

ORNITHOLIDAYS TOUR TO USA – HAWAII
I'iwis, Omaos & Nenes

11 – 25 April 2013



Leaders: David Kuhn and Simon Boyes

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A Personal Diary

A brief word about Hawaiian pronunciation: in the text and checklist below, many names have a glottal stop, marked with the symbol ʻ. So the Iʻiwi, one of the endemic honeycreepers, is pronounced I-iwi.

Thursday, 11 April

We have a full group of ten for the second Ornitholidays tour to Hawaii. Among them are many loyal travellers: Iain and Dave are notching up their 50th Ornitholidays tour – a real Hawaii Five-0! We meet up at Heathrow Terminal 1 for the day-time United Airlines flight to San Francisco. It's a ten hour flight, over dramatic ice-scapes of Greenland and Hudson Bay, but still only lunch-time when we arrive. Immigration formalities are speedy, and we collect our bags before handing them back to airport staff for the Hawaii flight. The onward United flight is a further five hours, and lands at Honolulu Airport on time at 1820 local time. As we approach, we fly over Pearl Harbour and its monument on the left. Hawaii is 11 hours behind BST. David Kuhn is at the baggage carousel to meet us; and we have two comfortable Dodge minibuses to take us to our hotel near Waikiki Beach. Most of the group are more interested in rest than dinner – but a few of us gather in the warm atmosphere of the outdoor terrace restaurant for a snack and a local beer before bed.

Friday, 12 April (Oahu)

After breakfast in a café near Waikiki, we start with a drive along the scenic Tantalus Drive, which winds through the forests above the city. The Oahu Amakihi soon appears, in the treetops, chasing off introduced Japanese White-eyes at one point. The most conspicuous Hawaiian birds are all introductions, while the remaining endemics usually need more careful searching. The amakihi is a small greenish honeycreeper with a downcurved bill, from Hawaii's one endemic family. This is *Drepanidae*, and its members are often referred to as drepanids. Living here in the lowlands where there are mosquitoes in the rainy season, the amakihis must have built up resistance to avian malaria. This introduced disease has hit the Hawaiian endemics hard, as they have historically had no resistance. Also heard at this point are introduced Red-billed Leiothrix and White-rumped Shama.

A drive to the north coast brings us to our next spot, the Kahuku golf course. On the way, we notice that Indian Mynas, Spotted and Zebra Doves are the most abundant wayside species. There are also a few Red-crested Cardinals, whose ancestors came from Brazil. Pacific Golden Plovers and Ruddy Turnstones are a common sight on the golf course, both assuming their smart breeding plumage before migrating north of the Arctic Circle. We start to find Bristle-thighed Curlews, another wintering species that will soon fly to Alaska. Some have leg-tags from a local banding programme here; one perches close enough to see clearly the bristle-like feathers that give the bird its name. There are ten or so, feeding in pairs on the short grass, and occasionally showing an orange rump in flight. They are much easier to see here than on their remote breeding grounds in the Arctic.

From a dune-top viewpoint we can watch a Humpback Whale breaching in one direction, and wildfowl on the James Campbell Wildlife Refuge in the other. These include Hawaiian Coot, a few Black-crowned Night Herons, Hawaiian Stilts (the endemic subspecies of Black-necked Stilt) as well as transitory Laughing Gull and Common Tern. After lunch in nearby Laie, we follow the coast road towards the south-east, until we reach Manana Island, also known as Rabbit Island. Here we set up scopes on the breeding colony of Sooty Terns, and watch a few Wedge-tailed Shearwaters, Brown Noddies and Red-footed Boobies passing by. White Terns, (often known by their former name of Fairy Terns), and more Humpback Whales complete the scene. We now have a total of ten Humpbacks for the day, including two breaching.

We head back to base, happy with our first day in the Hawaiian field. Dinner is a short distance on foot from the hotel, on the Waikiki seafront.

Saturday, 13 April (Oahu)

As I take a dawn swim on Waikiki Beach – only a few minutes' walk from our rooms – a pair of White Terns fly past on their way to the city park where they nest.

