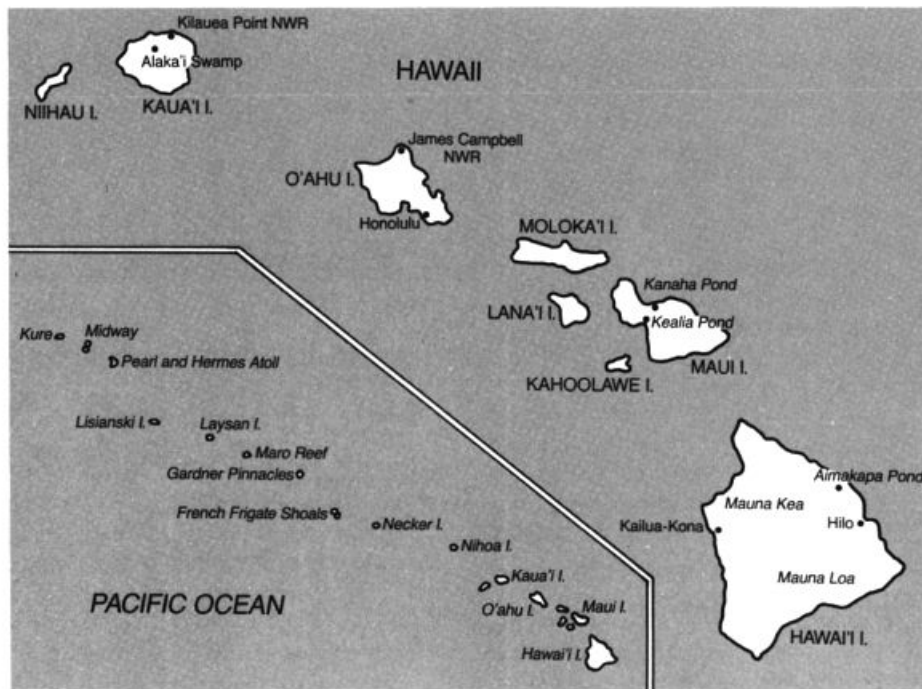


hawaiian islands region



ROBERT L. PYLE

The frequent precipitation in spring diminished to more normally drier conditions through June and July, but vegetation remained greener than usual in many locations. Trade winds were generally weak or absent, and the summer was unusually warm and humid. Increasing visits to Midway Atoll since public group tours began last winter have produced a number of exciting species records, as cited below and in last season's report. The Navy departed June 30, and public visits are expected to increase further to this mid-Pacific outpost that is now a national wildlife refuge.

Abbreviations: F.F.S. (*French Frigate Shoals*); H. (*Hawai'i Island*); K. (*Kaua'i Island*); M. (*Maui Island*); O. (*O'ahu Island*).

ALBATROSS TO EGRETS

The small colony of Laysan Albatross breeding at Kaena Pt. Natural Area Reserve, O., continues to flourish despite problems with dog harassment. At least three chicks fledged in July from the lowlands near the point, and several more fledged from the group at higher elevation (RK). More than 100 Wedge-tailed Shearwaters were breed-

ing this year on coastal sandhills close to Kaena Pt., despite heavy dog depredation in spring (RK). The most significant event of the season was the discovery July 3 of a Newell's Shearwater (*threatened*) nest with an egg, near the headquarters building at Kilauea Point N.W.R., K. Three ad. Newell's were flying in the vicinity. Later searches did not find any more nests (TT). In historic times, Newell's have only been known to nest on higher elevation mountain slopes. This coastal nesting in a protected refuge might be related to a cross-fostering experiment conducted 18 years ago in which Newell's eggs were brought to the refuge and raised successfully by foster parents in the Wedge-tailed Shearwater nesting colony at Kilauea Pt., close to this year's nest (TT). Other notable reports of Newell's Shearwaters on Kaua'i this summer were of one flying over Lihue airport July 7 and one heard July 31 flying over Koaie Stream gaging station in the Alaka'i swamp (TS).

