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Return of the Peale's Peregrine Falcon to Waikiki, Hawai'i September 30, 2021 - April 30, 2022

By Michael Walther

The following is an update on Michael Walther's observations of a Peale's Peregrine Falcon in Waikiki. He started sharing the falcon's story in last year's July/August issue of the 'Elepaio (81:4). Michael is a well-known photographer and author of books about Hawaiian nature and of articles in birding and nature publications.

We thank him for providing several lead articles for the 'Elepaio over the years as author and co-author (see 'Elepaio 55:6, 'Elepaio 66:5, 'Elepaio 68:6, 'Elepaio 71:4).

On September 28, 2021 at 7:30 AM, I observed the fresh remains of a White Tern on the extreme south end of the concrete ribbon that surrounds the upper part of the Kalia Tower at Hilton Hawaiian Village. The following day, a second White Tern's remains were observed about 15 yards from the end of the ribbon. It seemed likely these were caught by a Peregrine Falcon but I did not see the falcon until the morning of September 30, 2021. The Peale's Peregrine stayed on the ribbon at the location of the second White Tern for about 5 minutes. At 6:05 PM the Peregrine was observed and photographed back on the Kalia Tower Ribbon very close to the White Tern remains. At 6:30 PM the falcon was observed in the center of the upper ribbon which is above the highest floor. This was an occasional roosting location for this falcon when it was observed from November 23, 2020 - May 31, 2021. At 6:35 PM the falcon flew east towards Fort Ruger Park on Ala Moana Blvd.

All observations were from our condo that is approximately 90 meters above the Ala Wai Canal and has a 180-degree view of the southern Ko'olau Mountains from Koko Crater to Punchbowl on the mauka (mountain) side. From the makai (ocean) side kitchen window, I can see from the Moana Sheraton to the Hilton Hawaiian village, Waikiki, and several kilometers offshore.

This is definitely the same Peregrine that was observed frequently at the Hilton from November 23, 2020 - May 31, 2021. This falcon used the same perches and roosts as it did during its first stay and was observed hopping down into the recessed areas below the ribbon drinking water as it had also done previously. The falcon might have over-summered in Hawai'i but no ebird observations for Peregrines were recorded during the summer of 2021 and I never observed it. Since I thought it had probably left Hawai'i, my efforts to look for the falcon at the Hilton were minimal. It is possible the bird migrated from Hawai'i and returned.

From September 28, 2021 to April 30, 2022, I observed the Peale's Peregrine falcon on 72 of 214 days. Most of my observations were at the Kalia Tower of the Hilton Hawaiian Village either early in the morning while it was at its roost or after sunset when it returned to the same roosting locations.

I had 158 total observations including; perched (95), flying (48) and eating (15). These observations were at the following locations; Hilton (98), Ala Wai Canal area (5) and over the ocean (1). Some areas had more than one observation on the same day. Most observations were between 5:00 am and 7:00 am (55) and from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm (28). The Peregrine was observed eating White Terns,



Adult Peale's Peregrine Falcon perched on the end of a rain drainage duct at the Kalia Tower, Hilton Hawaiian Village on January 6, 2022. Note the un-streaked breast. Photo was taken from 1,200 yards with a 500mm lens plus 2-2x converters = 2,000 mm lens, photo credit Michael Walther.