After a tasty Starbucks breakfast, our destination is a dry valley just east of Waikiki. Parking in a leafy suburb by the last homes, we strike out into the bush. Once taro was grown along these river beds, but now invasive scrub of *Albizia* and Christmasberry (among many other exotic trees and shrubs) has formed a secondary forest. A remnant population of Oahu Elepaio survives here, a monarch flycatcher. It needs a helping hand in the form of rat poison scattered in their territories to keep the nests safe. Passing Java Sparrow as we start our walk, we soon come across a singing Red-billed Leiothrix. This beautiful introduction from Asia is in the babbler family, and sings a pleasing repeated warble. Some way along the river bed, David's squeaking produces a dramatic response as a juvenile Elepaio investigates us, giving us long views, sometimes too close for focussing the bins. David also has a lichen-covered Elepaio nest to show us: probably the one from which this bird recently fledged. As we return to the vehicles, a White-rumped Shama perches on a garden wall by the vehicles.

There is time to return to our rooms for a mid-morning coffee. Now we set out to look for White Terns in Queen Kapiolani Park, right opposite our hotel. A pair appear immediately, perched together in a tree with horizontal branches. This species builds no nest, so flat branches are important for finding a safe depression for the single egg. Also here are Java Sparrows, Yellow-fronted Canaries, House Finches and Common Waxbills. It is strange to see Pacific Golden Plovers in their breeding plumage feeding among the palm trees, since they will shortly return to nest in the high Arctic tundra.

A substantial lunch is much enjoyed at *Good to Grill*, before we set out for the afternoon sea-watching. Returning to the area we visited yesterday evening, we watch a Red-tailed Tropicbird as it flies along the cliffs above us, and settles out of sight in a cave. Unfortunately it never reappears, so we turn our attention to the Wedge-tailed Shearwaters, Sooty Terns and Humpback Whales offshore. The east end of the island has many wonderful beaches, where surfers practise their skills. However, there are none of the huge waves craved by experienced surfers. Tonight's dinner is a buffet at a hotel within easy walking distance of our hotel.

Sunday, 14 April (Oahu to Big Island)

We enjoy a leisurely breakfast on the outdoor terrace at our hotel on a sunny, breezy morning. Soon afterwards we leave for the airport and catch the morning flight to Hilo, on the main island of Hawaii – always known just as the Big Island. Here, after some delay, we pick up two 4x4 minibuses. After dropping our luggage at the seaside hotel, we have lunch in town and head up into the hills – or more exactly a 4,000 ft volcano. For this we have to travel together in a larger bus, to accord with local licensing regulations. So, Patrick is our driver as we climb steadily to the aptly-named village of Volcano. Linda spots three soaring Hawaiian Hawks from the windows on the way. At the visitor centre, Apapanes are conspicuous, feeding on the red *lehua* flowers of the *ohia* trees (*Metrosideros polymorpha* – a close relative of the New Zealand pohutukawa, in the Myrtle family). These are bright scarlet honeycreepers, matching their favoured blossoms. Also here are Northern Cardinal and Saffron Finch.

We head down to the coast along the Chain of Craters road, through fields of lava mostly dating from the 1970s. The scale of the volcanic landscape is amazing as we traverse it for mile after mile. Its origin is the one currently active volcano on the island, Kilauea, one of the most active in the world. We stop in an area of lava that hits the ocean: in the caves of the small cliffs a population of Black Noddies nest – we watch them for a while both perched and in flight. Peter puts us onto a Green Turtle swimming just offshore.

Returning to the highlands, we take a walk along the rim of an impressive crater and walk down into a lava tube that has the approximate dimensions of an underground train tunnel. Here Apapanes are still more numerous, and we watch an Omao, an endemic thrush (or more specifically a solitaire), singing on an exposed branch. There are also Japanese White-eyes in mid-canopy. The tree-ferns are amazingly beautiful, and we enjoy listening to the evening chorus of Apapanes. It is one of David's favourite areas for sound recording. A confiding pair of Kalij Pheasants entertain us on the walk back.

