

HAWAII 2012

Apr 1, 2012 to Apr 11, 2012
George Armistead



From left to right, highlights from Hawaii: Oahu Amakihi, Red-tailed Tropicbird, a foraging Akepa, a graceful Laysan Albatross, and the highly endangered Palila (Photos by guide George Armistead)

We ran our Hawaii tour a little later than usual in 2012, and it worked out very well indeed. While the situation with the native birds on Kauai continues to cause real alarm among conservationists, Hawaii overall is still home to fantastic birds, and we felt lucky to connect with most of our target species.

We began in Oahu with a full slate of activities for the first day that involved some forest birding, some seabirding, and a little shorebirding. We spent just two nights on this, the most densely populated Hawaiian Island, and had great encounters with the Oahu Amakihi, a somewhat cooperative Oahu Elepaio, and a gorgeous Bristle-thighed Curlew.

On Kauai we visited the incomparable Alakai wilderness, and while it is sad to know how the native forest birds there have declined so dramatically, we were thrilled to have so many good encounters with Anianiau, and also the Kauai Elepaio, among others. Our pelagic boat trip proved a great success and we had Wedge-tailed and Sooty shearwaters constantly in view and also were very lucky to have sightings of Bulwer's Petrel and Newell's Shearwater! Our visit to Kilauea Point National Wildlife Refuge yielded land-based sightings of other seabirds, several of which were nesting, like Red-footed Booby and Laysan Albatross.

We finished up on the Big Island where we had some big target birds remaining. After admiring the steam vents and craters at Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, and tallying some Hawaiian Black Noddies there, we headed over to the Kona side of the island where we spent our final three nights. The apex of any birding trip to Hawaii is a visit to Hakalau National Wildlife Refuge. This is the only place we saw where native birds actually are common and at times outnumber non-native birds. I'iwi were fluttering around noisily everywhere and we quickly tallied great encounters with Hawaii Creeper, Akepa, Omao, and even the incomparable Akiapola'au! A final venture into the dry forest netted us exquisite sightings of the imperiled and beautiful Palila.

My thanks to Lance Tanino, David Kuhn, and Rob Pacheco for helping to make the trip such a success, each adding his own brand of expertise. And thanks to all of you for being such good travelers and for making this such a fun trip to guide! I hope I'll see you out birding again soon.

--George

For more information about this tour, including future departures, visit our website at www.fieldguides.com. And to see this same triplist online, go to www.fieldguides.com/triplists/hai12LIST.pdf and you will find the list in its entirety.

KEYS FOR THIS LIST

One of the following keys may be shown in brackets for individual species as appropriate: * = heard only, I = introduced, E = endemic, N = nesting, a = austral migrant, b = boreal migrant

BIRDS

Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)

HAWAIIAN GOOSE (*Branta sandvicensis*) – The state bird, and one native species that appears to be doing quite well, especially on Kauai where even 10 years ago they were rather rare. The lack of mongooses on Kauai allows them to prosper there. [E]

MALLARD (*Anas platyrhynchos*)

HAWAIIAN DUCK (*Anas wyvilliana*) – We saw good numbers on Kauai where they too prosper due to lack of mongooses, and a Mallard eradication program. All those on the Garden Isle are supposedly pure or nearly so, sharing few if any genes with Mallards. Known as Koloa locally. [E]

NORTHERN SHOVELER (*Anas clypeata*)

NORTHERN PINTAIL (*Anas acuta*)

RING-NECKED DUCK (*Aythya collaris*)

GREATER SCAUP (*Aythya marila*) – One on the Big Island.

