

Kōlea Quest 23: A Hatchling Bonanza

by Susan Scott

The following article was first published on July 6, 2023 on <https://www.koleacount.org/kolea-quest-23-a-hatchling-bonanza/>.

Twenty Hawai'i Audubon Society members left Nome last week (June 26, 2023) uttering a phrase few Alaska prospectors get to say: "We struck gold!"

Gold chicks, that is. During a trip that organizers named "Kōlea Quest 23," four Pacific Golden Plover chicks thrilled us to our toes by hatching about two hours before we had to board the plane for home.



Chicks hatch in the order the female laid the eggs. The top center chick, still wet, was the last to hatch. The parents immediately pick up the empty eggshells and drop them far from the nest, since the white shell interiors are a visible clue to predators. The flesh-colored bumps are the chicks' long, adult-size legs folded beneath them, © Susan Scott.

We knew the odds of finding kōlea chicks were low given

that shorebird nests are incredibly hard to find on the vast Alaska tundra. Also, the hatching had to be within our five-day visit, and even if they hatched, we had to get to the chicks before they left the nest and started running round eating insects and berries. Kōlea parents warm and protect their newly hatched chicks, but do not feed them.

Our chick-viewing chances fell even further when Nome resident and guide, Carol Gales, of Roam Nome, sent pictures of area roads in early June. Snowfall this year, she emailed, was heavy and the thaw was late.

Optimism ruled, however, because we had plover expert, Wally Johnson, with us as well as his long-time assistants, Nancy and Paul Brusseau of Anchorage.



Late snowfall leaves little for newly arrived kōlea to eat, © Jim Dory.

We weren't off the plane an hour when those researchers were off looking for plovers. Over the next couple of days the team found three kōlea couples, but only two nests.

Hawai‘i’s people-friendly kōlea become extraordinarily wary in their tundra nesting grounds because it’s loaded with predators. Foxes, jaegers, ravens, and raptors are constantly on the prowl for tasty eggs and scurrying chicks.



© Susan Scott

One of the two discovered plover nests was near a road and easy to check, but as the days wore on, and the eggs hadn’t hatched, we resigned ourselves to not seeing chicks.



The shallow puddles that lie between grassy tufts harbor mosquitoes and other insects that nourish birds and their chicks, © Susan Scott.

Even so, the plover eggs were a fine sight to behold, and any visit to remote Nome, located on the Seward Peninsula, is a grand success with its spectacular plants, animals, and jaw-

dropping scenery. And then nature gave us a living, breathing gift: The search team texted a picture of four hatchlings, and we had just enough time for all of us to get a quick look. Nome is famous for gold seekers, but for us plover lovers, those tiny golden bodies were our own special bonanza.

For more about Kōlea Quest 23, with more photos, go to <https://www.susanscott.net/alaska-kolea-quest-2023/>.

He ‘Io Au

An All Eyes on ‘Io Community Project

By the Big Island ‘Io Team

- Amy Durham, UH Hilo Graduate Student and Research Assistant with the San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance;
- Kate Maley, Raptor Technician, RCUH/DOFAW - East Hawai‘i Wildlife;
- Ande Buskirk, Information & Education Specialist, Hawai‘i Island Forestry & Wildlife.

He ‘Io Au is an initiative currently in its incubation phase, nurtured by passionate advocates of ‘io. Our mission is to hatch ideas for enhancing education, fostering community bonds, and strengthening relationships to our endemic Hawai‘i island hawk.

Why do we want to start a community project about ‘io?

As our only remaining endemic hawk in Hawai‘i, ‘io are linked to many aspects of our islands’ legacy. They hold significant cultural importance as ‘aumakua and serve ecologically as indicators of environmental well-being. Since ‘io are present in many of our daily lives, this makes them an ideal candidate for building connection to our native species and natural heritage. This is particularly relevant in altered landscapes where such interactions have become increasingly scarce.

Although federally delisted from the Endangered Species Act in 2020, ‘io still receive protections from the State of Hawai‘i and some from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. These safeguards are vital, especially in light of the increasing number of gunshot cases resulting in the death or

critical injury of ‘io. He ‘Io Au believes ‘io deserves continuous recognition, protection, and study. To address this, we actively involve our community in celebrating 'io while also promoting respect for this species and conducting research on their behavior, habitat requirements, and population size. Drawing inspiration from projects like the Kōlea Count and Hui Manu-o-Kū, we aim to collaborate with communities to gather crucial ‘io conservation data and foster stewardship, both now and in the future.



PC: Bow Tyler

What is "He ‘Io Au" ?

