



*Field Guides Tour Report*

**Hawaii 2019**

Apr 2, 2019 to Apr 11, 2019  
Chris Benesh & Dave Stejskal

*For our tour description, itinerary, past triplists, dates, fees, and more, please [VISIT OUR TOUR PAGE](#).*



*The Palila was our final endemic of the tour, and we had great views of this specialty on the slopes of Mauna Kea. Photo by guide Chris Benesh.*

Hawaii has certainly seen a huge upswing in birding interest ever since the American Birding Association decided to include Hawaii in the scope of their ABA area list! Truth be told, my interest in coming to the islands had never been very strong, knowing full well the ecological history of the Hawaiian chain with its loss of native species and invasion of non-native species (both animal and plant species). But, I'm sure glad I did finally come to Hawaii! The remaining native landbirds are pretty special, the seabirds are terrific, and the scenery is much more impressive than I had imagined. In fact, I'll likely return to the islands sometime in the not-too-distant future.

We started our trip with a short visit to Oahu, sampling the remnant habitats along the 'Aiea Loop Trail above Honolulu and the coastal environs on the north side of the island. We found our first native landbirds here (Oahu Amakihi and Oahu Elepaio) and also scored on a few wintering Bristle-thighed Curlews and our first impressive Laysan Albatross.

Next on the itinerary was the northernmost island of Kauai, where we divided our time between the native forests of Koke'e State Park, the northern coastal habitats of Kilauea Point and Hanalei NWRs, and the open ocean off of the town of Waimea on the west side of the island. That diversity of habitats translated into a fine diversity of birds for us with another three species of Hawaiian honeycreepers and Kauai Elepaio, a good variety of inland waterbirds like Hawaiian Goose, Hawaiian Duck, and Hawaiian Coot, and some great seabirds like Mottled Petrel and that surprise Kermadec Petrel!

Our final stop was the big island of Hawaii where we really got into quite a bit of the beautiful remaining highland native forest in Hawaii Volcanoes NP on the slopes of Kilauea Volcano and at Hakalau Forest NWR on the slopes of Mauna Kea. We tacked on an additional five species of Hawaiian honeycreepers in these habitats, thrilling at such fantastic species as Apapane, I'iwi, and the super-rare 'Akiapola'au, plus our third Elepaio species and our only native thrush species, the Omao. Our final endemic, the fabulous Palila, was the prize for our final full morning of the tour.

Many thanks to all of you who joined Chris and me on this short trip to the islands! You were all fabulous travel companions and you made the trip all the more enjoyable for the two of us to guide. We hope to see all of you again down the road on another birding adventure with Field Guides! Dave

## 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).*

**CACKLING GOOSE** (*Branta hutchinsii*) – A solitary long-staying individual was seen on our final afternoon at the Kealakehe sewage ponds. [b]

**HAWAIIAN GOOSE** (*Branta sandvicensis*) – We found this handsome endemic goose rather easily on both Kauai and on the Big Island. This represents one of the biggest conservation successes in Hawaii. [E]

**NORTHERN SHOVELER** (*Spatula clypeata*) – A single drake at the Kealakehe sewage ponds on our final afternoon of the tour. [b]

**HAWAIIAN DUCK** (*Anas wyvilliana*) – This is another one of the extant endemic waterfowl species that's doing rather well currently, though there is a hybridization threat with Mallard throughout its range here. We saw 'pure' birds on Kauai only. [E]

### *Odontophoridae (New World Quail).*

**CALIFORNIA QUAIL** (*Callipepla californica*) – Introduced here and only seen on the dry southwestern slope of Mauna Kea on the Big Island. [I]

### *Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies).*

**INDIAN PEAFOWL** (*Pavo cristatus*) – A countable ABA bird here on the Kona Coast of the Big Island, where a self-sustaining population exists. [I]

**CHUKAR** (*Alectoris chukar*) – We saw birds in the same spot high along the new Saddle Road on the Big Island. [I]

**ERCKEL'S FRANCOLIN** (*Pternistis erckelii*) – The largest and most visible of the three introduced francolins here. [I]

**BLACK FRANCOLIN** (*Francolinus francolinus*) – We certainly all heard this one on the Big Island and a majority of the group probably got some sort of look either here or earlier on Kauai. [I]

**GRAY FRANCOLIN** (*Francolinus pondicerianus*) – Our local guides on the Big Island knew exactly where to look for this one, the smallest of the three introduced francolins. [I]