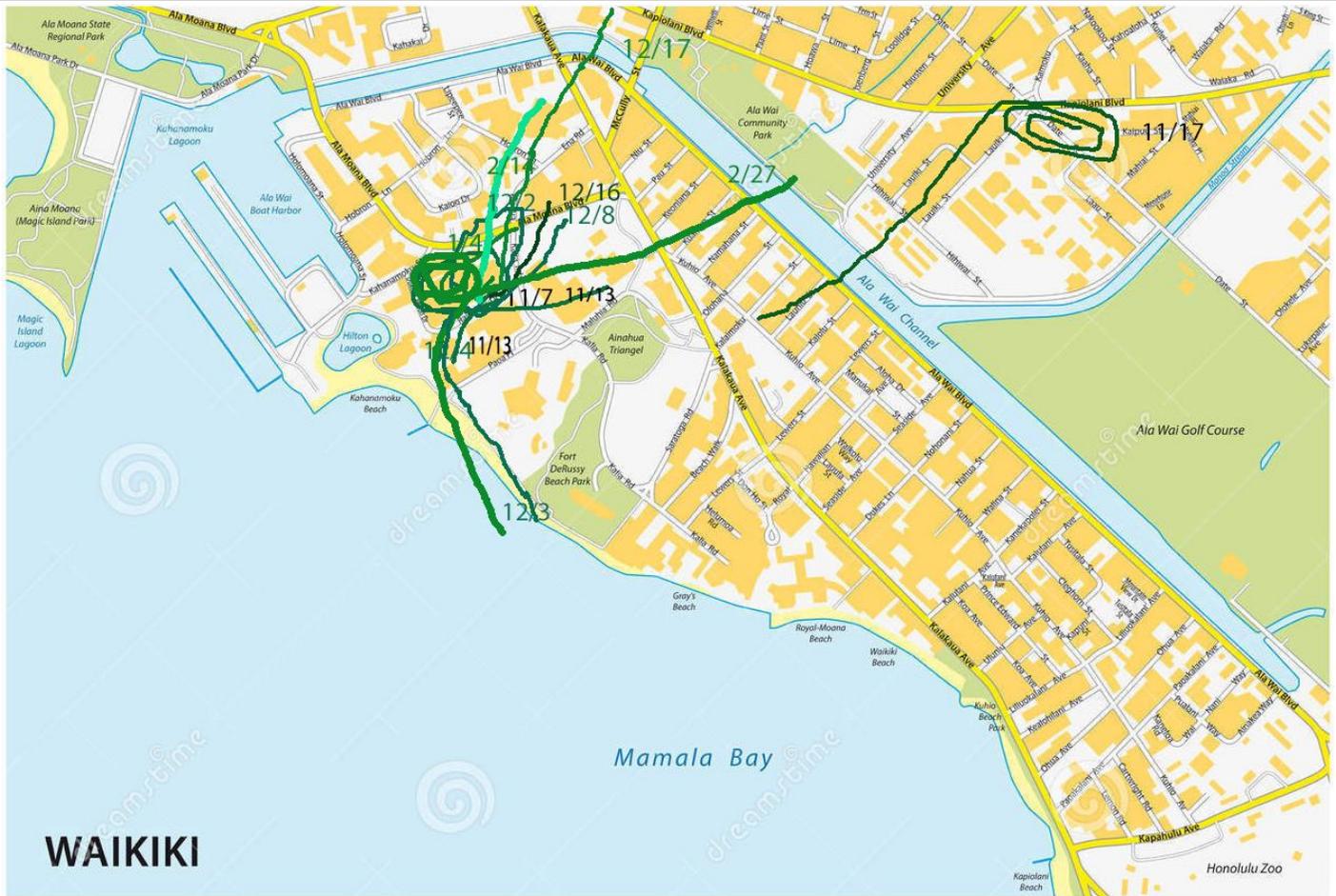
Rock Doves, Spotted Doves and Zebra Doves. This falcon continued to use the well-lit night sky in Waikiki to fly in, long after sunset.

There was a very noticeable change in the falcon's behavior in my observation area between its first stay from November 23, 2020 to May 31, 2021 and after it returned in September 2021. The Peregrine had attained adult plumage and 95% of the observations were at the Hilton Hawaiian Village Kalia Tower. It was rarely seen flying over Waikiki, Ala Wai Canal or Moiliili.

When it was a newly arrived juvenile it seemed to be more adventurous and made many exploratory flights in a wide area around Waikiki and Moiliili. Perhaps, it is possible, as its hunting skills increased and it knew the Waikiki and surrounding areas very well, it no longer needed to venture far from its base at the Hilton.

It seemed to be able to easily find enough food close to the Hilton towers. While most of this bird's observed activity was at the Hilton, it is very likely this falcon flew over the Ko'olau mountains to hunt at the Nu'upia Ponds area in Kaneohe on several occasions. EBird reports of a Peregrine at Nu'upia were made on December 21, 2021, January 11, 2022 and January 23, 2022. On December 17, 2021, I watched the Peregrine flying above Tantalus going towards the Ko'olau summit during a rarely observed long-distance flight.