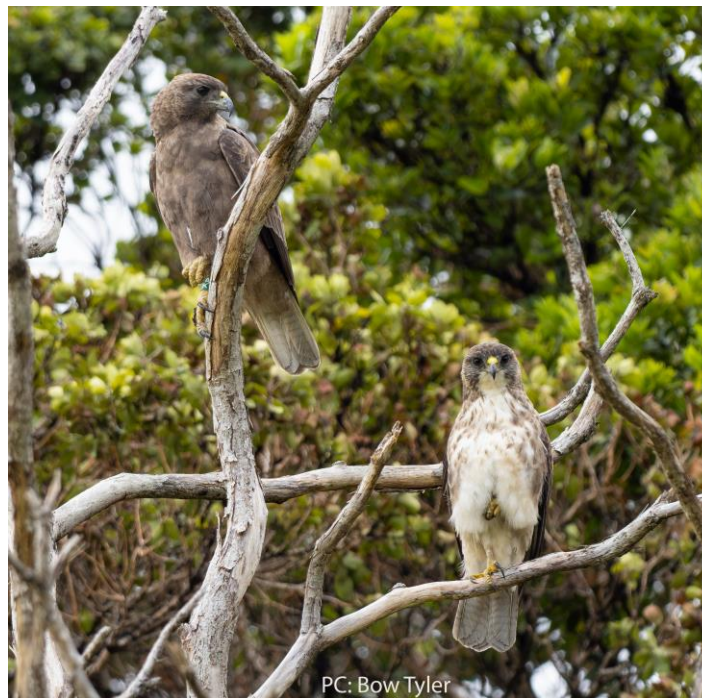
“He ‘Io Au” means “I am an ‘io.” This project name recognizes the deep connection that many of us have with ‘io in our daily lives. We aim to celebrate this connection collectively, inspire others, and utilize this shared bond to turn attention toward the sky and to put all eyes on ‘io.

We proudly present the He ‘Io Au community project. This project has the following parts:

- **Documenting story and observation:** Our aim is to document stories that highlight both the intrinsic and ecological values of ‘io. Through He ‘Io Au, we envision safeguarding noteworthy narratives, recording previously undocumented observations, and in doing both, cultivate a greater appreciation for ‘io.
- **Outreach:** Outreach at schools and to adult audiences can help spread awareness about ‘io, their biology, cultural significance, and the importance of their conservation to

Hawaiian ecosystems. Lesson plans have been developed for elementary, middle, and high school age groups. Adult outreach is planned at weekend community events and for special interest groups.

- **Online data collection:** Community data collection through a future online website platform will allow everyone to share information about hawks on their block. Our project is situated to be able to share information on ‘io sightings, behavior, and habitat use with conservation managers, wildlife rehabilitators, and researchers. This collaboration invites everyone to participate in the conversation about how to help ‘io.



PC: Bow Tyler

How you can help us take flight!

As residents of Hawai‘i and people closely connected to ‘io, we recognize that community involvement is essential to conservation efforts. We hope you will become a part of He ‘Io Au. Your support can take various forms:

- **Do you have a hawk on your block?** Do you have a significant story to tell about ‘io? Have you seen the same bird year after year nesting in the same tree? Have you noticed they are eating something unusual or doing an unusual behavior? Are ‘io taking your chickens? Have you grown up with ‘io or do you want to share your experience when you first met them? We’d like to talk story with you now.

• **Do you have a school or community group that would like to learn about ‘io?** We would love to connect to share what we’ve learned about ‘io. We are currently scheduling community sessions and classroom visits for Spring 2024.

• **Online Data Collection:** Do you have a research topic in mind related to ‘io that you believe should be explored? We’d love to hear from you. Our future website will not only enable everyone to participate in our research efforts but also share your ideas, observations, and community insights to guide future research objectives.

• **Funding:** The HAS BOD recently committed to financially supporting this project. Financial contributions are instrumental in ensuring the success of our project. Your donation will directly contribute to ‘io conservation efforts and help us build and maintain an online platform!



To receive a notice when our website is up and running, send an email to the address below. We will send you a one-time newsletter sharing our web address with the opportunity to subscribe to future newsletters. Please join us in this exciting journey of conservation and community engagement. Together, we can keep all eyes on ‘io! Contact us at: heioaucommunity@gmail.com

FREEMAN SEABIRD PRESERVE CHICK COUNT

On September 14, about 20 volunteers from HAS and partners Oikonos Ecosystem Knowledge and Hawai‘i Pacific University participated in this annual event and counted 308 Wedge-tailed Shearwater chicks, slightly down from last year. El Niño conditions are expected to continue

and impact the number of active nests and chick survival in 2024. Stay tuned for further analysis in our 2024 March/April issue of the ‘Elepaio.



For the slope section of the Preserve, we need “rock-able” volunteers as FSP Volunteer Coordinator Alice Roberts dubbed them, © Susanne Spiessberger.