Odontophoridae (New World Quail)

CALIFORNIA QUAIL (*Callipepla californica*) – Scads on the Big Island. [I]

Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies)

GRAY FRANCOLIN (*Francolinus pondicerianus*) [I]

BLACK FRANCOLIN (*Francolinus francolinus*) [I]

ERCKEL'S FRANCOLIN (*Francolinus erckelii*) [I]

JAPANESE QUAIL (*Coturnix japonica*) – Amazingly we saw one this year. Granted it was not seen by all, and it was only seen in flight, but still any sighting of this species is a good one. We found it in route to Hakalau NWR. [I]

RED JUNGLEFOWL (*Gallus gallus*) – No shortage of them on Kauai! A real highlight of course. Originally introduced by the Polynesians, some proportion of the ones on Kauai are believed to have been from original Polynesian stock. [I]

KALIJ PHEASANT (*Lophura leucomelanos*) – Though an attractive species they wreak some havoc by feeding on the endemic land snails and spreading nonnative seeds deep into native forest, thus transforming the forest. As usual we saw them well around Volcano. [I]

RING-NECKED PHEASANT (*Phasianus colchicus*) [I]

INDIAN PEAFAWL (*Pavo cristatus*) [I]

WILD TURKEY (*Meleagris gallopavo*) [I]

Diomedidae (Albatrosses)

LAYSAN ALBATROSS (*Phoebastria immutabilis*) – Wow! How many other places in the world do you have to "brake for albatrosses"? Not many. Seeing these birds and their nestlings on Kauai was incredibly special. With a world population of 2.5 million and counting, this species now breeds more and more commonly among the main Hawaiian Islands (and also has colonized islands in Mexico). The bulk of them breed on Midway and Laysan.

BLACK-FOOTED ALBATROSS (*Phoebastria nigripes*) – A couple seen on our pelagic.

Procellariidae (Shearwaters and Petrels)

MOTTLED PETREL (*Pterodroma inexpectata*) – Always nice to see, but they never hang around very long, or come very close. Often by the time the guides have called them out they are already disappearing. We had at least 5 sightings this year, with one or two making fairly nice passes.

WEDGE-TAILED SHEARWATER (*Puffinus pacificus*) – Seeing some at the colony at Kilauea Point was appreciated by all, and especially those of us that opted out of the pelagic. Offshore we saw our fairshare as well, with lots making nice close visits to the boat.

SOOTY SHEARWATER (*Puffinus griseus*) – Large numbers on our pelagic this year, with near 200 total recorded. These are the largest totals we have ever recorded of this species in our 10 years of tours here.

TOWNSEND'S SHEARWATER (NEWELL'S) (*Puffinus auricularis newelli*) – WOW! An endangered bird and one we

were extremely lucky to see. This was the first time we've recorded it on the tour, and it gave us nice views. [E]

Phaethontidae (Tropicbirds)

WHITE-TAILED TROPICBIRD (*Phaethon lepturus*) – Gorgeous and we enjoyed leisurely views. Simply lovely birds.

RED-TAILED TROPICBIRD (*Phaethon rubricauda*) – Watching them from Oahu and then again at Kilauea Point was most satisfying.

Fregatidae (Frigatebirds)

GREAT FRIGATEBIRD (*Fregata minor*) – As is often the case I believe all that we saw were adult females.

Sulidae (Boobies and Gannets)

BROWN BOOBY (*Sula leucogaster*) – Fairly numerous on the pelagic.

RED-FOOTED BOOBY (*Sula sula*) – Hundreds at Kilauea Point, and scattered elsewhere around Kauai. We saw a few from Oahu as well.

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

CATTLE EGRET (*Bubulcus ibis*)

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (*Nycticorax nycticorax*)

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

HAWAIIAN HAWK (*Buteo solitarius*) – Yes! After having missed this species last year due to constant rain, I was extremely relieved when Debbie spotted this bird! Great views. [E]

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

COMMON MOORHEN (HAWAIIAN) (*Gallinula chloropus sandvicensis*) – Though the AOU has split this bird from those in Europe, they opted not to split the Hawaiian birds. Stay tuned as things could change. [E]

HAWAIIAN COOT (*Fulica alai*) – Seen commonly at various wetlands. Historically considered both a deity and a delicacy by the native Hawaiian peoples. [E]

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

PACIFIC GOLDEN-PLOVER (*Pluvialis fulva*) – The Kolea is prominently featured on this trip, and we saw them daily, and in fine feather.

Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets)

BLACK-NECKED STILT (HAWAIIAN) (*Himantopus mexicanus knudseni*) – A handsome stilt we saw on numerous occasions, and one that may deserve species status. Compared to mainland birds they are resident/non-migratory, and have more extensive black on the neck and head. [E]

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

WANDERING TATTLER (*Tringa incana*) – The "Ulili" was seen several times.

BRISTLE-THIGHED CURLEW (*Numenius tahitiensis*) – I believe it was Juliette that spotted this bird for us. At a time when we were crunched for time, it was soooo nice to drive up to the spot get out of the car and find one immediately. We enjoyed nice studies of this handsome and unique shorebird.

RUDDY TURNSTONE (*Arenaria interpres*)

SANDERLING (*Calidris alba*)

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

LAUGHING GULL (*Leucophaeus atricilla*) – Keeping company with the species below, and a scarce bird in the archipelago.

FRANKLIN'S GULL (*Leucophaeus pipixcan*) – We had a pair in nice breeding plumage at the Kona Sewage Treatment Plant which was a good find indeed. Some Hawaii birders went to see them after we discovered them.

BROWN NODDY (*Anous stolidus*) – Several seen on the pelagic.

BLACK NODDY (HAWAIIAN) (*Anous minutus melanogenys*) – A few seen on the pelagic, but more satisfying was seeing them flying around the base of the chain of craters road.

WHITE TERN (*Gygis alba*) – Right from our hotel in Honolulu! Handsome birds.

SOOTY TERN (*Onychoprion fuscatus*) – Abundant off Oahu (mostly distant), but we saw few elsewhere, with just a few on our pelagic.

Pteroclididae (Sandgrouse)

CHESTNUT-BELLIED SANDGROUSE (*Pterocles exustus*) – Gary's hunch paid dividends and we enjoyed some decent views of this difficult species. [I]

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) [I]

SPOTTED DOVE (*Streptopelia chinensis*) [I]

ZEBRA DOVE (*Geopelia striata*) [I]

Psittacidae (Parrots)

ROSE-RINGED PARAKEET (*Psittacula krameri*) – Lots in Oahu (where we even saw a blue one) and a few on Kauai. [I]

Strigidae (Owls)

SHORT-EARED OWL (HAWAIIAN) (*Asio flammeus sandwichensis*)

Monarchidae (Monarch Flycatchers)

HAWAII ELEPAIO (*Chasiempis sandwichensis*) – This was the last one we needed, and we saw it at several locations on the Big Island. The Elepaios are split as of July 2010. Recent research shows that all Big Island elepaios are the same species, and probably the same subspecies, with clinal differences in appearance due to climate (i.e. humidity) in the areas they inhabit. We saw them in several places including the humid forest where they are darker and the dry forest where they are whiter (sometimes dramatically so).

KAUAI ELEPAIO (*Chasiempis sclateri*) – We saw them several times, and David even showed us a nest with an incubating adult. [E]

OAHU ELEPAIO (*Chasiempis ibidis*) – A tricky bird, and alas not all of us got on the one this year. More than half of us however got decent views of this endangered species. [E]

Alaudidae (Larks)

SKY LARK (*Alda arvensis*) [I]

Cettiidae (Bush-Warblers and Allies)

JAPANESE BUSH-WARBLER (*Cettia diphone*) [I*]

Pycnonotidae (Bulbuls)

RED-VENTED BULBUL (*Pycnonotus cafer*) [I]

RED-WHISKERED BULBUL (*Pycnonotus jocosus*) [I]

Muscicapidae (Old World Flycatchers)

WHITE-RUMPED SHAMA (*Copsychus malabaricus*) [I]

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

OMAO (*Myadestes obscurus*) – After having some difficulty with this species initially in Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, we had splendid views at Hakalau. [E]

Timaliidae (Babblers)

CHINESE HWAMEI (*Garrulax canorus*) – Pretty good views this year of an often secretive species. We spotted one singing from far away and were able to get him in the scope for good views. [I]

