



Field Guides Tour Report

Hawaii 2018

Mar 29, 2018 to Apr 7, 2018

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A spectacular orange glow at the Kilauea Volcano in Volcano National Park on our evening visit there. Photo by guide Chris Benesh.

Hawaii is a place of contradictions. Its forests are places of great beauty and its endemic honeycreepers are some of the most interesting examples of adaptive radiation of an ancestral finch in an island archipelago. These finches have evolved into highly specialized species like the spritely Apapane, the striking I'iwi, the Pine Grosbeak-like Palila, and perhaps the most specialized of the extant species, the 'Akiapola'au, with its short, chisel like mandible and highly decurved maxilla. We saw a total of ten native Fringillids during our visit to the islands of Oahu, Kauai, and Hawaii. Hawaii is also home to a great diversity of seabirds, from tiny Black Noddies to massive Laysan Albatrosses, and unsurpassed opportunities for up close experiences with tropicbirds, shearwaters, and boobies. And what a treat to see Bristle-thighed Curlews on their wintering grounds!

Looming in the background of any birder's visit to the islands is the knowledge that Hawaii is also a place of mass avian extinction over the past several hundred years, with at least 23 species lost during that time from the three islands visited on our tour. Particularly haunting are the songs and photos recorded of the last Kauai O'o from 1987; recordings of the Kama'o, a large thrush found on Kauai and last seen in 1989; the Oahu 'Alauahio last documented in 1968 though tantalizing sightings occurred up until 1990; the spectacular scythe billed Kauai 'Akialoa, lost from Kauai in 1969; and photos and recording of the yellow headed finch O'u lost in 1989. Sadly, a few more species are slipping away toward extinction as warming temperatures allow for avian malaria to creep higher into the mountains, and high energy storms and disease degrade the quality of the forests.

Despite the realities facing Hawaii, there is much to see and experience there. The geology alone is amazing. Testament to the power forces at work here, Volcano National Park and the Kilauea observation area we visited closed permanently following the major eruption that began on May 3rd. What a wondrous sight to see the bright orange glow of Kilauea disappear as it became shrouded in fog during our evening outing there. The spectacular Waimea Canyon on Kauai was also quite memorable.

Thanks to all of you for making the trip out to the islands with Dan and me. It was a great adventure! — Chris

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).

SNOW GOOSE (*Anser caerulescens*) – Two distant birds scoped at the Big Island Country Club.

CAKCLING GOOSE (*Branta hutchinsii*) – One was hanging out at the Kona Water Treatment Plant.

CANADA GOOSE (*Branta canadensis*)

HAWAIIAN GOOSE (*Branta sandvicensis*) – Some fantastic views of this species, better known as Nene. Staging a comeback. [E]

NORTHERN SHOVELER (*Spatula clypeata*) – A fair number in Kona.

HAWAIIAN DUCK (*Anas wyvilliana*) – We eventually connected with some good views of this mallard-like endemic. [E]

MALLARD (*Anas platyrhynchos*)

LESSER SCAUP (*Aythya affinis*) – A female was hanging out at the Kona WTP.

Odontophoridae (New World Quail)

CALIFORNIA QUAIL (*Callipepla californica*) [I]

Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies)

INDIAN PEAFOWL (*Pavo cristatus*) – We had one on the Big Island. This species recently became a countable one in Hawaii. [I]

CHUKAR (*Alectoris chukar*) [I]

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

BLACK FRANCOLIN (*Francolinus francolinus*) [I]

GRAY FRANCOLIN (*Francolinus pondicerianus*) – Seemingly the scarcest of the introduced francolin in Hawaii, we did have a good sighting in Oahu and again at a few spots on the Big Island. [I]

RED JUNGLEFOWL (*Gallus gallus*) – An iconic bird on Kauai! [I]

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

KALIJ PHEASANT (*Lophura leucomelanos*) – Some good views of this species at Volcano. [I]

WILD TURKEY (*Meleagris gallopavo*) [I]

Diomedidae (Albatrosses)

LAYSAN ALBATROSS (*Phoebastria immutabilis*) – Amazing to see this species so well at the Kilauea Lighthouse area and young birds at Princeville.

Procellariidae (Shearwaters and Petrels)

WEDGE-TAILED SHEARWATER (*Ardenna pacifica*) – Some seen at the nesting burrows and a few in flight at the Kilauea Lighthouse area.

Phaethontidae (Tropicbirds)

WHITE-TAILED TROPICBIRD (*Phaethon lepturus*) – Seen over a few of the large craters and one at the Kilauea Lighthouse.

RED-TAILED TROPICBIRD (*Phaethon rubricauda*) – These stunners were common at the Kilauea Lighthouse.

