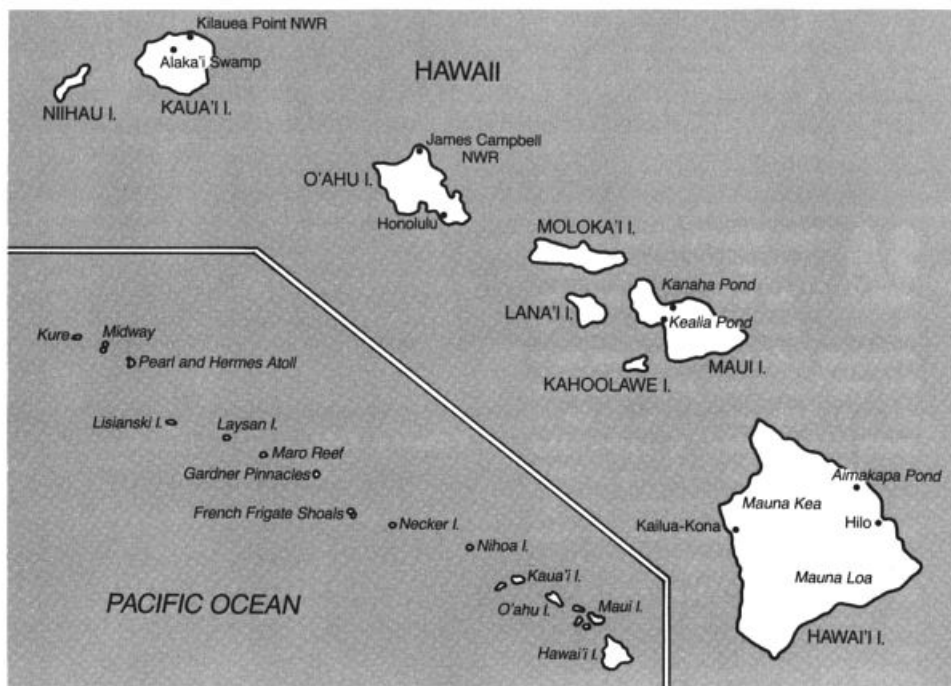


hawaiian islands region



ROBERT L. PYLE

The strong drought conditions of winter continued through March, delaying spring nesting for at least some species and probably having other impacts not yet recognized. General trade wind conditions returned in April and May, with light showers bringing rainfall up near or above the monthly median values for this normally driest season of the year. This was a flight year for Franklin Gulls, and a new species of frigatebird was found nesting in Hawaii.

Abbreviations: F.F.S. (*French Frigate Shoals*); H. (*Hawai'i Island*); K. (*Kaua'i Island*); M. (*Maui Island*); O. (*O'ahu Island*); J.C.N.W.R. (*James Campbell N.W.R., O'ahu*); K.P.N.W.R. (*Kilauea Point N.W.R., Kaua'i*).

ALBATROSS TO FRIGATEBIRDS

In the colony of Laysan Albatross at K.P.N.W.R., about 21 chicks were present at end of May from the 35 nests with eggs this year (CM). Counts of two–eight Hawaiian (Dark-rumped) Petrels (*Endangered*) were

noted flying inland over K.P.N.W.R. almost daily May 19–29 (CM). Repeated sea watches by Melgar at Nawiliwili Lighthouse near Lihue, K., from mid-March to late April recorded variously 100–1500 Wedge-tailed Shearwaters and numerous other species. Single Newell Shearwaters (*Threatened*) were first noted Mar. 31 and Apr. 2, increasing to 200+ Apr. 21 and 150+ Apr. 24. A few Sooty Shearwaters were spotted regularly, with peak count of 15 Apr. 21. Several sightings of uncertainly identified shearwaters were thought possibly to have been Christmas, Short-tailed, and Buller respectively (CM). Nawiliwili is 13 km n.e. of the traditional sea watch site at Mokauena Pt. A charter boat trip from Port Allen, K., out to Ni'ihau and Lehua Rock Apr. 18 (TS, CM et al.) yielded one Black-footed Albatross and seven Laysans, roughly 80 Wedge-tailed Shearwaters, 16 Sooties, seven–nine Newells, and single shearwaters that again may have been Christmas, Short-tailed, and Buller, respectively. One Flesh-footed Shearwater and seven Sooties were found 5 mi outside Midway Atoll May 14 (PP).