On February 15, 2022 an adult Peregrine Falcon was reported in the foothills of the Wai'anae range at Lualualei. At 5:15 pm February 27, 2022, I observed the Peregrine flying southwest over the Ala Wai Canal going towards the Hilton Hawaiian Village. It circled above the Kalia Tower then stooped at a 45-degree angle towards the shoreline and disappeared on the ocean side of the Hale Koa Hotel.



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Figure 1: Observed flights of the Peale's Peregrine Falcon October 2021 - February 2022. Note the concentration of short flights around the Hilton Hawaiian Village and the lack of more distant flights over the Ala Wai Canal and Moiliili.

On March 8, 2022, a Peregrine Falcon was reported at Nuuli'i Reservoir. It is very possible this was the Waikiki falcon and that it moved from the Hilton area to the west side of O'ahu in late February. Peregrine Falcons overwintering in Hawai'i are known to be observed throughout most or all of an island¹. Because this falcon is un-banded and has no GPS tracker, it's possible distant flights on O'ahu or inter-island flights cannot be confirmed. Amazingly, after an absence of sixty-one days from Waikiki, the Peale's Peregrine Falcon was observed perched on the lower concrete ribbon of the Hilton Hawaiian Village Kalia Tower at 6:00 am on April 30, 2022. It remained perched for ten minutes then flew over the Ala Wai Canal towards the Century Center building on Kalakaua Avenue. Last season's (2020 - 2021) previous record setting stay of

189 days was surpassed this season (2021 - 2022) when the Peale's Peregrine was present in Hawai'i for a new record of 214 days!

It will be interesting to see if this Peregrine Falcon returns to Waikiki in the autumn of 2022?

CITATION

1. Pyle, R.L., and P. Pyle. 2017. The Birds of the Hawaiian Islands: Occurrence, History, Distribution, and Status. B.P. Bishop Museum, Honolulu, HI, U.S.A. Version 2 (1 January 2017) <http://hbs.bishopmuseum.org/birds/rlp-monograph>

KEEP CATS SAFE INDOORS
 Keep Cats *and* Birds Safe

Attracting Endangered Seabirds to a Tiny Island

Project Begins to Enhance Recovery and Increase Knowledge

The following is a news release first published by the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) on April 26, 2022, on <https://dlnr.hawaii.gov/blog/2022/04/26/nr22-057/>.

Seabirds nesting on three-acre Moku‘ae‘ae Island, just off Kīlauea Point, have one of the best views of natural and manmade features in Hawai‘i. The iconic Kīlauea Point Lighthouse is in full-view atop the rugged cliffs, often inhabited by thousands of seabirds.

Last week workers from the DLNR Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW), the Kaua‘i Endangered Seabird Recovery Project (KESRP), and volunteers from Archipelago Research and Conservation (ARC), took the first steps to create a new colony of Band-rumped Storm Petrels on Moku‘ae‘ae. The species is listed as endangered both at the federal and state level. The work is intended to also enhance the colony of Bulwer’s Petrels, already breeding on the island.



Kīlauea Point Lighthouse, photo credit Susanne Spiessberger

On Friday, just up the road from the lighthouse, workers loaded nest boxes for the birds into large canvass bags. Earlier a helicopter had dropped three people on the island, and then made five additional trips to sling-load supplies over.

The boxes are set out as burrows, with the hope they will become nesting homes for two species of seabirds. “For these nest enhancing projects, we expect our actions will help increase breeding success for the species, increase their breeding ranges, and increase our own capacity to study these enigmatic species,” explained Dilek Sahin, KESRP project coordinator.

The team set up fifty nest boxes and calling systems to try and attract the Band-rumped Storm Petrels. A new colony, created by this social attraction, will make research more accessible and management activities more effective. The boxes were built specifically to allow these small petrels in, while keeping the larger Wedge-tailed Shearwaters out. Researchers say this will help reduce “inter-specific” competition, helping to increase nesting success for the target seabirds.



Moku‘ae‘ae; Kīlauea Point Lighthouse on the right side, photo credit DLNR.