**RED JUNGLEFOWL** (*Gallus gallus*) – I really had no expectations regarding the status of this one on the islands, but I was blown away by how abundant it was on Kauai! Everywhere! [I]

**RING-NECKED PHEASANT** (*Phasianus colchicus*) – Most easily seen on the Big Island on this tour. [I]

**KALIJ PHEASANT** (*Lophura leucomelanos*) – These introduced pheasants are certainly acclimated to the presence of humans on the Big Island! [I]

**WILD TURKEY** (*Meleagris gallopavo*) – It was very strange to see this one displaying in the grasslands on the dry slopes of Mauna Kea. [I]

### *Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves).*

**ROCK PIGEON** (*Columba livia*) [I]

**SPOTTED DOVE** (*Streptopelia chinensis*) – This and the next species were seen daily on this tour. [I]

**ZEBRA DOVE** (*Geopelia striata*) [I]

**MOURNING DOVE** (*Zenaida macroura*) – A single flyby near the Kona Coast on the Big Island for some. [I]

### *Pteroclididae (Sandgrouse).*

**CHESTNUT-BELLIED SANDGROUSE** (*Pterocles exustus*) – We found at least eight birds on the ball fields near our hotel on the Big Island. Another odd introduction that seems to be doing fairly well, at least locally. [I]

### *Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots).*

**COMMON GALLINULE (HAWAIIAN)** (*Gallinula galeata sandvicensis*) – We saw quite a few of these at the Hanalei NWR on Kauai. The race here is endemic to the islands. [EN]

**HAWAIIAN COOT** (*Fulica alai*) – This endemic coot was recorded on every island. All but one of our birds (at the Kealakehe sewage ponds) were the white-shielded morph. [E]

### *Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets).*

**BLACK-NECKED STILT (BLACK-NECKED)** (*Himantopus mexicanus mexicanus*) – A couple of birds on our way into Hanalei NWR on Kauai appeared to be these mainland American birds (Chris got a photo), a form that's exceedingly rare in Hawaii.

**BLACK-NECKED STILT (HAWAIIAN)** (*Himantopus mexicanus knudseni*) – This distinctive endemic race was seen very well on every island, but best on Kauai at Hanalei NWR [E]

### *Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings).*

**PACIFIC GOLDEN-PLOVER** (*Pluvialis fulva*) – These were seen on just about every open patch of grass throughout the islands, even up into the highlands. [b]

### *Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies).*

**BRISTLE-THIGHEd CURLEW** (*Numenius tahitiensis*) – We all enjoyed fantastic looks at a few wintering birds on the golf course on Oahu that first afternoon of the tour. If you're not into climbing over the tundra and up steep hills near the Arctic Circle in Alaska to see this one on the breeding grounds, this is definitely the way to do it! Our tagged bird, ol' #87, had been tagged in 2013 at that very spot (thanks to Howard's sleuthing!). [b]

**RUDDY TURNSTONE** (*Arenaria interpres*) – Our second-most common migrant shorebird of the tour, well behind #1 Pacific Golden-Plover. [b]

**SANDERLING** (*Calidris alba*) [b]

**WANDERING TATTLER** (*Tringa incana*) – Seen well on Oahu and on the Big Island. [b]

**LESSER YELLOWLEGS** (*Tringa flavipes*) – A single vagrant bird was spotted at the Kealakehe sewage ponds on our final afternoon. [b]

### *Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers).*

**BROWN NODDY** (*Anous stolidus*) – Mostly seen from our boat during our pelagic trip off of Waimea.

**BLACK NODDY (MELANOGENYS)** (*Anous minutus melanogenys*) – Great looks at this gray-tailed subspecies at both Waimea on our pelagic and at Hōlei Sea Arch on the Big Island.

**WHITE TERN** (*Gygis alba*) – Fantastic studies of birds sitting on eggs – in trees! – on Oahu on our first two days of the tour. #700 for Diane!! [N]

**SOOTY TERN** (*Onychoprion fuscatus*) – Several distant flybys on the Oahu coast during the first couple of days of the tour.

**LEAST TERN** (*Sternula antillarum*) – At least one bird on the final afternoon at the Kealakehe sewage ponds.

*Phaethontidae (Tropicbirds)*

**WHITE-TAILED TROPICBIRD** (*Phaethon lepturus*) – We had some very memorable looks at this gorgeous seabird from Kilauea Point NWR on our second visit there, and saw other distant birds at various craters & cliffs on Kauai and the Big Island.