The Red-billed Tropicbird remained at K.P.N.W.R. with the other 2 species until at least mid-April (CM, DK). About 18 White-tailed Tropicbird nests and 45 Red-tailed Tropicbird nests were recorded at K.P.N.W.R. this spring (CM). A large Brown Booby chick with a few downy feathers was observed well May 26 at a nest site 50 ft above the coastal trail from Yokohama Beach to Kaena Pt., O. (CL, excellent †). This is an unprecedented area for Brown Booby nesting. In the Main Islands this species is known to nest only on certain offshore islets, not near Kaena Pt.

SA Lesser Frigatebirds have been visiting Tern I., F.F.S., for 2 decades. Single males appeared occasionally at first. Later they came more regularly, and in time two birds or rarely three might be present. This year, a male and female were seen perched together Mar. 11, and repeated sightings of one or two birds were reported during ensuing weeks. A male was observed May 20 displaying on a nest platform in a colony of nesting Great Frigatebirds, and the pair were together on the platform May 27. The female was seen to be on an egg June 1 (DD, AA, AV ph.).

This may well be the first record of Lesser Frigatebird breeding in the United States, or anywhere in the A.O.U. Check-List area. Three of the world's 5 species of frigatebird are at least regular visitors to the U.S., and now all three have been recorded nesting here.

DUCKS TO GULLS

Nesting of Koloa (Hawaiian Duck, *Endangered*) at Kanaha Pond, M., was encouraging this year. A pair with six young was sighted there Mar. 4, and another pair with four smaller chicks was there Mar. 13 (FD) Nine Koloa were counted at Kanaha Mar 17 (MN). The common wintering ducks, N Pintail and N. Shoveler, remained at Kealia Ponds N.W.R., M., in good numbers into

April. High counts were 118 pintails Apr. 3 vanishing to zero Apr. 16, and 288 shovelers Mar. 16, falling more slowly to five May 1, and gone by May 19 (MN, EV, DP). These counts are considerably higher than have been reported for the rest of Hawaii combined.

The **Black Kite** wintering at Midway Atoll was observed several times weekly until the last sighting of one June 6. Two different individuals were present after mid-March, often seen together but generally distinguishable by slightly different plumage pattern and loss of different molting primaries. The two were last seen together May 20 (PP). The several Peregrine Falcon sightings this past winter continued into spring, with individuals reported s. of Ho'okena in S. Kona, H., Mar. 12 (EL); in Waikamoi Preserve, M., Mar. 30 (EN); over Tantalus hill in Honolulu, O., Apr. 16 (MW); and at Midway Atoll until Apr. 19 (PP). Interesting high counts of Hawaiian Coots (*Endangered*) this spring included 110 at Kona Water Treatment Ponds, H., Apr. 25 (MM), and a peak of 492 at Kealia Ponds N.W.R., M. At Kuilima Water Treatment Ponds, O., the count Apr. 19 was 251 coots, down from 500+ in late February (MO, RLP). Severe dry conditions for the past year on Ni'ihau I. are forcing large numbers of coots to remain on nearby Kaua'i I., where they are now causing serious damage problems on golf courses for the state wildlife division to deal with (TT).

The dry winter conditions delayed nesting by Hawaiian (Black-necked) Stilts (*Endangered*) into April at Nu'upia Ponds, O. (MR), and at J.C.N.W.R. and Pearl Harbor N.W.R., O. (MS). Nesting numbers at the refuges were still below normal at season's end. The Bristle-thighed Curlews wintering on the dunes adjacent to Ki'i Unit, J.C.N.W.R., remained into spring, with eight reported in March, six reported in April through mid-May, and three still there May 28 (MS, CS, MO, RLP). At Midway, peak counts of Bristle-thigheds were 113 Apr. 13 (PP) and 130 Apr. 30 (DK). A Ruff still at Midway through April was last seen May 3 (PP).

