

Trip Report — Hawaii 2025

March 13-21, 2025 with Cory Gregory & Mandy Talpas



The Red-tailed Tropicbird is both graceful and downright gorgeous. Lucky for us, we had dozens of these at a nesting colony and sometimes quite close! Here's an awesome photo by participant Dan Blower.

Hawaii, the most geographically isolated land mass in the world, is teeming with tropical wildlife, host to incredible vistas, and home to some of the most famous beaches on the planet. With birds, plants, and animals that you can't see anywhere else, this gorgeous island chain is a must-see location for birders. Our trip together aimed to see as many of these as we could and, I'm happy to report, we did very well! Mandy and I wanted to thank each of you for joining us, we certainly appreciate it, but also we hope you made memories that will last a lifetime. After all, that's a lot of what these trips are all about for us.

Our trip, which began on the island of Oahu, kicked off on a Friday morning when we climbed out of Honolulu and up to the Manoa Cliffs area. It didn't take long for us to encounter some very common species; the trees were alive with Red-vented and Red-whiskered bulbuls, Warbling White-eyes, Red-crested Cardinal, and our main target, the endemic Oahu Amakihi. Success! Found on no other island in the world, this tiny honeycreeper bopped around with white-eyes until we had our fill. Dropping back down into Honolulu, we stopped in the city to admire the many nesting White Terns. These ghostly, unique seabirds don't mind one bit nesting in the huge trees along the busiest roads! We also stopped at Kapiolani Park that morning where we appreciated the migrant Pacific Golden-Plovers as well as some more introduced species like Java Sparrow and Yellow-fronted Canary. We took our picnic lunch to the beautiful coastline of southeastern Oahu and ate while we admired the dozens of Red-tailed Tropicbirds swirling right overhead! Not only was that spectacular in itself, we also were lucky and encountered the very rare Red-billed Tropicbird, a species that's not supposed to be in Hawaii at all! That afternoon we drove up into the hills and did some hiking. Our main target was the Oahu Elepaio, a rare endemic found only on Oahu. Although we enjoyed seeing the White-rumped Shama and Red-billed Leiothrix, the star was indeed the tiny elepaio which we ended up seeing very well. Before long, it was time to head back into town. What a great first day!



Hawaii has an interesting mix of native species, introduced ones, but also migratory ones. Here's one of the most common ones we encountered, the Pacific Golden-Plover. In winter, they don't need super pristine habitat. In fact, many of the ones we saw were in yards and city parks. Photo by guide Cory Gregory.

Today was another day in paradise and we had the luxury of exploring more of Oahu. After departing our comfortable hotel, we stopped along the coastline and admired thousands of Sooty Terns, Red-footed Boobies, and a couple Brown Boobies. The vast seabird colony was very impressive! Our group made its way to a couple of marshes next to see a different mix of birds. Right away we started seeing the endemic subspecies of Common Gallinule and Black-necked Stilt, as well as Hawaiian Coots and even a rare Brant! We stopped at a nearby Marine Corp base and added a distant Caspian Tern and had better looks at Common Waxbill and Scaly-breasted Munia. It was quite warm though, and we kept moving before long. After making our way around to the north part of the island, and after lunch, we stopped at a golf course. Birding at a golf course? You bet! The star of the show here was the range-restricted Bristle-thighed Curlew, a large shorebird that winters in some parts of Hawaii and elsewhere in the south Pacific. Not

only did we find one, we found several, all foraging out in the short grass. Success! We eventually had to depart and make our way back to Honolulu for the evening.



Hawaii, given its remote location in the Pacific, is an important area for nesting seabirds and we saw this firsthand many times. Here's a Red-footed Booby on a nest! Photo by participant Mei Shyong.