Sheri S. Mann, the DOFAW Kaua‘i Branch Manager was one of the driving forces behind the Lehua Island Restoration Project. The much larger Lehua, like Moku‘ae‘ae, is also managed as a State Wildlife Sanctuary and is now free of rats which had a long history of devouring seabird eggs and chicks.

“On Lehua we are now in the recovery and monitoring phase. Native seabirds have returned in larger numbers (compared to pre-rat eradication), and native plants are being allowed to grow without have rodents gnawing on them,” she noted. The grant supporting rare seabird and recovery on Moku‘ae‘ae is also covering additional work on

Lehua, including placement of thirty nest boxes for Band-rumped Storm-Petrels. On both islands, trail cameras will be used to monitor activity and to provide scientific data to maintain, protect, and facilitate seabird re-colonization of the islands.



"Band-rumped Storm-Petrel" by JulioM. is marked with CC BY-NC-ND 2.0. To view the terms, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd-nc/2.0/jp/?ref=openverse>

Dr. André Raine, Science Director of ARC, did extensive work on Lehua, and was on hand on Moku‘ae‘ae to accept sling-loads of burrow boxes and sandbags to hold them in place. The chopper lowered one load to where Raine was standing on a small spit of sand surrounded by rugged rocks...the preferred breeding habitat for Bulwer’s Petrels, described as a secretive bird. It is hoped that the nest boxes deployed in these areas will provide additional protected nesting sites for the existing Bulwer’s Petrel colony. No rats have been detected on Moku‘ae‘ae, but Barn Owls have. Researchers find bird carcasses on every trip to the islet. An integral part of the project is controlling the invasive, non-native owls.

Sahin concluded, “With our sound system (social attraction), and safer burrows we want to create the impression that Band-rumped Storm-Petrels are already nesting on Moku‘ae‘ae. We have created an attractive system for the birds and because these species have high apparent site-fidelity once they come to the island to nest, we’re hoping they’ll stick with their home site year-after-year.”

KŌLEA COUNT UPDATE

Most of the kōlea spending their winter months in Hawai‘i have made it already to Alaska by the end of April. But, there are always some “slow pokes” (if there is such thing, considering it only takes them an estimated three days to fly from Hawai‘i to Alaska).

This guy was the last of the 30 birds, which were banded and tagged with small, lightweight transmitters by kōlea researcher Wally Johnson this spring, to leave Hawai‘i. HAS president Susan Scott took a photo of him at National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific at Punchbowl Crater on April 26. He transmitted GPS coordinates from Punchbowl once more a couple of days later, but attempts to find and check on him were unsuccessful. What a relief when we got news from Wally Johnson that this handsome guy was recorded at 159.28569W 58.7572098N (made it to Alaska)!



Tagged and banded male kōlea at Punchbowl Cemetery on April 26, 2022, photo credit Susan Scott.

MANU-O-KŪ UPDATE

This year’s Manu O Kū (MOK) Festival in honor of Honolulu’s official bird was held at the Coronation Lawn of ‘Iolani Palace on May 7. Visitors could enjoy guided walks by Rich Downs and Sherine Boomla to spot nesting White Terns and chicks on the Palace grounds, as well as entertainment, games, crafts, prizes, etc.



Left to right: Pat Moriyasu, Susanne Spiessberger, Wendy Johnson, Michelle Hester, David Hyrenbach, and Susan Scott at the MOK festival HAS booth, photo credit Wendy Kuntz.

FSP UPDATE

We opened Freeman Seabird Preserve (FSP) on a couple of special evenings as a thank-you to habitat restoration volunteers for their hard work earlier this year. The events were dubbed “Flight Delight” by our president Susan Scott, and a delight it was for sure!

We were able to watch dozens of Wedge-tailed Shearwaters soaring through the evening sky, almost on a collision course with us, before they waddled back to their nests and filled the air with an amazing sound portfolio.



“Flight Delight” evening, photo credit Susanne Spiessberger.

After the sun set, HAS Board member Alice Roberts pointed out the first objects in the night sky, and we could enjoy the wedgie’s company for a little while longer.



Our new seasonal signs, designed by Greg Hester Graphics, are attached to the FSP gate and explain what’s going on at the preserve year-round, photo credit Susan Scott.