One Mottled Petrel and one Tristram's Storm-Petrel were observed well from a ship between Midway and Kure July 8, and one Black-winged Petrel was seen on the return trip July 11 (EV). The two petrels are casual visitors to Hawaiian waters, and the storm-petrel nests in small numbers on

several of the uninhabited n.w. Hawaiian Islands. A male **Lesser Frigatebird** was observed well on Eastern I., Midway, July 12 (good †EV, DS). Lessers have been recorded several times on Kure, and more regularly in recent years at F.F.S. Another outstanding sighting on Midway was of a bird reported to be an **Intermediate Egret** (*Mesophyx intermedia* of Asia and Australia), studied well on Sand I. July 25 (extensive †SR, ph. RS). Identification is to be confirmed. Two stray Cattle Egrets were reported at Sand I., Midway, July 12–13 (EV).

QUAILS TO TERNS

Two ad. California Quail were seen along a water ditch beyond Poomau near Koke'e, K., July 14, and one in the same general area July 30 (TS). This long-established species, formerly common on most of the main islands, is now infrequently reported. High counts of 179 Hawaiian (Black-necked) Stilts (both *Endangered*) were recorded at Kealia Pond N.W.R. July 1. Both included a large number of immatures (MN). Still another exciting bird at Midway was a **Mongolian Plover** in partial breeding plumage observed closely on Sand I. July 11 (good †EV). A specimen collected on Lisianski I. in 1967 represented the only prior Hawaiian record. Two Bristle-thighed Curlews at Kure July 8–10 and four at Sand I., Midway, July 12 (EV) may have been over-summering. A bird identified as a Gray-tailed Tattler in full breeding plumage was observed closely at Kure July 10 (†EV, DS). Gray-taileds are at best rare stragglers to Hawaii. Two Wandering Tattlers and two Ruddy Turnstones June 19 at Kealia Pond N.W.R., M. (MN), and one Ruddy at Paiko Lagoon, O., June 28 (TS) may well have been over-summering in Hawaii. But eight Ruddies at Kure July 8–10, 22 at Midway July 11 (EV), and eight at Kealia Pond July 15 (MN) were more likely early fall arrivals.

Two juv. Com. Terns, casual visitors to Hawaii, were seen at Kealia Pond June 19–July 17 (MN) and July 26 (EV). A Hawaii Forestry & Wildlife team surveying seabird colonies at Kure July 9 counted 120 Gray-backed Terns, including 31 juveniles, a 100% increase over previous years (EV, DS).

OWLS TO ESTRILDOIDS

A Short-eared Owl at Trig I., F.F.S., first seen July 24 being mobbed by seabirds, was found the next day with a severe wing fracture and was euthanized (U.S.F.W.S.). Short-eareds at the w. end of the n.w. Hawaiian chain appear in winter and are probably stray visitors from Asia. But this bird at F.F.S., much nearer to the main Hawaiian Is., is probably a summer straggler of the endemic Hawaiian race.

Although the wild 'Alala (Hawaiian Crow, severely *Endangered*) on Hawai'i

SA Following the report last season of a Little Tern (*S. albifrons*) in full breeding plumage at Sand I., Midway, in late May, a bird observed June 21–23 at Sand I. was identified by voice as a Least Tern (*S. antillarum*) (SR, † on voice). Several weeks later, July 11–13, two different birds were found there (EV). One was identified by voice and white rump/tail plumage as a Little Tern; the other was an immature with a pale gray rump and tail which did not vocalize. Separation of these terns as Least or Little in the field is very difficult. Voice differences described between European and eastern North American birds may not be distinctive for Pacific forms. The pure white rump and tail distinctive for Little Tern is apparently present only in adult birds in full breeding plumage. Least/Little Terns have been reported often in the Hawaiian Islands since the 1950s. Of 3 known specimens, two from Midway and French Frigate Shoals are Littles, and one from French Frigate Shoals is a Least (all determined by Roger Clapp, Biological Resources Division at the United States National Museum). Some of the Hawaii sightings have been of two or even four birds, occasionally mentioning an adult and an immature together. Repeated sightings of these terns in mid-Pacific suggest that breeding might be occurring somewhere nearer than Asia or North America. Perhaps the breeding event described at Pearl & Hermes Reef in 1988 (Conant et al. *Pacific Science* 45:353) may in fact be persisting. Any regular nesting in the Hawaiian Is. or in the mid-Pacific would be a large expansion of breeding range for either species. Some intensive field research on this topic is clearly needed.