The next day was an important one, it was the day we got to board a plane and fly to a different Hawaiian island. We were off to Kauai! We started birding right away when we landed and it didn't take long to find a flock of Chestnut Munias by our lunch cafe. Wouldn't you know it, our first birding stop after lunch was another golf course! But for good reason. It was here that we got to spend quality time with the Hawaiian Goose! As it so happens, there was also a rare Snow Goose there as well. On a nearby road, we were witness to some amazing behavior by the huge Laysan Albatrosses that nest in the neighborhood. Incredibly, we even got to watch an adult feeding a youngster! That afternoon we birded at Hanalei National Wildlife Refuge and scored another endemic, the rare Hawaiian Duck. Shortly after,

we birded from the overlook in Kilauea Point National Wildlife Refuge which was eye-opening; dozens of Red-footed Boobies were nesting down below us, Great Frigatebirds soared in lazy circles offshore, and nesting Wedge-tailed Shearwaters made several close passes to us. Whew, what a day! A new island and new birds. Success, once again.



No, we weren't in the Himalayan foothills! One of the fancier introduced birds is the Kalij Pheasant and we got to see several of these throughout our trip including this one on the Big Island. Photo by guide Cory Gregory.

We woke up to some different sights and sounds on our first morning in Kauai. We hit the road and ate a picnic breakfast before we started the climb up into the mountains. As we made our way up, through the grassy clearings and open forest, we started to encounter some new birds. A couple of Black Francolin was the highlight and before long, we were at the beautiful Waimea Canyon overlook. Talk about a nice view! Off in the distance, we could see White-tailed Tropicbirds swirling around which means we completed the 3 tropicbird sweep on this trip! Most of the morning, however, was spent birding the Kaluapuhi Trail. Almost immediately we started to

encounter some new and exciting birds. The tiny Kauai Elepaio was adorable as ever, we actually saw a Japanese Bush Warbler, we scored a half dozen Apapane, the tiny Anianiau, and even heard the very rare Kauai Amakihi! Later that day, we visited the Kawai'ele State Waterbird Sanctuary and tallied Hawaiian Goose, Hawaiian Coot, Black-necked Stilt, Wandering Tattler, and Black-crowned Night-Heron. All in all, it was a very productive day with lots of lifers for everyone!



Apapane! This is a Hawaiian endemic that we were keen to see. Thankfully, we had many sightings of these specialties from multiple islands. Photo by participant Mei Shyong.

The following morning we ventured to the Sleeping Giant Trailhead where we made the climb up into the wet forest, serenaded by the White-rumped Shamas the entire way. One of the highlights here was actually getting to see the skulky Chinese Hwamei as it sang from a perch. We also had a quick encounter with some Greater Necklaced Laughingthrush but they didn't stick around for long. After our birding here and our descent, we drove to the southern tip of Kauai where we visited Po'ipu Beach. Here, the attraction

may not have been birds, actually. Why? Because on the beach were several, point-blank Hawaiian Monk Seals! Not only that, but there were also several Hawaiian Green Sea Turtles, an endangered species, resting on the sandy beaches. It was incredibly fascinating being able to see these at such close range. Later that day we took another short flight, this time to the Big Island, our home for the next several nights.



We certainly spent considerable time hoping to see this gifted songster. Eventually, we were rewarded with quick glimpses of this Chinese Hwamei but it didn't stay in the open for long. Photo by guide Cory Gregory.

Dawn broke over Kona and we were off to some new locations in search of some new birds. We opted to visit the sewage lagoons first which was a good move; we really cashed in! Our triplist grew with the additions of Cackling Goose, Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Long-billed Dowitcher, Lesser Yellowlegs, Sanderling, African Silverbill, and Yellow-billed Cardinal. After about an hour of great birding, we turned inland and headed up into the mountains. We finally made it to the Palila Discovery Trail where we saw some new species such as Erckel's Spurfowl,

Eurasian Skylark, and Hawaii Amakihi. That afternoon we continued our search for new trip birds and came away with Wild Turkey, Ring-necked Pheasant, Short-eared Owl, and Red Avadavat. Near the town of Waikoloa we also encountered one of the stranger species, the Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse! Native to sub-Saharan Africa and India, more than 700 of these gamebirds were Introduced in Hawaii in the 1960s where they still persist today in low numbers. We closed out the day by returning to Kona and birding our way up Kaloko Drive. It didn't take long for our keen group to find our target species, the island-endemic Hawaiian Hawk! The young bird was very vocal and it called almost the entire time we watched it. After enjoying some Red-masked Parakeets as well, we had to turn back towards town. All in all, another great day filled with new birds.