At dusk we join many other visitors for the spectacle of the fires of Kilauea, surprisingly at a lower altitude than our vantage point at the Jaggar Museum. From day to day the mood of the volcano changes: occasionally it hurls out boulders, but now the glow from the flames is a steady but raging furnace. On the left side as we look, a fierce upward torrent of a million embers is pushed skywards with monumental force – great to watch, especially as darkness falls. We return to Hilo for a fine dinner at Café Pesto, where the locally caught fish *ono* is a particular favourite.

Monday, 15 April (Big Island)

After a long day yesterday, we opt for a relaxing one today. Breakfast in the hotel is followed by a drive back to the Volcano Village area. Along the Mauna Loa road, Kalij Pheasants appear along the verges, and Apapanes are singing and flying about whenever we stop. A morning ramble along the almost traffic-free road turns up great views of the Hawaiian Amakihi and the Hawaiian Elepaio. The amakihi is a small, yellow-green honeycreeper, with black lores: a close relative of the one we saw in Oahu on Friday. Like the Apapane, it is attracted to the red blossoms of the *ohia* trees. Sue and Bob provide the teamwork that finds us the elepaio. Also similar to the Oahu species, it is a female that flies to feed a recently fledged juvenile. Later a black-throated male appears. Unlike the Oahu Elepaio that we watched, these show no interest in David's squeaking noises. A few of us also see a butterfly similar to a Red Admiral: its name is Kamehameha, and it turns out to be one of only two endemic butterflies in the islands.

Lunch is outside a charming café in Volcano Village where the friendly staff produce soup and sandwiches to order. There are home-baked cookies and fruit to follow. Back in Hilo, we have an hour to relax: Peter and Sandra watch a Wandering Tattler in breeding plumage foraging along the shore outside the hotel. We set out again along the coast to the north. At Kalopa State Park, we walk in a patch of remnant lowland forest with open grassy areas, hoping to see the Hawaiian Hawks that have recently been nesting here. The large nest is easy to find – but not their occupants.

Another fine dinner at Café Pesto is much enjoyed by all.

Tuesday, 16 April (Big Island)

We have another day in Patrick's 14-seater bus to the slopes of Mauna Kea, the other great volcano on the Big Island. We take the Saddle Road, which heads west from Hilo. On the way, a walk at Pu'u O'o under cloudless skies takes all morning. This is an area of scattered *ohia* trees growing on an old flow of *pahoehoe* (smooth, unbroken) lava. I'iwis make a brilliant start: they are the larger cousin of the Apapane, even more scarlet, with a scythe-shaped red bill. We see them regularly along the trail. Next comes a perched Hawaiian Hawk, which allows a close approach. Later, we watch a juvenile hunger-calling, both at rest and in flight. This hawk is a *Buteo*, a close relative of our Buzzard, with a similar call. We come across a small group of Mouflon, an introduced sheep from the Caucasus, but they run away at our approach. The rams have huge horns.

At the far end of our walk is a *kapuka*, a term for the hills, covered in old forest, surrounded by lava flows in which the trees are far smaller. Most of the trees here are *Acacia koa*, with willow-like leaves. As soon as we enter, we find a Hawaiian Creeper, a small green relative of the amakihis. We spend much time quietly listening for the calls of the rare Akiapola'au, but without luck. All the same, the three new endemics are a pleasing haul. In the *kapuka* are also many Hawaiian Amakihis, as well as a few Apapanes and an Omao, the solitaire which we saw on Sunday. The dominant bird-song is the introduced Red-billed Leiothrix.

Driving on to the shoulder of Mauna Kea, we pass Chukar, Wild Turkey and California Quail, all introduced for sport. Eurasian Skylarks become a regular sight and a delight to hear. After our picnic lunch at over 6,000 ft, we set off for a walk to look for the Palila, another endemic drepanid that has evolved a bill like a crossbill. It specializes in feeding on the pods of the *mamane* tree (*Sophora chrysophylla*), and is seriously endangered. Its population has dropped by two-thirds in 20 years. After five minutes' walk, Sue asks David, "what's that bird?" Within seconds we are watching a fine pair of Palilas as they feed on *mamane* flowers, in no hurry to move on. Hawaii has unenviable record as the USA capital of species extinction. David expects the Palila to be the next bird to suffer this sad fate. After years of habitat loss and losing the fight against introduced predators, avian malaria is the latest killer. As feral pigs spread higher and higher up the mountains, they create wallows where the introduced mosquitoes breed.