RED-BILLED LEIOTHRIX (*Leiothrix lutea*) – Seen several times, mostly fleetingly, but I think everyone at some point got a good view of one. [I]

Zosteropidae (White-eyes)

JAPANESE WHITE-EYE (*Zosterops japonicus*) [I]

Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)

NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD (*Mimus polyglottos*) [I]

Sturnidae (Starlings)

COMMON MYNA (*Acridotheres tristis*) [I]

Emberizidae (Buntings, Sparrows and Allies)

SAFFRON FINCH (*Sicalis flaveola*) [I]
RED-CRESTED CARDINAL (*Paroaria coronata*) [I]
YELLOW-BILLED CARDINAL (*Paroaria capitata*) [I]

Cardinalidae (Cardinals and Allies)

NORTHERN CARDINAL (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) [I]

Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)

WESTERN MEADOWLARK (*Sturnella neglecta*) [I]

Fringillidae (Siskins, Crossbills, and Allies)

HOUSE FINCH (*Carpodacus mexicanus*) – Yellow ones, orange ones, gold ones, red ones. [I]

YELLOW-FRONTED CANARY (*Serinus mozambicus*) [I]

PALILA (*Loxioides bailleui*) – Thankfully we found them easily, as this species precipitous decline has everyone terrified about what is in store for them. An attractive species, this endangered species has a tiny range and much degraded habitat. There are apparently only about a 1000 left. [E]

HAWAII AMAKIHI (*Hemignathus virens*) – Happily quite common on the Big Island, and males are nice rich yellow. [E]

OAHU AMAKIHI (*Hemignathus flavus*) – Our first 'drep' of the trip seen well just outside Honolulu. [E]

KAUAI AMAKIHI (*Hemignathus kauaiensis*) – Numbers in the Alaka'i have declined in recent years. It took some effort to see several well this year but the big heavy bill of this amakihi was evident when we finally did get one to sit still. [E]

AKIAPOLAAU (*Hemignathus munroi*) – YES! This can be a tough bird to see, so to find a lone, silent foraging bird was most satisfying. We enjoyed good studies. Somewhat similar to an amakihi in structure and plumage, but this species is larger, with more sturdy legs, and a unique bill. [E]

ANIANIAU (*Magnumma parva*) – Apparently rather distantly related to the Amakihi, this species is unique to its genus. We had many great encounters with this Kauai specialty in the Alakai wilderness. [E]

HAWAII CREEPER (*Oreomystis mana*) – Several seen well on the Big Island. [E]

AKEPA (HAWAII) (*Loxops coccineus coccineus*) – Great show with this species, as we found a couple singing, and another pair performing flight displays and then others were foraging at close range. [E]

IIWI (*Vestiaria coccinea*) – Seeing one on Kauai was a nice treat, but at Hakalau NWR, they put on a right good show. A perennial favorite on the tour, and certainly one of the planet's greatest birds. [E]

APAPANE (*Himatione sanguinea*) – Quite common on Kauai, and abundant in places on the Big Island. [E]

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

HOUSE SPARROW (*Passer domesticus*) [I]

Estrildidae (Waxbills and Allies)

LAVENDER WAXBILL (*Estrilda caerulea*) – Yes, an exotic and introduced, but still awfully charming. [I]

COMMON WAXBILL (*Estrilda astrild*) [I]

AFRICAN SILVERBILL (*Euodice cantans*) [I]

NUTMEG MANNIKIN (*Lonchura punctulata*) [I]

CHESTNUT MUNIA (*Lonchura atricapilla*) [I]

JAVA SPARROW (*Lonchura oryzivora*) [I]

MAMMALS

BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN (*Tursiops truncatus*)

HUMPBACK WHALE (*Megaptera novaeangliae*)

SMALL INDIAN MONGOOSE (*Herpestes auropunctatus*) [I]

HAWAIIAN MONK SEAL (*Monachus schauinslandi*) [E]

AFRICAN WILD ASS (*Equus asinus*) [I]

DOMESTIC GOAT (*Capra hircus*) [I]

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Totals for the tour: 89 bird taxa and 6 mammal taxa