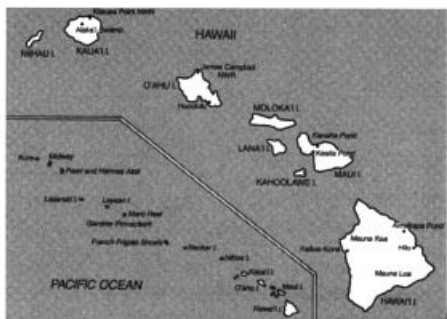


# hawaiian islands region



## ROBERT L. PYLE

Heavier rainfall finally brought some relief from the long drought, but winter totals were still below normal on all islands except the windward (e.) side of Hawai'i Island where well above normal. Wintering waterfowl came in good numbers and broad species diversity, and endangered endemic Hawaiian forestbirds had some noteworthy highlights.

**Abbreviations:** H. (*Hawai'i Island*); K. (*Kaua'i Island*); M. (*Maui Island*); O. (*O'ahu Island*); W.T.P. (*Water Treatment Ponds*).

## GREBES THROUGH DUCKS

A straggling Pied-billed Grebe appeared at Hanalei N.W.R., K., Dec. 30 and Jan. 9 (CM). At Kilauea Pt. N.W.R., K., the first Laysan Albatross chick hatched Jan. 24, but only 9 nests remained active from the roughly 40 that started this season (CM), a larger decrease than is usual. An ad. Masked Booby mingling with Red-footed Boobies at Kilauea Pt. Feb. 17 (CM) was an unusual record from anywhere in the main islands away from O'ahu. A Great Blue Heron was sighted Dec. 19 at Nu'upia Ponds, O. (EV), where these stragglers have been reported frequently in recent years.

Visiting geese and ducks appeared in good numbers and diversity, perhaps a result of more reporting from smaller, artificially maintained wetlands on several islands. Three Brant feeding on the reef at the mouth of Kinikini Ditch on the Pacific Missile Range Facility n. of Kekaha, K., remained from at least Dec. 25 through Feb. 7 (JD, CM, PD). Single Brant appeared at Laysan I. Dec. 1 (FWS); at Bayfront Park in Hilo, H., Dec. 8 & 9 (*vide* TP); and at Ki'i Unit, James Campbell N.W.R., O., Dec. 12

(MO). Three Canada Geese were seen repeatedly at Hanalei N.W.R., K., Dec 6–Feb. 17 (CM). Brant and Canadas are uncommon visitors to Hawaii. Early nesting by Nene (*Endangered*) at Kilauea Pt., K., included 2 pairs with goslings and 8 new nests by Dec. 6 (CM). One pair with goslings in a group of eight was seen there Feb. 4 (LH).

Reports of N. Pintails in good numbers at various sites included up to 15 on O'ahu, 17 on Moloka'i, 32 at Mana Rd. Pond near Waimea, H., and three wintering at Midway Atoll. At Hanalei N.W.R., K., pintails increased from 20–40 in December to almost 80 in mid-January and then decreased to two Jan. 26 with none thereafter (CM). It's unusual for pintails to outnumber the other primary wintering duck, N. Shoveler, which also turned up at numerous localities on most of the main islands but generally in smaller numbers. Counts at Hanalei N.W.R. started at 30 Dec. 6 and stabilized at 15–25 through February (CM). Outnumbering all of the above, however, were 127 pintails and 336 shovelers counted at Kealia Pond N.W.R., M., Dec. 14 (MN) with "lots" thereafter (LT).

At least 7 scarcer species were each reported at numerous places on most main islands. Rarities included a Cinnamon Teal at Hanalei N.W.R., K., all winter (CM); a Canvasback in a small unvegetated pond at Sea Mount Golf Course in Punalu'u, H., Jan. 31 and Feb. 7 (EV, TP); a Tufted Duck at Loko Waka Pond in Hilo, H., Dec. 12, Jan. 22, and Feb. 15 (TP, RD) and later across the island at Aimakapa Pond Feb. 28 (DP); and a Hooded Merganser (< 5 records in Hawaii) at Kaunakakai W.T.P., Moloka'i, Dec. 7 & 16 (AD). Each was reported to be a male in fine plumage. All-in-all, a good winter for visiting waterfowl.

## PLOVERS THROUGH SKY LARK

The small plover reported through November and December at Sand I., Midway, was observed closely and carefully at leisure Jan. 19–20 (DP, RP); it was photographed and sketched in detail. After much study and reference-checking over the next month, with helpful comments on current ideas for field marks by several on the Hawaii birders' e-mail network, the bird was finally

judged to be a probable Semipalmated Plover rather than a Com. Ringed Plover (DP). Such plovers at Midway have a bit better geographic likelihood of being a Com. Ringed from Eurasia than do others found in the main Hawaiian Is. to the east. A Killdeer, rare in Hawaii, was observed well at Nu'upia Ponds, O., Dec. 19 (EV), and the same bird or another was reported twice in James Campbell N.W.R., Dec. 30 at Ki'i Unit and 1.5 km away at Punamano Unit Jan. 21 (PD). Counts of 107 Sanderlings at Kealia Pond N.W.R., M., Dec. 14 (MN) and 33 on the reef at Kinikini Ditch n. of Kekaha, K., Jan. 31 (JF) represented good numbers for Hawaii. A fine Ruff, uncommon in Hawaii, was well observed at Kealia Pond N.W.R., M., Dec. 24 and Feb. 19 (LT).