Returning to town, we pick up supplies for tomorrow's picnic, and have two hours to relax at the hotel. Tonight's dinner is within walking distance, at Ponds Restaurant, which is built on stilts over a lagoon.

Wednesday, 17 April (Big Island)

Hilo has a reputation as a rainy place, and sure enough it's wet this morning. After breakfast at Ken's House of Pancakes, we head up the Saddle Road in heavy rain. Our destination is Hakalau Wildlife Refuge, on the east slopes of Mauna Kea. For ten miles we bump along a rough road, through cleared landscapes of introduced grasses where cattle used to graze. Here the common birds are Eurasian Skylark, Pacific Golden Plover, Erckel's Francolin, and both Common and Kalij Pheasants. A small flock of Wild Turkeys are conspicuous in one field. Near the forest, we detour a short distance to check a pond where Nene, the endemic Hawaiian Goose, can sometimes be seen. Through a light drizzle we watch four of these small, rare geese as they wander along the shore of the pond. At the reserve parking spot, there is another single Nene.

The Hakalau Forest is a beautiful open forest of *ohia* and *koa*. We spend the morning walking slowly down a track, in light April showers. During one dry spell an Akepa appears: a tangerine-coloured drepanid that feeds exclusively in *ohia*, more on insects than nectar. Later we see two more. Now we turn our attention to the final endemic of the Big Island, the Akiapola'au. For this we can ignore the *ohia* as this yellowish bird with a strange bill feeds only in *Acacia koa*. We have no luck in the morning, and take a break to enjoy a substantial picnic in a well-placed shelter with table and chairs. Thanks again to our staff team of Linda and Ann for preparing the various rolls to individual specifications!

Now the sun comes out, encouraging the abundant I'iwis to sing and display. There are also Hawaiian Amakihis, Apapanes and one or two Hawaiian Creepers to enjoy. Omaos are more visible here than in other places we have been – one even hops on the track ahead of us. This lovely forest gives a hint of how this eastern slope of the volcanoes must have originally appeared – with indigenous birds singing on all sides. At 1320 we are delighted to follow David's gaze to a male Akiapola'au in a *koa* at eye level to us. He had heard its song on the hillside below us. The long, curved upper mandible is visible and captured by Peter's camera. We read that it hammers with its blunt lower mandible on lichen-covered branches looking for insect larvae; then uses its ibis-shaped upper mandible to wrinkle the grub out. Now we have seen all the possible endemics on both islands we have visited, giving David cause for rejoicing. This last one is another rare species, easy to miss.

We return to Hilo, and have plenty of time to swim in the pool, enjoy the confiding Wandering Tattler which is on the shore again, and to relax. By popular request our last dinner here is a return to Café Pesto.

Thursday, 18 April (Big Island to Maui)

We leave the Big Island on the 0820 flight to Maui. The return of vehicles, check-in and breakfast are all easy and straight-forward at Hilo Airport. As we descend into Kahului, we see a flat, agricultural landscape, with a large volcano to the east, and a volcanic mountain range to the west. Most of the agriculture turns out to be huge sugar-cane plantations. Collecting the new vehicles, we drive to the hotel and check into our rooms. Our first outing is to Keilia Wildlife Refuge, an area of brackish lagoon and old shrimp ponds. There are Hawaiian Stilts, Hawaiian Coot and Pacific Golden Plover in great numbers, plus a few Ruddy Turnstone and Sanderling. Duck include the usual Mallard/Hawaiian Duck hybrids, plus a pure drake Mallard, (a migrant that is liable to be shot by the conservation authorities), and many Northern Shoveler. One of the hybrids has a nest with eight eggs on an embankment. We hope she returns soon, as the presence of mongoose traps suggests that she is in danger. At the end of our circuit, a nesting colony of Cattle Egrets includes a few Black-crowned Night Herons. Recently fledged Cattle Egrets with black bills cause confusion: within a week or two they will change to yellow.