Hawaiian Goose (*Branta sandvicensis*) is endemic to the Hawaiian Islands and the name *sandvicensis* comes from the old name of Hawaii, the Sandwich Islands. Photo by participant Mei Shyong.

We ventured out from Kona again this morning in hopes for more new things that we had yet to stumble into. One such bird was the Chukar. After a bit

of searching along the roadsides I'm pleased to say that we DID find them, much to the delight of Deborah! Afterwards, we slowly climbed uphill in the 4x4 vehicles, higher and higher, until we reached Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge. We stepped out of the vehicles and into paradise where the air was fresh and cool, and the plants and trees we saw were native; this is what Hawaiian birding is all about! We spent several hours slowly hiking down the Pua Akala Tract and most of us would agree afterwards that this was the best birding of the entire trip, what a finale! The trees were alive with various endemics. Hawaii Elepaio bounced from branch to branch, a couple of Omao perched in the open for us, and Apapane and liwi were downright common. Some of the rarer endemics we also saw mixed in with the Hawaii Amakihis included the wondrous Akiapolaau with its crazy bill, the endemic Hawaii Creeper, and even the gorgeous male Hawaii Akepa. This truly was the perfect conclusion to this trip!



A gifted songster, the White-rumped Shama was a welcome sound although, of course, they aren't actually native to Hawaii. Photo by guide Cory Gregory.

Other wildlife encounters included:

Humpback Whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) - Seen offshore many times.

Small Indian Mongoose (*Urva auropunctata*) - Not native, sadly.

Hawaiian Monk Seal (*Neomonachus schauinslandi*) - Incredible views along the beach

Domestic Ass (*Equus asinus*)

Eurasian Wild Pig (*Sus scrofa*)

Domestic Cattle (*Bos taurus*)

Domestic Goat (*Capra hircus*)

Brown Anole (*Anolis sagrei*)

Green Sea Turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) - Along with the monk seals, incredibly close views.

Hawaii is such a remote archipelago and because it's so diverse, this has translated into a wonderful mix of endemic birds. Our trip together was a great one and we just want to say thank you to all of you for joining us on this adventure. We hope you made lasting memories and that you'll look back fondly on Hawaii, it's culture, its scenery, its plants, and of course the amazing birds! Thanks to Nicole in the office for prepping such a smooth tour, and especially Mandy for her excellent guidance, amazing birding skills, and incredible depth of knowledge!

Thanks again and be safe wherever your travels take you next. Good birding! You can see my complete trip report on eBird at this link: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/355774>

