

# Hawaiian Islands Region

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Warm temperatures averaging above normal at most stations continued through the winter, with only an occasional brief cold snap. Precipitation amounts were above seasonal normals on some islands and below on others, but generally were nicely spread through the season. This brought healthy vegetation and good conditions in lowland areas for the late-winter start of nesting.

Abbreviations: H. (*Hawai'i I.*); K. (*Kaua'i I.*); M. (*Mau'i I.*); O. (*O'ahu I.*); J.C.N.W.R. (*James Campbell N.W.R., O'ahu*); P.H.N.W.R. (*Pearl Harbor N.W.R., O'ahu*).

## Grebes to Ibis

Four Pied-billed Grebes at Aimakapa Pond, H., Jan. 4 (EV) represented a high count for recent years. Pied-billeds were rare stragglers to Hawaii until 2 decades ago, when a pair remained at Aimakapa Pond to breed and started a small colony of birds, which persists as a new breeding

resident species for the state. The banded Short-tailed Albatross (*Endangered*) which returned to Sand I., Midway, last season remained through the winter (NS, TH *et al.*), with occasional absences for a few days when foraging at sea. Seven Laysan Albatross were reported Dec. 7 (EV) & 28 (LT) at Kaena Pt. Natural Area Reserve, O., where they have been struggling to nest in recent years. The nesting colony of Laysans at Kilauea Point N.W.R., K., continues to grow. This year 52 chicks were thriving there at winter's end, with an estimated six-eight more at Princeville outside the refuge (KV). Two Red-tailed Tropicbirds were seen near the Blowhole on the e. coast of O'ahu Feb. 3 (HS), an interesting mid-winter observation. Two Great Blue Herons, occasional stragglers to Hawaii, remained in Nuupia Ponds W.M.A., O., Dec 21 (EV), and one was seen there Jan. 28 (PD). A Green Heron was reported in flight at Loko Waka Pond in Hilo, H., Feb. 10 (GY), the same pond where one of these very, very rare stragglers to the Region resided for more than a year in the early 1980s. The White-faced Ibis (another rare straggler) found at Aimakapa Pond, H., last season was joined by another, and the two were observed there and at nearby Kona Water Treatment Ponds from Dec. 21 through at least Feb. 9 (JL, JC, GY *et al.*).

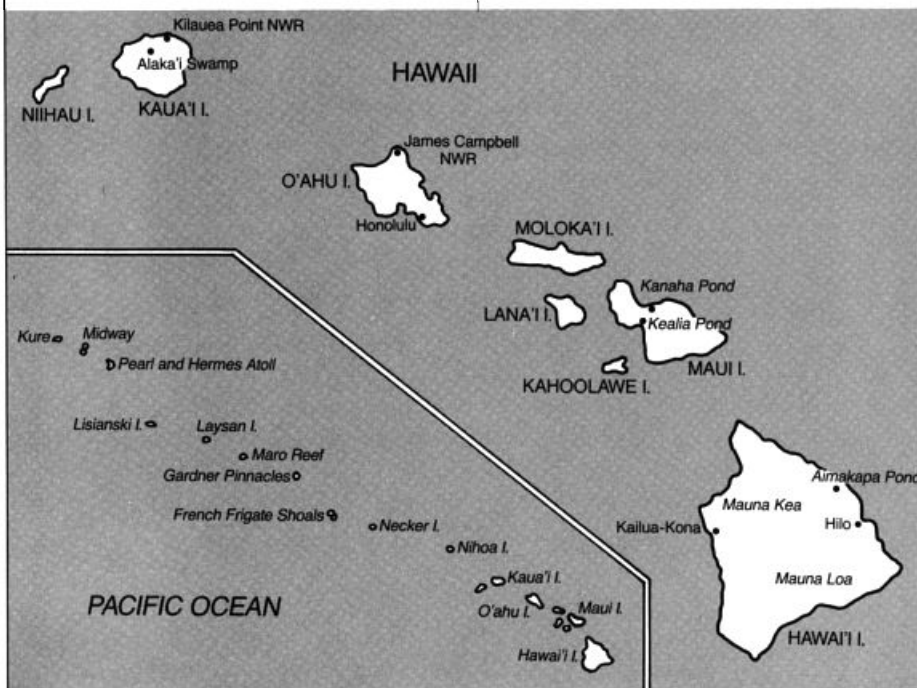
## Waterfowl

One Emperor Goose, a straggler reported very few times in the state, was discovered on the beach in front of the Waikalaloa Resort Hotel on the Kona coast of Hawai'i