A NOTEWORTHY RECORD

Good news from the Kōlea Count citizen science project: Mr. X is back once again in the X-section of Punchbowl and with that, on his way to becoming the world’s oldest known kōlea (at least 21 years and 3.5 months at the time of writing)! He lost one of his red plastic bands a couple of years ago, now the other is gone as well and only the aluminum band made it back with him. The four kōlea still equipped with tiny satellite transmitters also made it back - a 100% return rate!



Mr. X, © Susanne Spiessberger.

SHOREBIRD FAREWELL @ PAIKŌ LAGOON WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Low-Tide Reef-Walk: Saturday, April 22, 2023, 9-11 am
by Alice P S Roberts

On Earth Day 2023, 4 FSP WEEDing Volunteers & 4 other bird enthusiasts joined me at the water's edge at the end of Kuli'ou'ou Road at 9 am. We talked about the area's evolution, tides, & what makes a bird a BIRD? Helping with this last question, were several of the nearby church's mixed ducks (mixed Mallard types - even one with some obvious white Easter Duck genes - we assumed most were Mallards, *Anas platyrhynchos*, or Mallard X Koloa X whatever...); anyway, being used to people feeding them, they got up close & personal; Koloa, *Anas wyvilliana*. We saw the usual urban species: mynas, finches, Zebra Doves, Red-crested Cardinals, Red-vented Bulbuls, but no chickens this trip! A couple Manu-O-Kū/White Terns (*Gygis alba*) were synchronized & soaring high above while many white Cattle Egrets (*Bubulcus ibis*) with their s-shaped necks & legs straight out behind were observed flapping-flying at a much lower altitude. A couple of our beloved Kōlea /"PGPs"/Pacific Golden-Plovers (*Pluvialis fulva*) were walking out on the nearest sand bar along with a few Ruddy Turnstones ('Akekeke/Keke, *Arenaria interpres*) who were doing their stone flipping thing.

This trip, we did not see even one big black W/M (shapes of letters W or M depending on viewers location under the flying bird), 'Iwa/ Great Frigatebird (*Fregata minor*) often seen overhead on my trips; & no 'Auku'u, of any age was seen (Black-crowned Night-Heron, *Nycticorax nycticorax*). Sadly, 'Alae 'Ula (*Gallinula gallinula sandvicensis*) was not seen this trip. But we did confirm seeing an 'Ūlili, (Wandering Tattler, *Tringa incana*) right across from Kuli'ou'ou Road's end where one has often been seen.

About 3 Black-necked Stilts (Ae'o/Kukuluae'o, *Himantopus mexicanus knudseni*) were seen &/or heard around us – such pretty black & white birds with a not so pretty yell flew near & around us several times during our tour - often at close range trailing their pink legs behind them.



Black-necked Stilt, © Susanne Spiessberger.

One of them was wearing 3 bands, it was 1 of 3 chicks banded in 2018, a 4th was thought lost, but we saw all 4 on a HAS walk. About this bird, one band has disappeared so DLNR could not give us any specific details. Roger has been seeing/photographing this bird along with 2 unbanded Ae'o for months. I wonder if it's a child who has chosen to live at home with its parents...

In the water (tide seemed lower than the expected -0.2 foot), we saw many interesting critters: teeny tiny gobies (bottom dwelling fish), a small mamo (an endemic damsel with 5 vertical stripes,) a school of mullet. Asher, our youngest walker, caught a swimming crab in a peanut butter jar (great reuse for plastic bottle & safe too) - swimming crabs have 10 legs (of course being decapods) with the last pair paddle-shaped. We saw many "tongues" but no real "sand balls" - if you want to know more about these last 2 things, join me on a tour of PAIKŌ LAGOON.

We looked at many native plants along the path around part of the sanctuary, on the delta (sand closure of the flood channel; I've never seen it closed off before) & on the beach: 'Aki'aki (grass), Kīpūkai, 'Ākulikuli, 'Ākulikuli-kai (pickleweed), Pōhuehue (morning glory), Kaun'oa (orange stringy morning glory) & Milo babies everywhere! We did not see much seaweed. As for the geology of the area, we discussed Koko Crater & Koko Head including less than 7,000-year-old Hanauma Bay. As we returned to our starting

point late, we collected several bags of trash, including a couple HI-5 bottles and cans.

124TH NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

The following details were made available to us at the time of print (more information on <https://www.audubon.org/conservation/join-christmas-bird-count>).

Big Island

Hilo: Saturday, December 30, 2023. Compiler Sherman Wing. No extra volunteers are needed this year.