A RESOLUTION

While HAS is committed to the protection and conservation of Kawainui-Hāmākua Marsh and shares concerns over the long-term planning for the area and potential impacts to ecological function and biological resources, the HAS Board of Directors has voted to withdraw as a plaintiff in the litigation against the State of Hawai‘i regarding the approval of the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Kawainui-Hāmākua Marsh Master Plan Project <https://dlnr.hawaii.gov/wildlife/kawainui-hamakua-eis/>.

We appreciate the hard work and shared vision of our fellow conservation organizations, Hawaii’s Thousand Friends and Lani-Kailua Outdoor Circle. The decision was not easy and is not a reflection on the merits of the case, but rather the fulfillment of a recently passed resolution by the HAS Board at a meeting held on April 18, 2022:

Whereas, the Hawaii Audubon Society, by vote of its Board of Directors, establishes an organizational policy to place primary emphasis on seeking cooperative and collaborative engagement with the public and with government agencies and non-governmental organizations in the furtherance of our mission objectives.

Resolved, that this Society will avoid litigation as an environmental protection strategy and not be a party to individual or class action lawsuits unless such action is approved by a 2/3 majority of the sitting Board of Directors.

Hawaii Audubon Society Membership and Donations

The mission of the Hawaii Audubon Society (HAS) is to foster community values that result in the protection and restoration of native wildlife and ecosystems, and conservation of natural resources through education, science and advocacy in Hawai'i and the Pacific. Founded in 1939, HAS is an independent nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization and does not receive dues paid to the National Audubon Society. Thank you for supporting your local Hawaii Audubon Society.

Going forward, all annual memberships end on Dec 31. As a courtesy, all 2022 memberships (new or renewed this calendar year) will expire Dec 31, 2023. See details on <https://hiaudubon.org/membership>.

Please choose your membership level on our website <https://hiaudubon.org/membership>:

- \$15 Hawaii Audubon Society Student Membership
- \$25 Hawaii Audubon Society Regular Membership
- \$40 Hawaii Audubon Society Family Membership
- \$100 Hawaii Audubon Society Supporting Membership

Or, make a tax-deductible donation in any amount on <https://hiaudubon.org/donate/>.

International membership is now only \$25.

All members will receive by email the bimonthly 'Elepaio journal, with peer-reviewed scientific articles and local environmental news and activities. To request the 'Elepaio by mail (**not available to international members**), contact hiaudsoc@gmail.com.

Mahalo for your support and commitment to protecting Hawai'i's native wildlife!

Announcements

Upcoming Events and Field Trips

For regular updates, check out
<http://www.hiaudubon.org/events>
and/or our social media sites

Welcome Home to Shorebirds

Paikō Lagoon Wildlife Sanctuary

September 10, 2022, 9 am

Enjoy fall at Paikō! Let's welcome our unique and beautiful migratory shorebirds as they return from their extensive travel to enjoy the Hawaiian Islands for the fall and winter months.

RSVP: MermaidsHI@aol.com

Leader: Alice Roberts

29th Hawai'i Conservation Conference

July 15 –22, 2022, virtual

This year's theme is Kūlia i ka huliau — Striving for change. Visit our virtual booth and connect with us. For more information, go to

<https://www.hawaiiconservation.org/conference/2022-conservation-conference/>

Wildest Show Summer Concerts at the Honolulu Zoo

July 6, 2022, 4.30-7pm

For more information go to our Facebook and Instagram accounts closer to the date:

<https://www.instagram.com/hawaiiaudubonsociety/> and
<https://www.facebook.com/HawaiiAudubonSociety>

New field check card

An updated version of our popular field check card, accompanying the 7th edition of our *Hawaii's Birds* book, is now available to download for free on:
<https://hiaudubon.org/birding-in-hawaii/>.

Get outside and start checking off!

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Table of Contents

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Return of the Peale’s Peregrine Falcon to Waikiki, Hawai‘i September 30, 2021 - April 30, 2022	24
Attracting Endangered Seabirds to a Tiny Island	28
Kōlea Count Update	29
Manu-o-Kū Update	29
Freeman Seabird Preserve Update	30
A Resolution	30
Announcements	31