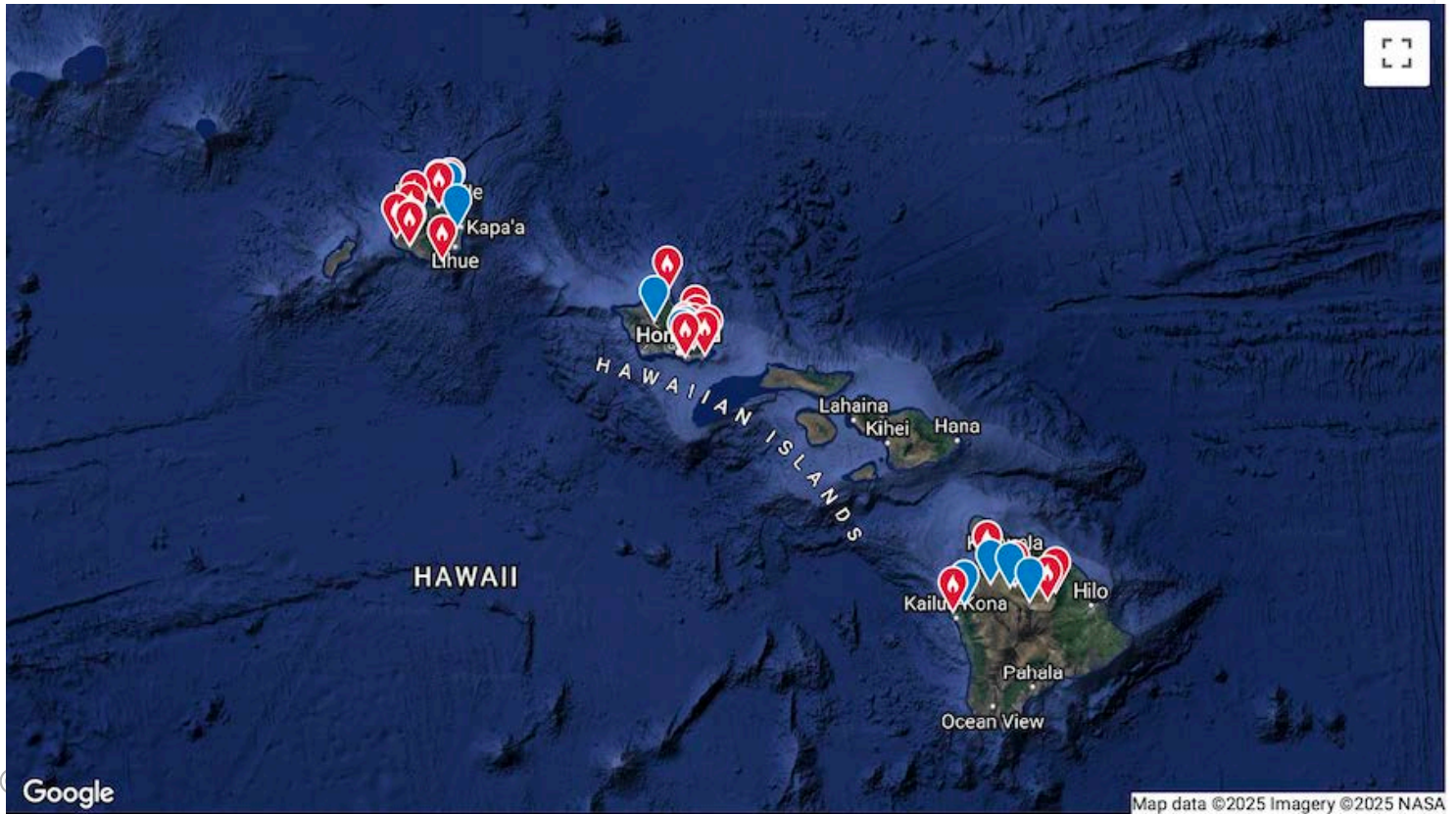
-- Cory Gregory (Curlew)



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For a narrative summary of this tour, including a Field Guides photo gallery and additional media for this trip...

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 12

LIFERS











































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Species Observed

Show all details

| | | | |
|-----|-----------------------------|--|---|
| 1 | Snow Goose | <i>Anser caerulescens</i> |  1  1 |
| 1 | Brant | <i>Branta bernicla</i> |   1 |
| 1 | Cackling Goose | <i>Branta hutchinsii</i> |   1 |
| 101 | Hawaiian Goose | <i>Branta sandvicensis</i> |  1  4 |
| 14 | Northern Shoveler | <i>Spatula clypeata</i> |   1 |
| 6 | Hawaiian Duck | <i>Anas wyvilliana</i> |  1  1 |
| 2 | Northern Pintail | <i>Anas acuta</i> |   1 |
| 3 | Green-winged Teal | <i>Anas crecca</i> |   1 |
| 1 | California Quail | <i>Callipepla californica</i> * |   1 |
| 10 | Wild Turkey | <i>Meleagris gallopavo</i> * |   1 |
| 2 | Ring-necked Pheasant | <i>Phasianus colchicus</i> * |   1 |
| 2 | Kalij Pheasant | <i>Lophura leucomelanos</i> *  |  1  1 |
| 2 | Red Junglefowl | <i>Gallus gallus</i> * |   1 |
| 8 | Gray Francolin | <i>Ortygornis pondicerianus</i> * |   3 |
| 7 | Black Francolin | <i>Francolinus francolinus</i> *  |   2 |
| 2 | Chukar | <i>Alectoris chukar</i> * |   1 |
| 10 | Erckel's Spurfowl | <i>Pternistis erckelii</i> * |   3 |
| 41 | Rock Pigeon | <i>Columba livia</i> * |   3 |
| 35 | Spotted Dove | <i>Spilopelia chinensis</i> * |   15 |
| 101 | Zebra Dove | <i>Geopelia striata</i> * |   15 |