Fregatidae (Frigatebirds)

GREAT FRIGATEBIRD (*Fregata minor*)

Sulidae (Boobies and Gannets)

BROWN BOOBY (*Sula leucogaster*) – A few were seen just offshore on Kauai.

RED-FOOTED BOOBY (*Sula sula*) – Terrific views of this species at the Kilauea Lighthouse.

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

CATTLE EGRET (*Bubulcus ibis*)

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) – At least thirty of these were at the Kona WTP.

Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills)

WHITE-FACED IBIS (*Plegadis chihi*) – Considered scarce in Hawaii, we saw three of these at the Kona WTP.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

HAWAIIAN HAWK (*Buteo solitarius*) – We had a terrific show of this species at the Kilauea Volcano and again for some on the Pua Akala tract in Hakalau. [E]

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

COMMON GALLINULE (HAWAIIAN) (*Gallinula galeata sandvicensis*) – We saw a total of three of this endemic subspecies on Kauai. [E]

HAWAIIAN COOT (*Fulica alai*) – One was on Oahu while the others were seen on the Big Island. [E]

Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets)

BLACK-NECKED STILT (HAWAIIAN) (*Himantopus mexicanus knudseni*) – Another endemic subspecies seen both on Kauai and again on the Big Island. [E]

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

PACIFIC GOLDEN-PLOVER (*Pluvialis fulva*) – Known locally as the Kolea, we saw them in a wide variety of habitats often among urban settings.

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

BRISTLE-THIGHED CURLEW (*Numenius tahitiensis*) – One of the highlights of our visit to Oahu, we had good views of this species at the Kahuku GC and James Campbell NWR.

RUDDY TURNSTONE (*Arenaria interpres*)

SANDERLING (*Calidris alba*)

WANDERING TATTLER (*Tringa incana*) – Most memorable was the large number of these evident at the Kealakehe Wastewater Treatment Plant on the Big Island.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

LAUGHING GULL (*Leucophaeus atricilla*) – Dan spotted one at the Kealakehe WTP that was spending the spring at this location.

BLACK NODDY (MELANOGENYS) (*Anous minutus melanogenys*) – Good scope looks at this species in the lava cliffs on the Big Island.

WHITE TERN (*Gygis alba*) – Wonderful to see this delicate species nesting in the park near our hotel on Oahu.
SOOTY TERN (*Onychoprion fuscatus*) – A few of these were seen offshore during our seawatch from Lydgate State Park on Kauai.
LEAST TERN (*Sternula antillarum*) – Three were at the Kealakehe WTP on the Big Island where they have recently nested.

Pteroclididae (Sandgrouse).

CHESTNUT-BELLIED SANDGROUSE (*Pterocles exustus*) – After a bit of a wait we connected with one that Mary spotted for us! [I]

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves).

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) [I]

SPOTTED DOVE (*Streptopelia chinensis*) [I]

ZEBRA DOVE (*Geopelia striata*) [I]

Strigidae (Owls).

SHORT-EARED OWL (HAWAIIAN) (*Asio flammeus sandwichensis*) – A few of these lovely owls seen, known here as Pueo.

Psittaculidae (Old World Parrots).

ROSE-RINGED PARAKEET (*Psittacula krameri*) – Some of these extremely long tailed parrots were at Kapiolani Park on Oahu. [I]

ROSY-FACED LOVEBIRD (*Agapornis roseicollis*) – There were four of these at the Waikoloa Skatepark on the Big Island where this species has been nesting since 2014. [I]

Psittacidae (New World and African Parrots).

RED-MASKED PARAKEET (*Psittacara erythrogenys*) – Seen by some at the Kaloko Fish Pond.

Monarchidae (Monarch Flycatchers).

HAWAII ELEPAIO (MAUNA KEA) (*Chasiempis sandwichensis bryani*) – We had three of this Mauna Kea form on the Palila Trail on the Big Island. This form has the frosty headed look. [E]

HAWAII ELEPAIO (HILO COAST) (*Chasiempis sandwichensis ridgwayi*) – Seen at Hakalau Forest on the Pua Akala Tract. This form has a rich, buffy face. [E]

KAUAI ELEPAIO (*Chasiempis sclateri*) – Quite a few of these were seen at the Koke'e State Park on Kauai. [E]

OAHU ELEPAIO (*Chasiempis ibidis*) – We tracked down a couple of these along the lower 'Aiea Loop Trail on Oahu. [E]

Alaudidae (Larks).

EURASIAN SKYLARK (*Alauda arvensis*) [I]

Pycnonotidae (Bulbuls).

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

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

Scotocercidae (Bush Warblers and Allies).

JAPANESE BUSH WARBLER (*Horornis diphone*) [I*]

Zosteropidae (White-eyes, Yuhinas, and Allies).