**RED-TAILED TROPICBIRD** (*Phaethon rubricauda*) – Beautiful looks on both of our visits to Kilauea Point NWR on Kauai.

*Diomedidae (Albatrosses)*

**LAYSAN ALBATROSS** (*Phoebastria immutabilis*) – We had a couple of great experiences with this huge tubenose, with our first encounter being an extremely close flyby at Kahuku Golf Course on Oahu, and then a few active nests in the Princeville neighborhood on Kauai. Our close flyby was a banded adult and, again, thanks to Howard's sleuthing, it was determined that it was banded in 2015 and that it hatched on or before 2014. [N]

*Procellariidae (Shearwaters and Petrels)*

**KERMADEC PETREL** (*Pterodroma neglecta*) – Chris and I had this bird in the backs of our minds when we went to visit Kilauea Point NWR on Kauai, but we held out little hope of actually seeing it since there were no 2019 sightings before our visit. Well, I guess someone has to be first!

**MOTTLED PETREL** (*Pterodroma inexpectata*) – This was the highlight of our short pelagic trip off of Waimea off the west coast of Kauai. This one's always been high on my 'most wanted' list, and it was a thoroughly satisfying experience! [a]

**WEDGE-TAILED SHEARWATER** (*Ardenna pacifica*) – We had a couple of birds at a nest at Kilauea Point NWR and then quite a number of birds on our Kauai pelagic trip – including the bird at the end that had us thinking of bigger things! [N]

**SOOTY SHEARWATER** (*Ardenna grisea*) – A couple of close flybys on the Kauai pelagic trip.

*Fregatidae (Frigatebirds)*

**GREAT FRIGATEBIRD** (*Fregata minor*) – A few birds at Kilauea Point NWR on both of our afternoon visits.

*Sulidae (Boobies and Gannets)*

**BROWN BOOBY** (*Sula leucogaster*) – Mostly on Kauai, but a few of us saw a couple of birds out in front of our Oahu hotel during breakfast.

**RED-FOOTED BOOBY** (*Sula sula*) – An abundant nester at Kilauea Point NWR. [N]

*Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)*

**CATTLE EGRET** (*Bubulcus ibis*) – It looks like Cattle Egret has successfully colonized Hawaii... As far as anyone can tell, all of the birds here are the nominate B.i. ibis, or Western Cattle-Egret.

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

*Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills)*

**WHITE-FACED IBIS** (*Plegadis chihi*) – This seems to be a regular 'vagrant' to the ponds on the Kona Coast of the Big Island.

*Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)*

**HAWAIIAN HAWK** (*Buteo solitarius*) – This was the only Hawaiian endemic that we recorded on the tour that really left us wanting. [E]

*Strigidae (Owls)*

**SHORT-EARED OWL (HAWAIIAN)** (*Asio flammeus sandwichensis*) – That bird flying around the canyon at Koke'e State Park on Kauai during the full daylight hours was pretty strange.

*Psittaculidae (Old World Parrots)*

**ROSE-RINGED PARAKEET** (*Psittacula krameri*) – Including a field full of them near Waimea on Kauai! [I]

**ROSY-FACED LOVEBIRD** (*Agapornis roseicollis*) – A couple of birds at the little park on the Big Island during our picnic lunch. The only other place to see countable Rosy-faced Lovebirds in the ABA area is in Phoenix. [I]

*Psittacidae (New World and African Parrots)*

**RED-MASKED PARAKEET** (*Psittacara erythrogenys*) – Several birds flying next to the roadside near Kona on the Big Island. [I]

*Monarchidae (Monarch Flycatchers)*

**HAWAII ELEPAIO** (*Chasiempis sandwichensis*) – We saw a couple of different phenotypes on the tour on the Big Island – the first is what we had on the list as race bryani up at the Hawaii Volcanoes NP, and the second was at the Palila spot on the dry side of the mountain, which we called C.s. sandwichensis. New research shows that there really are no assignable subspecies in Hawaii Elepaio. Great looks at both, though!