Lunch is at a restaurant overlooking the harbour at Ma'alaea, where we can watch several Humpback Whales as they frolic offshore. West Maui is a famous calving ground from January to March, and there are many boats that leave the harbour to watch the whale action.

After a siesta back at the hotel, we set off up Haleakala, the great volcano in the south-east of the island. The ascent up to 10,023 feet is much steeper than the climb to Volcano on the Big Island, and involves many hairpin bends. We stop at Hosner Grove, just inside the national park at 6,500 ft, to look for the Alauahio or Maui Creeper. Of the Maui endemics this is the most widespread. We fail on the loop trail, except for Linda,

who sees a yellow male briefly. But back in the car-park we find two females, or perhaps a female and young. They are tiny, non-descript drepanids with a small, straight bill, for feeding on insects rather than nectar. They remind us of Goldcrests in their manner of foraging. Here also are old friends: I'iwi, Apapane and Hawaiian Amakihi. Climbing further in the vehicles, we watch several Chukar by the road as the vegetation becomes more and more sparse. Just below the summit, there is only bare lava, with clumps of wonderful plants named Silver Swords (*Argyroxiphium*, in the sunflower family). Unfortunately we are a few months too early to see a flowering specimen. A few months too early, or a few years too early: as the Silver Sword can take up to 50 years to flower, and then it dies.

From the top we can see the astronomical observatory on top of Mauna Kea, across the sea 80 miles away. Below us are layers of cumulus cloud: it's like a view from a plane but without the noise. With the temperature rapidly dropping, we photograph the fine sunset, and spend the next half-hour waiting for the rare Hawaiian Petrels to return from the sea, overhead, to their burrows around the summit. They dig them out of volcanic ash with their webbed feet. We never see one, but instead hear their haunting calls which give them their local name *Ua'u*. David, a passionate sound recorder, allows us to hear their calls magnified through his parabola.

An excellent dinner is at Marco's, an Italian restaurant back in Kahului: later than usual, but much enjoyed all the same.

Friday, 19 April (Maui)

Today we split into three groups: David takes Peter, Sandra, Dave T and Ann back up the slopes of Haleakala seeking the two remaining tricky Maui forest endemics on a steep trail; Bob and Linda opt for a relaxing day round the hotel; and the rest of us enjoy a leisurely day making further explorations of lowland Maui. After breakfast in the hotel, I enquire about whale watching boat trips from Ma'alea; and we decide to book one for the afternoon. It's an extra, but only costs \$26 each.

We start with a quick look at Kanoha Pond, near the airport. Here the usual suspects (Hawaiian Stilts, Hawaiian Coot, Pacific Golden Plovers and Ruddy Turnstone) are joined by a Wandering Tattler and a few Black-crowned Night Herons. One pair of stilts have just hatched two young, which are feeding themselves along the shore with the same confidence as their parents – yet they must be two days old at most. Next, following a tip-off from David, we visit a pond next to Long's Drugstore in Kihei, looking for a Wilson's Phalarope, a wind-blown migrant. Dave E finds it as soon as we arrive, swimming and finding plenty of food close to the pond edge. It never spins as phalaropes often do (as a technique for disturbing more insects). Whenever it flies to the middle of the pond, the nesting stilts chase it off again. Their normal migration would take them from wintering grounds in Argentina to breeding territories in Canada. A Chestnut Mannikin (or Munia, as it is known in its native Asia) perches on the reeds above the phalarope.