North Kona: Saturday, December 16, 2023. Contact Lance Tanino, lance.tanino@gmail.com, (808) 495-6545

Volcano: Sunday, December 17, 2023. Contact Alex Wang, axwang12@gmail.com

Maui

‘Iao: Thursday, December 21, 2023

Haleakalā National Park: Thursday December 28, 2023

Hana: Wednesday December 27, 2023

Lana‘i: Friday December 15, 2023.

Contact for any of the four: Sonny Gamponia, sgamponia@gmail.com, (808) 244-0727

Kaua‘i

Lihu‘e: Saturday, December 23. Contact Jennifer Rothe, lihuecbc@gmail.com

O‘ahu

Honolulu (from Waimanalo on the east to ‘Aiea on the west and from Kāne‘ohe on the north to Diamond Head on the south): Sunday, December 17, 2023. Contact Pete Donaldson: pdnldsn.bird@mac.com (preferred), (808) 456-5662 (h), (808) 371-4447 (c). Some birding experience is helpful, but you do not need to be an expert birder to participate. If you know others who might be interested, please pass the information on to them, or let Pete know so he can contact them. If you have a preference for your count area, please let Pete know.

Waipio: Sunday, December 31, 2023. Contact Richard May: (808) 375-2439 or rmayhi02@hotmail.com. The Waipio Count Circle includes a large portion of the Pearl Harbor

Shoreline, a portion of Ford Island, ‘Aiea, Pearlridge, Pearl City, the Waipio Peninsula, much of Mililani and Schofield Barracks, and the Pālehua area above Makakilo. It also includes the initial portion of the forest trails above Komo Mai and Waimano Home Roads. Please note that the ‘Aiea Loop Trail is on the Honolulu CBC, not the Waipio Count.

FALLOUT SEASON

It is still peak fallout season for seabird fledglings (until mid-December). For more information on this topic, go to <https://dlnr.hawaii.gov/wildlife/seabird-fallout-season> and enjoy the following poem:

The Night of the ‘A‘o

Young shearwaters fledge on clear nights,
flying off their nested places of birth,
seeking the brightest part of the sky.

In olden days that would aim them
towards moon and stars,
astronautical ambition leading them always offshore

to commence careers feeding on high seas.
But now our night-time electrifications
sometimes confuse their flights

so that fledge-night birds descend
on backyards, on shopping malls,
on all our lighted night places.

Some autumn nights flocks of shearwaters
rain down suddenly

on a high school football game,

making it seem a scene by Hitchcock,
the horror mostly in the hearts of the birds
who cannot lift off from level ground

and need to be,

by the kindness of strangers,
carried to the sea.

—Joseph Stanton, from *Prevailing Winds*:

<https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-1-d&q=joseph+stanton+prevailing+winds>

Hawai'i Audubon Society Membership and Donations

The mission of the Hawai'i 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 Hawai'i Audubon Society.

All annual memberships end on December 31. See details on <https://hiaudubon.org/membership>.

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

\$15 Hawai'i Audubon Society Student Membership

\$25 Hawai'i Audubon Society Regular Membership

\$40 Hawai'i Audubon Society Family Membership

\$100 Hawai'i Audubon Society Supporting Membership

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

New international membership ('Elepaio by email only) is now \$25; for international **renewals** requesting a print version, the fee is \$38.

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 new international members**), contact office@hiaudubon.org.

Announcements

For regular updates, check out hiaudubon.org/events and/or our social media sites.

Annual Meeting & Members Dinner 2023



When: Sunday, Nov 5,
from 6 to 9 pm

Where: Bishop Museum's
Atherton Hālau,

1525 Bernice Street,
Honolulu, HI 96817

Ticket price: \$45

Join us for an ono dinner from Da Spot, non-alcoholic beverages, and a presentation by HPR's Manu Minute host Prof. Patrick Hart, titled "How bird song can inform conservation and management of Hawai'i's birds".

Details on hiaudubon.org/annual-dinner/.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

Fieldwork Habitat Restoration

January through March, Saturdays from 8 to 11 am

At Freeman Seabird Preserve (FSP), located in Southeast O'ahu at Black Point. For more information, go to <https://freemanseabirdpreserve.com>.

FSP is generally closed to public visitation to protect sensitive nesting habitat. Reservations may be arranged for individuals or groups that would like to help restore Hawaiian coastal vegetation and seabird nesting habitat.

Email Alice Roberts at mermaidshi@aol.com in advance to participate.

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Table of Contents



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KEEP CATS SAFE INDOORS

Keep Cats *and* Birds Safe

Kōlea Quest 23: A Hatchling Bonanza	41
He 'Io Au Community Project	42
Freeman Seabird Preserve Chick Count	44
A Noteworthy Record	44
Shorebird Farewell @ Paikō Lagoon Wildlife Sanctuary	45
124 th NAS Christmas Bird Count	46
Fallout Season	46
The Night of the 'A'o	46
Announcements	47