failed to reproduce this year (see Spring report), the 2 captive flocks had an outstanding season. Seven chicks were hatched from captive-laid eggs at the Bird Conservation Center, Olinda, M., and three at the Keauhou Center, H. One of the latter soon died, but the other nine were raised successfully. Plans are to release eight in 2 groups of four later this fall at McCandless Ranch. Release in groups may help them to mutually defend against predation by 'Io (Hawaiian Hawk, *threatened*), as was suggested by the loss last winter of two lone young 'Alala, probably to 'Io. Total 'Alala count is now 41 birds: 26 in captivity (17 older birds and nine chicks), and 15 in the wild (five older birds and 10 younger birds released as chicks in 1993, 1994, and 1996). The 'Alala report is from SJ, U.S.F.W.S., and the Peregrine Fund.

The rare bird monitoring team on Kaua'i counted 75 active nest of Puaiohi (*Endangered*) this year in study areas near and in the Alaka'i Swamp, with a few pairs still nesting at summer's end (TS). Red-billed Leiothrix continue to do well on O'ahu. Back of Honolulu, three were found along lower Palolo Valley trail June 20 (VS), and an estimated 15 were observed on lower Pia Valley trail June 28 (TS). Two birds identified by an experienced observer as Eur. Starlings were seen June 25 foraging on a small grassy median strip adjacent to H-1 freeway near Middle Street in Honolulu (JM). Stray starlings have been recorded a few times in the past 20 years in Honolulu, including a group of up to 11 in January 1995 at Sand I. Park not far from Middle Street, which gradually dispersed over a few weeks to unknown fates.

Three 'Apapane chicks hatched successfully July 14 in a nest in a public display exhibit at Honolulu Zoo. This was the first nesting by this pair, and the 2nd clutch to hatch successfully in the captive propagation program at the zoo. The first clutch hatched last year in a back area not on public display. 'Apapane are abundant in the wild, and are trial species in the program in preparation for possible future captive propagation of rarer endemic Hawaiian forest birds.

Orange-cheeked Waxbills continue to be reported on Maui. Three were observed July 1 in the fish farm portion of Kealia Ponds N.W.R. (MN). Chestnut Mannikins, common since the late 1970s in lowland portions of Kaua'i, are now spreading to higher elevations in the Alaka'i Swamp area. Five were seen on the Mohihi-Waialae trail at the one-mi marker July 14, and five

again—including some juveniles—at the 2-mi marker Aug. 1 (TS). An active nest of Nutmeg Mannikins, long established on Kaua'i, was observed Aug. 1 at the Koaie Stream gaging station fairly deep in the Alaka'i area (TS).

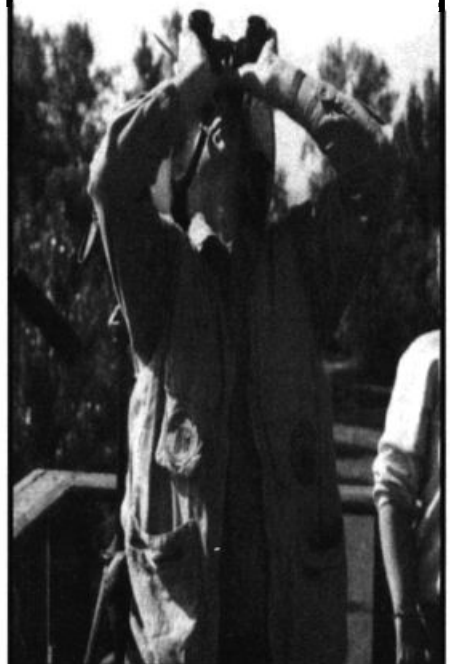
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