Now we return to the Kealia Wildlife Refuge, where we spent an hour yesterday. The magnificent visitor centre, built with federal funds, only opened nine months ago. We are warmly welcomed, especially as they seem short of visitors. In the scrub near the lagoons we see a pair of Mourning Doves, an introduction from mainland USA, and several Nutmeg Mannikins (confusingly named: it's the same species as Scaly-breasted Munia). There is a dowitcher feeding intently that allows a close approach. It calls twice and confirms its identity: Long-billed utters *keek* as this one does, as opposed to the Short-billed's *tu-tu-tu*. The latter is a rarity in Hawaii, whereas the Long-billed is a regular visitor in small numbers. Bill length is not a good field feature of these beautiful migratory waders. This one, already mostly in brick-red breeding plumage, is on its way to west Alaska or easternmost Siberia. Otherwise, Kealia's birds are much the same as yesterday.

Lunch is again on the terrace restaurant overlooking Ma'alea Harbour. The *Ocean Intrigue*, a sturdy catamaran operated by the Pacific Whale Foundation, casts off at two o'clock. Soon we are following a Humpback as it dives repeatedly, spending ten minutes or so underwater each time. Sometimes it allows longer looks as it exhales and rolls its humped back on the surface, in the characteristic manner so different from other great whales. Unfortunately it is not in the mood for breaching or pectoral-fin-slapping like many of the other Hawaii Humpbacks we have watched. For me the highlight of the experience is to hear the whale vocalizing underwater through the hydrophone dropped down by the ship's naturalist staff. It is loud, very varied, and often rather bovine in tone and phrase! Almost all the time the hydrophone is in the water, it sings. Bird-wise the voyage is a total non-event! Since Ma'alea is in a deep bay, it attracts neither tern nor

shearwater. We agree that this is a good way to spend the afternoon, and the naturalist commentary on the whales is very clear and informative.

Back at the hotel, we discover that the 'A Team' was soon rained off on the mountain. They managed good looks at the yellow male Maui Creeper, but of the Crested Honeycreeper and the Maui Parrotbill there was no sign. Dinner tonight is at Fernando's, a short walk across the road from the hotel. They cook a variety of fine Mexican meals, including plenty of *burritos* and *enchiladas*.

Saturday, 20 April (Maui to Kauai)

A leisurely start, with breakfast at 0800 in the hotel, gives Ann and me the chance of an early Pacific swim from the hotel's sandy beach. A Green Turtle pops its head out to observe us.

We fly to Lihue on Kauai – our fourth and final island. Unfortunately we arrive just after the San Francisco flight; and the car rental company is having a bad day, with two staff off sick. Finally, after waiting for too long, we have our two minibuses, and we are soon checking in at our hotel nearby. After a late lunch in Lihue, we head up to the north coast, passing Red Junglefowl on every verge – almost all in the original Indian forest plumage. Princeville is our destination, and in particular a well-heeled leafy suburb with views over the sea. Here, in the gardens, nest Laysan Albatrosses! There are two fluffy chicks in different cul-de-sacs, one on a lawn, another on a driveway and blocked off by parking cones for its safety. Both parents are nearby, keeping an eye on their single offspring, about three months old. Is this the least likely nesting garden bird? One chick has the company of a White-rumped Shama, an improbable combination but true! Also here is Java Sparrow, and another incongruous sight: a Pacific Golden Plover perched on a rooftop. David explains that the albatross were here long before the houses; and they have proved extremely tolerant and site-faithful despite all the changes to their nesting environment.

Nearby taro fields have our first pure Hawaiian Duck, with a few Nene and Hawaiian Coot. Nenes fare better here than on other islands, as the dreaded mongoose was never released here. Our last stop is near the lighthouse at Kilauea, where a colony of Red-footed Boobies are nesting in the trees. Almost all are of the white morph, with one lone dark individual. A single Red-tailed Tropicbird is incubating in a small cave in the cliff below, and a few Great Frigatebirds are perched here too. Now we can see Laysan Albatross in flight, exercising their six-foot wingspan. Wedge-tailed Shearwaters begin to fly higher off the sea, and circle towards their nesting burrows below us well before dusk. We have wonderful eye-level views of these large, slow-flapping seabirds. One can be seen landing, pausing, and disappearing into a burrow.

Dinner is at JJ's Broiler, a short walking distance from the hotel.