I., Jan. 3, and was still there at season's end (RD, m.ob.). It foraged on seaweed-covered rocks, and appeared to be a molting first-winter bird. Nene (Hawaiian Goose, *Endangered*) were nesting well on Kaua'i at Kipu Kai and at Kilauea Point N.W.R., but gosling survival was unusually poor this year for reasons not yet determined (TT). The population of Koloa (Hawaiian Duck, *Endangered*) at Kanaha Pond, M., continues to thrive. One female with six fledglings and another with five downy chicks were observed there with five other adults Feb. 4 (AE). Also at Kanaha were two ♂ Mallards, one evidently a molting first-winter bird. The observer judged these Mallards likely to be wild migrants because of their skittish behavior, their first appearance a few days earlier with incoming pintails and shovelers, and the proper timing for the first winter molt of a wild bird (AE). Mallards in Hawaii are rarely reported now as truly wild visitors because of the abundance of feral resident Mallards in the Main islands. But all feral Mallards were reported to have been cleared out earlier from Kanaha Pond to prevent interbreeding with the new Koloa population becoming established there (FD). A count of 23 Koloa and three Mallards was obtained at Kanaha Feb. 17 (MN).

High counts of N. Pintail, a common winter visitor, at Kealia Pond N.W.R. were an estimated 40 Dec. 3 (TS), 122 Jan. 8 (MN), and 50 Feb 4 (AE). Elsewhere, 35 were at Koloa Mill Pond, K., Dec. 13 (TS) and 30 at Honouliuli Unit, P.H.N.W.R., Dec. 29 (PD). All are high counts for pintails here in recent years. High counts for N. Shoveler, the other common winter visitor, were 50 at Kealia Pond N.W.R., Dec. 3 (TS), 168 there Dec. 26 (MN), 54 at Makalawena Pond, H., Dec. 21 (JL), an unusually high count for that pond n. of Aimakapa Pond, and 40 at Kona Water Treatment Ponds Feb. 3 (AE). These counts are about as expected for recent years.

Among less common species, counts of 13 Green-winged Teal at Koloa Mill Pond, K., Feb. 11 (TS) and 18 at Kealia Pond N.W.R., Feb. 18 (MN) were unusually high. Smaller numbers of Am. Wigeon and Lesser Scaup were reported at 5 localities each. Among scarcer species, two ♀ Ring-necked Ducks and one Greater Scaup were at Aimakapa Pond, H., during January and February (v.o.), and two Greater Scaup were reported at Kii Unit, J.C.N.W.R., Jan. 7 and Feb. 3 (PD). Three Eur. Wigeon were found at Honouliuli Unit, P.H.N.W.R., Jan. 18 and Feb. 2 (PD). And, finally, a ♂ Gadwall (rare straggler to Hawaii) was consorting





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Photo by Neal Brown

with feral Mallards at Waiakea Pond in Hilo, H., from Dec. 21 (KI) to Feb. 10 & 13 (GY, TS).

### Osprey to Swiftlets

The Osprey at reported last fall at Loko Waka Pond near Hilo, H., was seen there again Dec. 21 (KI) and Feb. 10 (GY), and also at nearby Waiakea Pond Jan. 10 (JC). One also was reported flying over the entrance to Pacific Missile Range Facility, K., in early December (AA). A Peregrine Falcon was observed Feb. 23 stooping on small Hawaiian honeycreepers flying high over the wet rain forest in the Hanawi area of Haleakala Mt., M. (TS). Two Hawaiian Coots (*Endangered*) were seen together Dec. 7 on Kawaikoa Stream, just upstream from the Camp 10 Road (TS), an interesting locality in the forest near Koke'e, K.

Black-bellied Plovers, Killdeer, and Bristle-thighed Curlews remained through the winter at the same localities reported last fall (v.o.). All are uncommon winter visitors. A Greater Yellowlegs, a rare visitor here, was discovered at Pouhala Marsh near Waipahu, O., Dec. 29 (PD), and was still there Jan. 15 (TH) and Feb. 8 (PD). Another was at a small wetland w. of Poipu, K., Jan. 10 (DK) and Feb. 11 (TS). A Pectoral Sandpiper, seldom found here in winter, was reported at Koloa Mill Pond, K., Dec. 23 (DK); one was seen repeatedly at Nuupia Pond W.M.A., O., Jan. 9–Feb. 28 (LT). A ♀ Ruff, casual in Hawaii, was observed at Pouhala Marsh Dec. 29 (PD). Shorebird highlight of the season, however, was a **Curlew Sandpiper**, a species recorded about 5 times in Hawaii, observed carefully and at leisure at Maalaea Flats in Kealia Pond N.W.R., M., Feb. 4 (AE, † and sketches). An imm. Laughing Gull was seen at Kii Unit, J.C.N.W.R., Nov. 24 (MO, RLP) and Dec. 19 (KI), and one was also reported at Kealia Pond N.W.R., M., Feb. 4 (AE) and at Waiakea Pond in Hilo, H., Feb. 15 (JC). Perhaps all were the same individual. Two imm. Ring-billed Gulls were observed at Kealia Pond N.W.R. repeatedly from Dec. 3 to Feb. 28 (v.o.), and an imm. Glaucous-winged Gull was at Ki'i Unit, J.C.N.W.R., during January and February (v.o.). These are the 3 gull species reported in Hawaii more frequently than other species. A Hawaiian (Short-eared) Owl appeared Feb. 4 at Kanaha Pond Sanctuary (AE), a little oasis in the developed coastal lowland area of Maui. Fifteen Guam Swiftlets (formerly Uniform or Island Swiftlet) were found at the regular site in upper N. Halawa Valley Dec. 21 for the Honolulu CBC.