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|------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|---|
| 2 | Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse | <i>Pterocles exustus</i> | * | ▶  1 |
| 15 | Common Gallinule | <i>Gallinula galeata</i> | | ▶  4 |
| 136 | Hawaiian Coot | <i>Fulica alai</i> | | ▶  5 |
| 42 | Black-necked Stilt | <i>Himantopus mexicanus</i> | | ▶  5 |
| 46 | Pacific Golden-Plover | <i>Pluvialis fulva</i> | | ▶  10 |
| 3 | Bristle-thighed Curlew | <i>Numenius tahitiensis</i> | | ▶  1  1 |
| 1 | Long-billed Dowitcher | <i>Limnodromus scolopaceus</i> | | ▶  1 |
| 8 | Wandering Tattler | <i>Tringa incana</i> | | ▶  3 |
| 1 | Lesser Yellowlegs | <i>Tringa flavipes</i> | | ▶  1 |
| 28 | Ruddy Turnstone | <i>Arenaria interpres</i> | | ▶  3 |
| 9 | Sanderling | <i>Calidris alba</i> | | ▶  1 |
| 17 | White Tern | <i>Gygis alba</i> | | ▶  3 |
| 2 | Brown Noddy | <i>Anous stolidus</i> | | ▶  1 |
| 1 | Black Noddy | <i>Anous minutus</i> | | ▶  1 |
| 2500 | Sooty Tern | <i>Onychoprion fuscatus</i> | | ▶  1 |
| 1 | Caspian Tern | <i>Hydroprogne caspia</i> | | ▶  1 |
| 5 | White-tailed Tropicbird | <i>Phaethon lepturus</i> | | ▶  2 |
| 1 | Red-billed Tropicbird | <i>Phaethon aethereus</i> | | ▶  2  1 |
| 44 | Red-tailed Tropicbird | <i>Phaethon rubricauda</i> | | ▶  1  3 |
| 5 | Laysan Albatross | <i>Phoebastria immutabilis</i> | | ▶  1  2 |
| 9 | Wedge-tailed Shearwater | <i>Ardenna pacifica</i> | | ▶  2 |
| 6 | Great Frigatebird | <i>Fregata minor</i> | | ▶  1 |
| 185 | Red-footed Booby | <i>Sula sula</i> | | ▶  3 |
| 5 | Brown Booby | <i>Sula leucogaster</i> | | ▶  1 |

