developed a liking for fish oil.

Mr. George C. Munro, in his book Birds of Hawaii, says (in 1944), "The species is now reduced to about two hundred birds." As much as I respect Mr. Munro as a scientist and student of bird life, I doubt the story is as bad as that, because as I say, my estimate made on the basis of a count around about one quarter of Kanaha Pond, was that there must have been a hundred of these birds there last Sunday. There are some other marshes on Maui and I know there are some on Molokai, Oahu, and Kauai. Undoubtedly we have received flights of them on Maui, due to their feeding grounds at Damon Ponds, Oahu, being filled in, but there are still considerable numbers of them there, too.

There is another white-breasted bird at Kanaha Pond these days; he may be found there every year from October to April or May. This is the pintail duck, a migrant from the Mainland every year. When he gets good and fat and rested and

begins to think about setting up housekeeping, off he goes to Alaska or Northern Canada to join hundreds of thousands of his kind in nesting on the tundras of those lands. As you drive by, or stop a moment, you may see a whole flock of what looks like good-size snowballs, or large puff-balls shining in the sun. These are the pin-tails, so-called because of two thin feathers sticking out by themselves behind a short sharp tail. They are almost twice as large as the Stilt and certainly weigh more than twice as much. They are rated as twenty-six to twenty-eight inches in length. Nature, of course, has made the male much more handsome than the female. Doesn't she always? His underfeathers are white; his head is a glossy green and purple, breaking to a white line down each side of the neck, and there are silver, green, purple and black in his wing, back and tail feathers. Mama Pin-tail is grayish and dusky brown and has streaks of yellow-brown. I will admit she has a rather attractive head topped with a ruddy-brown, and also has two alert "come-hither" eyes. But then she has to hide herself and her little ducklings from hawks, weasels, foxes, wolves, wolverines and other enemies of her nesting country, so we may allow her to be demure and less colorful.

Another bird that wanders and nests far afield from Hawaii Kanaha and back every year is the Golden Upland Plover. It is said that in the 1870's and 1880's this bird used to fly from his nesting grounds in Alaska and Northern Canada in such great flocks that the whole sky would be black with them. Hunters used to stand on the beaches and in a short time would bring down so many that they would carry them away in gunnysacks (or sugar bags if you prefer). He is now protected under the Federal Migratory Bird act. All Fall and Winter the plover has been busily digging up grub worms and pouncing on any worms here in Hawaii at Kanaha and other ponds and on the upper slopes of our mountains. He gets so fat and oily that if he is shot while flying he is apt to break open when he falls. In getting ready for his honeymoon flight across the Pacific 2,500 miles to the North, he had dug up and swallowed down his little red lane, enough grub worms to destroy a considerable tonnage of sugar cane or cabbage. He is therefore a valuable bird, economically, for our farmers and ranchers. His Hawaiian name is Kolea.

What a wonderful study in energy and aerodynamics birds are! This little plover weighing perhaps six or seven ounces makes the flight from here to the Mainland, more than 2,000 miles, probably in thirty hours, or 700 miles a day! He is one of the swiftest of flyers. Stand behind a tree when he is coming in for a landing and you will hear his taut wings make a noise like a large, tight rubber band stretched in a wind. He leaves us almost on the first of May every year, wearing his honeymoon plumage, white underparts against a coal black ribbon drawn around his throat, eyes and down his sides.

People passing by this Pond in the morning or just before dusk may hear a hoarse squawk and notice a large grayish bird heavily flapping his way to or from the pond. This is another native of Hawaii - the black crowned heron, or to give him his Hawaiian names, "Aukuu" or Aukuu-kahili." The "kahili" part of his Hawaiian name refers to two creamy white plumes trailing backward across his shoulders from a point above his eyes; they are seven to eight inches long. Here is another useful bird, economically, since his food consists of mice, dragon-fly larvae, water beetles and occasionally, small fish. Watch him closely and you will see what looks like a hump of gray bird standing spraddled on long yellow-green legs with his head hunched back on his shoulders. You might think he had had a bad night and felt terrible, just able to keep up by spreading his feet wide apart. But suddenly there is a quick movement, a neck seven or eight inches long stretches out, a head and long heavy sharp bill darts into the water and is pulled out again;

the head is thrown up and a couple of gulps follow which tell you that at least a part of breakfast or dinner had gone down into the place where it will be separated into all the necessary vitamins and made into energy.

Looked at close at hand or through glasses you will see that Aukuu has beautiful blue-black feathers on the upper part of his wings; that he had greenish-brown, softest of soft feathers on his back, and varying shades of gray and white feathers underneath. But take care, if you happen to have one of these birds in hand, because that heavy black bill of two-and-a-half inches strikes a wicked blow which could easily tear out your eye or a piece of flesh. Mr. and Mrs. Aukuu commonly fly up into the valleys or gulches in small colonies, such as Waikapu, where there is heavy foliage, when they want to raise a family. You will know by the squawks and heavy flapping of wings if you approach near such a colony. They usually rest in the thick part of the tree growth during the day, either near their feeding grounds, or in the valleys.

(To be concluded)

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TO ELIZABETH CARR and the ice-bound birds of the Pacific Southwest coast, the Hawaii Audubon Society sends its sympathy for the inclement weather. Mrs. Carr writes: "...The record-breaking cold weather here has surprised the birds no end. In San Francisco there is a lake which the gulls have always claimed for their own--an inlet somewhere. It froze over for the first time recently. The gulls flew down as usual, but instead of alighting on water they bumped down on hard ice and went skidding along on their tail feathers. Crowds of gulls stood around scolding and trying to figure it out. (I'm not an eye-witness to this, but I got it through hear-say.)"

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GRACE E. BARSTOW (Mrs. Robert Cushman) MURPHY's very interesting series of articles on the scientific expedition to the lonely and unexplored Snares Islands, south of New Zealand continues in the November and December, 1948, numbers of Natural History.

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MARCH ACTIVITIES:

BIRD WALK: March 13th, to Pa Lehua, Waianae Range, above Ewa plantation.
Meet at the Library of Hawaii at 8:30 a.m.

MEETING: March 21st, Library of Hawaii Auditorium, at 7:30 PM.
A Territorial naturalist has been asked to speak on bird sanctuaries. Watch the daily papers for final details.

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