**KAUAI ELEPAIO** (*Chasiempis sclateri*) – We found a couple of very confiding birds at Koke'e SP on Kauai. [E]

**OAHU ELEPAIO** (*Chasiempis ibidis*) – This was our first Elepaio species on the tour and it proved to be the most difficult to see, or see well, at least. The birds that we saw were at a much lower elevation than the other Elepaios that we saw on Kauai and the Big Island, and were certainly within the 'mosquito zone', so one might conclude that they might have developed some immunity to avian pox and avian malaria. [E]

*Alaudidae (Larks)*

**EURASIAN SKYLARK** (*Alauda arvensis*) – In the grasslands on the dry west and southwest slopes of Mauna Kea on the Big Island, [I]

*Pycnonotidae (Bulbuls)*

**RED-VENTED BULBUL** (*Pycnonotus cafer*) – Seemingly everywhere on Oahu. [I]

**RED-WHISKERED BULBUL** (*Pycnonotus jocosus*) – Maybe only slightly less common than the above species on Oahu. [I]

*Scotocercidae (Bush Warblers and Allies)*

**JAPANESE BUSH WARBLER** (*Horornis diphone*) – After hearing a bunch of these throughout Kauai, we were all pretty stunned to find one singing in the open fairly high in a tree along the roadside at Hanalei NWR! [I]

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

**JAPANESE WHITE-EYE** (*Zosterops japonicus*) – Seen daily on all islands. [I]

Leiiothrichidae (Laughingthrushes and Allies)

**CHINESE HWAMEI** (*Garrulax canorus*) – We never could track this one down for a look. Grrrrr... [I\*]

**RED-BILLED LEIOTHRIX** (*Leiiothrix lutea*) – A few excellent looks at this introduced babbler from China on both Oahu and the Big Island. [I]

Muscicapidae (Old World Flycatchers)

**WHITE-RUMPED SHAMA** (*Copsychus malabaricus*) – Especially common on Oahu and Kauai. [I]

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

**OMAO** (*Myadestes obscurus*) – We had some super looks at this endemic thrush - a close relative of our Townsend's Solitaire - on the Big Island, especially in the lovely Hakalau Forest NWR. This is, by far, the easiest of the endemic Hawaiian thrushes to see today. [E]

Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)

**NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD** (*Mimus polyglottos*) – Only a few of these on the Big Island. [I]

Sturnidae (Starlings)

**COMMON MYNA** (*Acridotheres tristis*) – Recorded daily on every island. [I]

Fringillidae (Finches, Euphonias, and Allies)

**PALILA** (*Loxioides bailleui*) – This was the last of our 'gettable' Hawaiian endemic landbirds, and it didn't disappoint! We were all treated to really memorable encounters with this big, fancy finch in the remaining patchy mamane-naio habitat on the dry s.w. slope of Mauna Kea. [E]

**APAPANE** (*Himatione sanguinea*) – Easily the most common of the 'Hawaiian Honeycreepers' encountered on the tour. It was a fantastic experience hearing the dawn chorus of these birds at Kilauea Lodge on the Big Island, and then to hear these, Iiwi, Hawaii Amakihi, and Hawaii Creeper all singing vigorously at the Hakalau Forest NWR, giving us a glimpse of what things must have been like here in the past. [E]

**IWI** (*Drepanis coccinea*) – Hanging on and doing pretty well up at the Hakalau Forest NWR on the Big Island, where we had a number of great encounters. Now, if we could only get rid of that gorse and plant more native forest... [E]

**AKIAPOLAAU** (*Hemignathus wilsoni*) – We were incredibly lucky with the timing on this one. We hadn't gotten more than 100 yards down the main trail at Hakalau when another birder got us onto a close, foraging male right next to the trail! We then spent the next 30 minutes or so enjoying our looks and watching the foraging behavior of this Endangered Hawaiian endemic. [E]

**ANANIAU** (*Magumma parva*) – We did well with this tiny creeper, the smallest of the bunch, up at Koke'e State Park on Kauai. This one proved to be ABA #700 for Ann! [E]

**HAWAII AMAKIHI** (*Chlorodrepanis virens*) – Our best spot for this tiny endemic creeper was near the Koko'Olau Crater in Hawaii Volcanoes NP on our arrival day there in the park. [E]

**OAHU AMAKIHI** (*Chlorodrepanis flava*) – We actually had quite a few of these along the 'Aiea Loop Trail in Keaiwa Heiau SP above Honolulu on Oahu. It's great to see a native landbird doing well right in the middle of the lowland 'mosquito zone'. Our first endemic landbird of the tour. [E]