Sunday, 21 April (Kauai)

This morning is scheduled for our pelagic, looking for seabirds on a catamaran. We head out to the harbour at Kekaha in the south-west of the island. However, we drive there in steady rain and meet the captain when we arrive. He advises that we postpone as the rain shows no sign of abating. Also contributing to the decision are two factors: the shortage of shelter on the boat, and the fact that seabirds tend not to fly much in calm and wet conditions. So, we tentatively re-arrange the voyage for Tuesday afternoon, and put Plan B into action.

First we look for the rare and endangered Hawaiian Monk Seal on beaches along the south coast. We find two at Po'ipu. One is hauled up on the sand, the other swimming in the shallows. The beach warden allows a reasonably close approach. As we make our way north we stop for Chestnut and Scaly-breasted Munias, and for Western Meadowlark, perched on a tuft of grass in a field and singing. Lunch is at Garden Café, a popular spot that serves all kinds of home-grown produce. So, among the wraps and rice dishes come huge portions of salads. We rejoice as the rain stops.

Back at Kilauea, the road to the lighthouse is now open; so we can explore further than yesterday. We watch a Great Frigatebird chasing a Red-footed Booby until it releases its meal. Red-tailed Tropicbirds are flying past us, calling all the time. There are 15 or so, giving excellent views of the red bill and tail streamer, plus all-white wings. White-tailed Tropicbird is also possible here, but we see none. Wedge-tailed Shearwaters are a common sight nesting in burrows alongside the track, or sitting out at the entrance. Nenes are also everywhere, grazing the short grass or plucking berries from the bushes. Some are very confiding and come

too close for the photographers. We see a colony of Laysan Albatross, among which are well-grown chicks and courting adults. They face each other, bounce up and down as they sky-point with their necks or toss their heads from side to side. One Humpback Whale surfaces offshore; and Sandra finds us a Sunday school of Spinner Dolphins, which cruise the bay below us. Often one leaps out of the water and crashes back, showing pale underparts. This headland is a brilliant place to spend an afternoon.

After a mid-afternoon stop at a coffee and tasty home-baked snack shop, we explore the taro fields at Princeville. Yesterday we looked down on them: now we drive between them on a quiet road. There are great views and photo opportunities of Nene and Hawaiian Duck; and we try enticing two introduced passerines out of the bamboos: Hwamei (a laughingthrush from China) and Japanese Bush Warbler. Neither is prepared to show itself. We return to base with plenty of time to relax before dinner. Our choice is a Mexican Restaurant, Mariachi's, within walking distance – they serve excellent meals in a relaxed, quiet atmosphere.

Monday, 22 April (Kauai)

...is our day for the mountain forests of Kauai. After an efficient Starbucks' breakfast, we climb the road that parallels the Waimea Gorge. If we had good weather, the views would be spectacular, but instead we are soon into low cloud and rain. The road climbs up a ridge, clothed with good native forest. To the left the land drops steeply down to the west coast, and to the right it's an equally steep fall into the gorge. Black Francolin below the forest gives way to Erckel's Francolin higher up. Parking at the top, we soon find the Kauai Amakihi visiting the pink passion flowers for their nectar. They have a slightly longer bill than the other two amakihis we have seen. The rain and cold wind force us to try lower down, where in the campground an obliging Japanese Bush Warbler sits out in the open. Peter finds a Hwamei – called Melodious Laughingthrush in the Pratt field guide. A Mule (or Oregon Black-tailed) Deer appears by the road - an introduced species we were not expecting to see.

We break for a mid-morning coffee at a well situated café just below the campground. Returning to the top of the road, the Kauai Elepaio appears, but this is umbrella birding in less than ideal conditions. David tries to put us onto an Anianiau, another small yellowish drepanid, but only two or three can claim any kind of a view. Like most of its family, it doesn't stay long in one place.

The café serves us a fine lunch, with Portuguese bean soup and corn bread a popular and warming choice. We abandon the idea of further mountain birding since the rain is heavier now. Returning to the lowlands, we stop for the Hawaiian subspecies of the Short-eared Owl: three are visible from one spot. Dave and Iain spot a White-tailed Tropicbird flying past in the distance. In the Lihue suburbs we come across three Northern Mockingbirds.