### Native Hawaiian Passerines

**SA** The four young Alala (Hawaiian Crow, critically *Endangered*) were released to the wild in January, as planned. Unhappily, this was countered by finding two wild Alala dead in January, and a 3rd missing and feared dead. These three were captive-reared birds; the two dead ones had been released in 1994 and were just coming into breeding age. Transmitters were still active on the two birds whose remains were found. Postmortem examination and other evidence for one indicated it was probably killed by an lo (Hawaiian Hawk, also Threatened). The other had been scavenged by a mongoose or rat, with indications that the predation was after death rather than the cause of death. The total population of Alala is now believed to be 15 birds in the wild and 17 birds in the captive propagation program.

Thirteen Elepaio were tallied on O'ahu Dec. 21 for the Honolulu CBC, nine in N. Halawa Valley and four across the count circle in and near Pia Valley. Elepaio on O'ahu have decreased alarmingly in recent years and are a candidate for endangered species listing. Two Puaiohi (seriously *Endangered*) were found in the Mohihi area, K., Dec. 28 for the Waimea CBC (TS), and one was heard in that area Jan. 28 (DK). Akikiki (formerly Kaua'i Creeper) were reported on Pihea, Alaka'i, Awaawapuhi, and Mohihi/Waialae Trails near Koke'e, K., this winter, usually singly or at most two individuals (DK, TS). A pair was watched at one spot on Pihea Trail on 7 dates Feb. 8–24. One was gathering nesting material Feb. 19 (DK). This species is still quite scarce, but is being reported a bit more frequently now on trails near Koke'e. One Apapane was sighted Dec. 2 at about 1000 ft elevation in Waikolu Valley, Moloka'i (EV), an island where this species is now scarce. A nest of the Akohekohe (*Endangered*) was found, and two Poouli (very critically *Endangered*) were observed, in Hanawi Natural Area Reserve, M., Feb. 23 (TS).

### Alien Passerines

Groups of five–seven Greater Necklaced Laughing-thrushes were found at Huleia N.W.R., Dec. 13, and in a yard part way up Waimea Canyon Rd., Feb. 17 (TS). Small groups of this scarce species move irregularly around Kaua'i, the only island where it is found. A small flock of Red-billed Leiothrix was observed around

buildings of the University of Hawaii Institute of Astronomy at the 10,000 ft summit of Haleakala Mt., M., several times between Oct. 31 and Nov. 5 (TD). Five Red-billed Leiothrix were seen near the University of Hawaii astronomical telescope atop 13,796 ft Mauna Kea, H., Nov. 26 and decreasing numbers each evening thereafter, until the final one bird Dec. 4 (BP). Both locations are far above tree line, in barren areas where birds of any kind are rarely seen, particularly scrub-forest birds such as leiothrix. On O'ahu, leiothrix continue to increase after nearly vanishing 2–3 decades ago. At one scrub-forest site along old Kalaniana'ole Rd. between Waimanalo and Kailua, careful half-hour observations made regularly (7:30–8 a.m.), Dec. 15, for 6 consecutive years yielded counts of Red-billed Leiothrix increasing steadily from three in 1991 to 21 in 1996 (TC). Elsewhere on O'ahu, observers reported leiothrix on  $\geq 5$  trails in the Ko'olau Mts. this winter, continuing the recent trend of more widespread sightings and a bit larger numbers. One Red-crested Cardinal was identified carefully in the park at Waiakea Pond in Hilo, H., Dec. 22 (KI) and Feb. 15 (JC *et al.*). While this species is doing well on most of the other main Hawaiian Is., only 2 prior unconfirmed reports are on record for Hawai'i I., both in the Hilo area. Seventy-two Com. Canaries were tallied for the CBC at Sand I., Midway Atoll, where they have been well established for more than 80 years. A few Chestnut Mannikins discovered around the settling ponds on Hanson Rd. near Pu'unene provided the first reports of this species on Maui. Three adults and five juveniles were spotted in a flock of Nutmeg Mannikins there Feb. 4 (AE), and one adult and three juveniles were found there independently Mar. 1 (H&PB). The species has been well-established for decades on O'ahu and Kaua'i, and has been reported once (1976) on Hawai'i I.

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