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|-----|---|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| 23 | Black-crowned Night Heron | <i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i> | | ▶  5 |
| 76 | Western Cattle-Egret | <i>Ardea ibis</i> * | | ▶  8 |
| 2 | Hawaiian Hawk | <i>Buteo solitarius</i> | | ▶  2 |
| 5 | Short-eared Owl | <i>Asio flammeus</i> | | ▶  2 |
| 12 | Rose-ringed Parakeet | <i>Psittacula krameri</i> * | | ▶  4 |
| 25 | Red-crowned Amazon | <i>Amazona viridigenalis</i> * | | ▶  1 |
| 13 | Red-masked Parakeet | <i>Psittacara erythrogenys</i> * | | ▶  1 |
| 3 | Hawaii Elepaio | <i>Chasiempis sandwichensis</i> | | ▶  1 |
| 3 | Kauai Elepaio | <i>Chasiempis sclateri</i> | | ▶  1 |
| 1 | Oahu Elepaio | <i>Chasiempis ibidis</i> | | ▶  1 |
| 8 | Eurasian Skylark | <i>Alauda arvensis</i> * | | ▶  3 |
| 5 | Red-whiskered Bulbul | <i>Pycnonotus jocosus</i> * | | ▶  2 |
| 16 | Red-vented Bulbul | <i>Pycnonotus cafer</i> * | | ▶  5 |
| 4 | Japanese Bush Warbler | <i>Horornis diphone</i> * 🇺🇸 | ▶  1 |  2 |
| 43 | Warbling White-eye | <i>Zosterops japonicus</i> * | | ▶  8 |
| 9 | Red-billed Leiothrix | <i>Leiothrix lutea</i> * | | ▶  4 |
| 6 | Chinese Hwamei | <i>Garrulax canorus</i> * 🇺🇸 | ▶  1 |  4 |
| 2 | Greater Necklaced Laughingthrush | <i>Pterorhinus pectoralis</i> * ✓ | | ▶  1 |
| 120 | Common Myna | <i>Acridotheres tristis</i> * | | ▶  18 |
| 3 | Northern Mockingbird | <i>Mimus polyglottos</i> * | | ▶  2 |
| 3 | Omao | <i>Myadestes obscurus</i> | | ▶  1 |
| 16 | White-rumped Shama | <i>Copsychus malabaricus</i> * | ▶  1 |  6 |
| 10 | African Silverbill | <i>Euodice cantans</i> * ✓ | | ▶  2 |

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|----|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|--|
| 6 | Java Sparrow | <i>Padda oryzivora</i> | * | ▶  4 |
| 3 | Scaly-breasted Munia | <i>Lonchura punctulata</i> | * | ▶  1 |
| 47 | Chestnut Munia | <i>Lonchura atricapilla</i> | * | ▶  3 |
| 32 | Common Waxbill | <i>Estrilda astrild</i> | * | ▶  4 |
| 7 | Red Avadavat | <i>Amandava amandava</i> | * | ▶  1 |
| 13 | House Sparrow | <i>Passer domesticus</i> | * | ▶  4 |
| 19 | Apapane | <i>Himatione sanguinea</i> | | ▶  2 |
| 10 | Iiwi | <i>Drepanis coccinea</i> | | ▶  1 |
| 3 | Akiapolaau | <i>Hemignathus wilsoni</i> | | ▶  1 |
| 3 | Anianiau | <i>Magumma parva</i> | | ▶  1 |
| 16 | Hawaii Amakihi | <i>Chlorodrepanis virens</i> | | ▶  2 |
| 2 | Oahu Amakihi | <i>Chlorodrepanis flava</i> | | ▶  1 |
| 1 | Kauai Amakihi | <i>Chlorodrepanis stejnegeri</i> | ✓ | ▶  1 |
| 4 | Hawaii Creeper | <i>Loxops mana</i> | | ▶  1 |
| 3 | Hawaii Akepa | <i>Loxops coccineus</i> | | ▶  1 |
| 31 | House Finch | <i>Haemorhous mexicanus</i> | * | ▶  14 |
| 11 | Yellow-fronted Canary | <i>Crithagra mozambica</i> | * | ▶  2 |
| 5 | Western Meadowlark | <i>Sturnella neglecta</i> | * | ▶  3 |
| 9 | Northern Cardinal | <i>Cardinalis cardinalis</i> | * | ▶  6 |
| 32 | Red-crested Cardinal | <i>Paroaria coronata</i> | * | ▶  1  13 |
| 8 | Yellow-billed Cardinal | <i>Paroaria capitata</i> | * | ▶  2 |
| 8 | Saffron Finch | <i>Sicalis flaveola</i> | * | ▶  4 |

EXOTIC: PROVISIONAL

| | | | | |
|---|-------------------------|---------------------------|-----|---|
| 6 | Tanimbar Corella | <i>Cacatua goffiniana</i> | ✱ ✓ | ▶  1 |
|---|-------------------------|---------------------------|-----|---|

4

Rosy-faced Lovebird

Agapornis roseicollis



  1

EXOTIC: ESCAPEE

13

Mallard

Anas platyrhynchos



  3