**KAUAI AMAKIHI** (*Chlorodrepanis stejnegeri*) – It was frustrating and disappointing that we had to work so hard and so long to get a look at one of these birds up at the Koke'e SP on Kauai. It sounds like numbers have dropped quite a bit since our last few tours here. [E]

**HAWAII CREEPER** (*Loxops mana*) – This endemic creeper really is a 'creeper', and we found it working nuthatch-like on major limbs and trunks in the wet ohia forest up along the trails in Hakalau Forest NWR. [E]

**HAWAII AKEPA** (*Loxops coccineus*) – We found a couple of pairs of these distinctive orange Hawaiian endemics along the trail at Hakalau Forest NWR. This one turned out to be ABA #700 for Howard! [E]

**HOUSE FINCH** (*Haemorhous mexicanus*) [I]

**YELLOW-FRONTED CANARY** (*Crithagra mozambica*) – Recorded on all of the islands we visited. [I]

Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)

**WESTERN MEADOWLARK** (*Sturnella neglecta*) – Just a couple of sightings on Kauai. [I]

Cardinalidae (Cardinals and Allies)

**NORTHERN CARDINAL** (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) – A familiar sight from home and recorded daily on the tour. [I]

Thraupidae (Tanagers and Allies)

**RED-CRESTED CARDINAL** (*Paroaria coronata*) – The more common of the two South American Paroaria cardinals. [I]

**YELLOW-BILLED CARDINAL** (*Paroaria capitata*) – Only on the Big Island. [I]

**SAFFRON FINCH** (*Sicalis flaveola*) [I]

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

**HOUSE SPARROW** (*Passer domesticus*) [I]

Estrildidae (Waxbills and Allies)

**COMMON WAXBILL** (*Estrilda astrild*) – Seen almost daily, with many dozens in some grassy spots on Oahu. The most common of the introduced Estrildids on the tour. [I]

**RED AVADAVAT** (*Amandava amandava*) – Our local guides on the Big Island knew exactly where to look for this tiny Asian finch. [I]

**AFRICAN SILVERBILL** (*Euodice cantans*) – Our best were at the ballfields that held the Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse on the Big Island. [I]

**SCALY-BREASTED MUNIA** (*Lonchura punctulata*) – Sometimes called the Nutmeg Mannikin. [I]

**CHESTNUT MUNIA** (*Lonchura atricapilla*) – Lots of these on Oahu and Kauai. [I]

**JAVA SPARROW** (*Lonchura oryzivora*) – We found this one on every island. Now a very rare bird on Java, where it's from originally. [I]

---

## MAMMALS

**HOUSE MOUSE** (*Mus musculus*) [I]

**ROUGH-TOOTHED DOLPHIN** (*Steno bredanensis*) – We had very good looks at these from the boat on our pelagic trip off of Waimea on Kauai.

**HUMPBACK WHALE** (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) – Seen distantly at both Kilauea Point NWR and off of Waimea on Kauai.

**SMALL INDIAN MONGOOSE** (*Herpestes auropunctatus*) – One of the most common introduced predators in the chain - where there were no mammalian predators historically. [I]

**HAWAIIAN MONK SEAL** (*Monachus schauinslandi*) – A single distant individual lounging on an isolated beach near Waimea. [E]

**WILD BOAR** (*Sus scrofa*) [I]

**DOMESTIC CATTLE** (*Bos taurus*) – Still roaming in the wild on the Big Island. [I]

**DOMESTIC GOAT** (*Capra hircus*) – Lots of these near the coast on the west side of the Big Island. [I]

**DOMESTIC SHEEP** (*Ovis aries*) – A few up high on the slopes of Mauna Kea. [I]

#### *Herps*

**GOLD DUST DAY GECKO** (*Phelsuma laticauda*) – A few folks saw this one at our hotel on Kauai. Introduced here from Madagascar. [I]

**BROWN ANOLE** (*Anolis sagrei*) [I]

**GREEN ANOLE (CAROLINA ANOLE)** (*Anolis carolinensis*) [I]

**GREEN SEA TURTLE** (*Chelonia mydas*) – Seen off of Kilauea Point NWR.

#### *Other Creatures of Interest*

**LITTLE BROWN SCORPION** (*Isometrus maculatus*) – Seen by Chris and others near our hotel on the Kona Coast on our final night together.

**HORNED GHOST CRAB** (*Ocypode ceratophthalmus*) – On the beach in Oahu.

---

## **ADDITIONAL COMMENTS**

---

**Totals for the tour: 90 bird taxa and 9 mammal taxa**