The numerous non-breeding plumaged Laughing Gulls reported last winter remained into April or May at most localities. And this was a strong flight year for Franklin Gulls in Hawaii. Breeding-plumaged birds were reported Apr. 25 at Cyano-tech Ponds near Kailua-Kona, H. (TM); Apr. 26 through May at Ki'i Unit, J.C.N.W.R. (PD, MS); May 1-19 (two birds) at Kealia Ponds N.W.R., M. (MN); May 7 flying

along Honolulu waterfront (Franklin or Laughing; DW); May 10 at Hanalei N.W.R., K. (CM); May 25-June 6 at Tern I., F.F.S. (AV); and June 1-3 at Midway (PP); all timed in a primarily SE to NW progression.

DOVES TO FINCHES

Four Mourning Doves were heard calling Mar. 14 on the slope back of Waikapu golf course on Maui (FD). The only prior report of Mourning Dove on Maui was in December 1996 on the slope back of Kihea/Wailea about 20 km from Waikapu. The species otherwise has been present in the state only in small numbers locally in n.w. Hawai'i Island.

SA'Alala (Hawaiian Crow, critically *Endangered*) did not nest successfully in the wild this spring. One pair of the four old original birds still remaining in the wild built a nest again this year, but all four are probably too old to produce viable young. Of the 24 young birds incubated in captivity and released to the wild beginning in 1993, 12 are known to be still alive. One female of the 24 who paired with an older male last year was caught and eaten by an 'Io (Hawaiian Hawk, *Endangered*) last August, destroying hopes for that pair. Two of the 1993-released birds paired this spring, built a nest, were observed copulating, but did not produce eggs. Hopes are higher for next year. Management techniques are now directed toward the 'Io predation problem, which is worst in summer when 'Io nestlings are large and fledging (all from DB).

In the captive flocks, the dry winter delayed breeding at the Peregrine Fund's Maui and Keauhou Centers. But at season's end three chicks from eggs laid at Maui were being raised at Keauhou, and 5-6 fertile eggs were in incubation there (CK).

Nesting of Puaiohi (*Endangered*) in the Mohihi/Alaka'i area of Kaua'i was delayed in starting and was more protracted this spring, probably related to the dry winter. Twenty-two nests had been found by end of May, fewer than in recent years (TS). In the captive flock at The Peregrine Fund's Keauhou Center, 16 chicks were being raised at season's end, all from eggs laid by captive-hatched parents. More eggs are in incubation. Plans are to release many of these new birds this winter (CK).

The nesting pair of Saffron Finches reported last season at Pukalani, M., was incubating another egg in the same nest box May 21. Two adults and two juveniles of different ages were present, indicating this to be at least the 3rd nesting this year (FD). These are Maui's first known occurrence of Saffron Finch.

Contributors: A. Anders, Donna Ball, Chuck Burrows, Mark Collins, Reginald David, D. Dearborn, Jim Denny, Peter Donaldson, Fern Duvall, Beth Flint, John Hirth, John Kormendy, Cyndi Kuehler, David Kuhn, Charles Lamoureaux, Elizabeth Lewis, Tony McCafferty, Christian Melgar, Marie Morin, Eric Nishibayashi, Mike Nishimoto, Mike Ord, Doug Pratt, Thane Pratt, Leilani Pyle, Peter Pyle, Mark Rauzon, Sharon Reilly, Mike Silbernagle, Tom Snetsinger, Cris Steeman, Robert Taylor, Tom Telfer, United States Fish & Wildlife Service, Eric VanderWerf, Anthony Viggiano, Michael Walther, Dave Worthington.

Robert L. Pyle, 1314 Kalakaua Ave. #1010, Honolulu, HI 96826



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