It was an interesting winter for gulls, too. Laughing Gulls were reported on O'ahu and Kaua'i (up to three at Kaua'i Lagoons near Lihue; JF, CM), and an imm. Bonaparte was seen repeatedly at Waiakea Pond in Hilo, H., Dec. 8–Feb. 15 (TP, JF). A first-winter Glaucous Gull, a rare straggler to Hawaii, roamed Kaua'i from Kalihiwai Beach on the n.e. shore in late January (CM) across to Waimea Beach on the s.w. shore Feb. 5, 6, 7 & 15 (JD, PD) with a side trip back to Kilauea Pt. close to Kalihiwai Feb. 13 (CM). A Glaucous-winged Gull was seen first at Hanalei N.W.R., K., Feb. 3 (CM) and then found with the Glaucous Gull at Waimea Beach in early February (JD, PD). These two birds seen by the same observers were well identified by bill color and other features. An imm. Glaucous-winged was reported, too, at Waiakea Pond in Hilo, H., Dec. 12 (*vide* TP), and a gull observed in flight Jan. 17 across the island at Waialea Beach s. of Kawaihae might have been the same species. Up to four large gulls observed variously around the Honolulu waterfront in late January through Feb. 28 (MO, BL) included (when all seen together) two Glaucous-wingeds, one probable Western, and an immature of an unidentified dark-backed type.

An imm. Com. Tern, rather scarce in Hawaii, was seen well at Nawiliwili Harbor near Lihue, K., Jan. 9 (CM). Another was seen closely at Waiakea Pond in Hilo, H., Feb. 6 & 15 (TP) and may have been the tern observed there Feb. 13–14 (DL). An

almost certain Guam Swiftlet was briefly observed circling overhead in Pacific Palisades above Pearl City, O., Dec. 2 (PD). This localized alien species has bred for decades nearby in upper N. Halawa Valley and has been sighted a few times higher on trails above this area, but not this low. The female Belted Kingfisher reported last season at ponds near Hilo, H., was seen again Dec. 16 at Loko Waka Pond (TP) and Jan. 22 & 27 at Waiakea Pond (RD, DL). A report of two Sky Larks watched on the ground and singing in flight on Lagoon Drive at the e. end of the main runway at Honolulu airport Feb. 21 (MO,RP) is encouraging since larks are reported on O'ahu much less frequently now than a decade ago as large open field habitats continue to disappear.

**ENDANGERED ENDEMIC  
HAWAIIAN PASSERINES**

Following the disasters in 1998 for the 'Alala (Hawaiian Crow, critically *Endangered*), recovery managers proceeded in late January to release five young birds. Two had been captive-hatched in 1997 and three in 1998. In late March, four wearing radio transmitters were being tracked regularly, but one 1998 bird was missing (AL, Peregrine Fund). See last season report for

background. One or two O'ahu 'Elepaio were observed on Aiea trail Dec. 20 (TC), on Kuliouou trail Dec. 25 (KP), and on Kulepiamo Ridge back of Niu Valley Dec. 30 (EK), all located on the w. slope of the s. Ko'olau Mts. Proceedings are well underway to formally list O'ahu 'Elepaio as an *Endangered* population (FWS).

Scheduling the Pu'u O Kaka'e CBC on Maui to coincide with field work by the Maui rare bird monitoring team in the Hanawi Natural Area Reserve resulted in count totals of seven Maui Parrotbills, 58 'Akohekohe, and two of the three Po'ouli known to remain in the world (LT). All are critically *Endangered* species. This achievement on a one-day CBC is unprecedented and not likely to be equaled again. Totals for non-endangered Maui 'Amakihi (248), Maui 'Alauahio (123), 'Iwi (143), and 'Apapane (abundant) were also notably high.


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**SA** In a crowning achievement for The Peregrine Fund's captive bird hatching and rearing program, 14 Puaiohi (small Kaua'i thrush, *Endangered*) were released in late January and February and are doing well. These birds were all hatched in captivity last summer from captive-hatched parents. The release site in the Pihea/Alaka'i area of Kaua'i is separated from the range currently occupied by the wild population. By end of March, four of the released birds had already formed pairs, built nests, and laid eggs. Two other females wandered a couple of km into the range of the wild birds and paired with wild males (AL). The Kaua'i rare bird team is carefully monitoring both populations, and hopes are high for some notable productivity this season.

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