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

Leiothrichidae (Laughingthrushes and Allies).

CHINESE HWAMEI (*Garrulax canorus*) [I*]

RED-BILLED LEIOTHRIX (*Leiothrix lutea*) – More easily heard than seen, we did get a few good looks along the way. [I]

Muscicapidae (Old World Flycatchers).

WHITE-RUMPED SHAMA (*Copsychus malabaricus*) – One of the fancier birds to be introduced to the islands. [I]

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies).

OMAO (*Myadestes obscurus*) – Our first ones were at Volcano National Park and again at Hakalau. This is the one remaining native thrush that seems to be holding its own. [E]

Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers).

NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD (*Mimus polyglottos*) [I]

Sturnidae (Starlings).

COMMON MYNA (*Acridotheres tristis*) [I]

Thraupidae (Tanagers and Allies).

RED-CRESTED CARDINAL (*Paroaria coronata*) [I]

YELLOW-BILLED CARDINAL (*Paroaria capitata*) [I]

SAFFRON FINCH (*Sicalis flaveola*) [I]

Cardinalidae (Cardinals and Allies).

NORTHERN CARDINAL (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) [I]

Icteridae (Troupials and Allies).

WESTERN MEADOWLARK (*Sturnella neglecta*) [I]

Fringillidae (Finches, Euphonias, and Allies).

PALILA (*Loxioides bailleui*) – Considered to be one of the rarest species of birds, we were quite fortunate to see as many as six of these in the mamane-naio forest on Mauna Kea. [E]

APAPANE (*Himatione sanguinea*) – This species is doing the best of all of the remaining Hawaiian honeycreepers. We had some wonderful encounters with it. [E]

IIWI (*Drepanis coccinea*) – A spectacular bird in every respect, this species was sadly doing quite poorly on Kauai. Fortunately, the population on the Big Island are doing better at the moment. [E]

AKIAPOLAAU (*Hemignathus wilsoni*) – A couple of these elusive birds were seen briefly along the Pua Akala Tract at Hakalau Forest. [E]

ANIANIAU (*Magumma parva*) – A handful of the Anianiau were present at Koke'e State Park on Kauai. It is the smallest of the honeycreepers. [E]

HAWAII AMAKIHI (*Chlorodrepanis virens*) – Seen in decent numbers on the big island. It was the common honeyeater in the mamane-naio forest as well as occurring in the ohia-koa forest. [E]

OAHU AMAKIHI (*Chlorodrepanis flava*) – Several of these were seen along the Lower 'Aiea Loop Trail. [E]

KAUAI AMAKIHI (*Chlorodrepanis stejnegeri*) – Well seen at Koke'e State Park. [E]

HAWAII CREEPER (*Loxops mana*) – A few of these were seen at Hakalau. we also learned that its Hawaiian name had recently been uncovered, the Alawi. [E]

HAWAII AKEPA (*Loxops coccineus*) – We saw several including a bird incubating along the Pua Akala Tract. [E]

HOUSE FINCH (*Haemorhous mexicanus*) [I]

YELLOW-FRONTED CANARY (*Crithagra mozambica*) [I]

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

HOUSE SPARROW (*Passer domesticus*) [I]

Estrildidae (Waxbills and Allies)

COMMON WAXBILL (*Estrilda astrild*) [I]

RED AVADAVAT (*Amandava amandava*) [I]

AFRICAN SILVERBILL (*Euodice cantans*) [I]

SCALY-BREASTED MUNIA (*Lonchura punctulata*) [I]

CHESTNUT MUNIA (*Lonchura atricapilla*) [I]

JAVA SPARROW (*Lonchura oryzivora*) [I]

MAMMALS

HUMPBACK WHALE (*Megaptera novaeangliae*)

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

WILD BOAR (*Sus scrofa*) [I]

DOMESTIC CATTLE (*Bos taurus*) [I]

DOMESTIC GOAT (*Capra hircus*) [I]

DOMESTIC SHEEP (*Ovis aries*) [I]

Herps

BROWN ANOLE (*Anolis sagrei*) [I]

GREEN SEA TURTLE (*Chelonia mydas*)

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

There were a few additional critters seen that did not make it into the main list. These included:

Gold Dust Day Gecko (*Phelsuma laticauda*)

Jackson's Chameleon (*Trioceros jacksonii*)

Asian House Gecko (*Hemidactylus frenatus*)

A few of us saw the local Lesser Brown Scorpion (*Isometrus maculatus*).

Also, there were quite a few amazing fishes hanging out behind our hotel in Kona that a few folks saw on the final morning. These included Great Barracuda and Peppered Moray among others. We even had two species of crab, the Horned Ghost Crab and the Thin-shelled Rock Crab!

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