After a siesta back at base, we set out again, to the north. Wailua Waterfall is worth seeing, an unbroken cascade of impressive height. David skilfully entices a Hwamei out of the undergrowth with quiet, minimal use of playback. He makes a point of not using playback of the endemic forest species, but uses it sparingly on the introductions. The Hwamei poses on several open branches for us, showing off its white spectacles, before flapping and gliding to another perch in typical laughingthrush manner. At Wailua River mouth (in Lydgate Park) we set up scopes in the hopes of seeing Hawaiian Petrels flying high before heading inland to mountain-top nests. However, the main focus of attention is two Humpback Whales, mother and calf, which regularly throw their great bulk into the air. We see ten or more breaches in 15 minutes, occasionally including a mid-air twist. Through the scopes, the ventral pleats are clearly visible. The Hawaiian Petrels do appear as the light fails, flying high, but only a few of the group can claim a satisfactory view.

Our Thai dinner, within walking distance again, is reasonably priced and much enjoyed. However, we take the vehicles round, as we leave the hotel in a heavy tropical downpour.

Tuesday, 23 April (Kauai)

On our way to further explorations in the Waimea area, we stop at Kalaheo Café for breakfast just as they open at 0630. The food, coffee and juices are substantial and well prepared; the service very efficient. Near Koke'e we transfer to a 4x4 owned by a friend of David's: we reach a beautiful plateau with views on all sides, covered in primary native scrub forest. Here starts the Alakai Swamp Trail, which we follow for just over a mile until the tree canopy begins. Now we slow down, while David listens intently for the slightest

sound from the endemics that live here. Anianiau, Kauai Amakihi and Kauai Elepaio are all here; the first of these shows much better than yesterday. The surprise is that we have views of the Greenfinch-like Akeke'e, another drepanid that feeds in the canopy. These are rare and endangered, a close relative of the Akepa on the Big Island. On the way in we hear many Japanese Bush Warblers and Hwameis: David sadly reflects that the Hwamei has taken over from the I'iwi as the loudest bird in this forest. Though flourishing on the Big Island, the I'iwi seems to be losing ground here fast, such that we have neither seen nor heard it. The mosses, ferns, lichens and flowering trees are stunningly beautiful.

At 1330 we return to the boat dock near Kekaha which we had to leave on Sunday without our pelagic. Now we have sunshine and a calm sea for the re-scheduled event. A taxi appears to take those back to the hotel who prefer not to experience the ocean motion. However, we find the catamaran *Na Pali Kai* stable and comfortable. Rob and Chris are our crew, and they provide a fine lunch of sandwiches, cookies, fruit and a huge drinks cooler. We start with the little and large: a flying-fish (flying) and two Humpback Whales. Further out, a few Bottle-nosed Dolphins show very little of themselves, unlike the Spinner Dolphins at Kilauea. Sooty Terns fly high above us, and White-tailed Tropicbirds appear both bathing in the sea and flying over. Most abundant birds are the Wedge-tailed Shearwaters and Red-footed Boobies, but among them are several Sooty Shearwaters. Later, a few Newell's Shearwaters pass by, often among the Wedge-tailed. There is a single Laysan Albatross, a single Brown Booby, and a single Band-rumped Storm-Petrel. A few Great Frigatebirds soar over, intent on harassing the boobies as they surface with freshly-caught fish. We make several transects of the zone three to four miles offshore, where most of the feeding frenzies are. As we return to the dock, a single Bulwer's Petrel passes us, and the two Humpbacks are almost blocking our way back to harbour. We step onto dry land four and a half hours after setting off: a wonderful experience for us all, as there is so much to see.

The landlubbers have a good taxi ride back; and Sandra swims from the sandy beach over the road from the hotel. The final evening meal is at the elegant Italian restaurant, Café Portofino, with wine provided by Ornitholidays.

Wednesday, 24 April (Kauai)

After a leisurely breakfast at the Feral Pig, we load up and drive the short distance to the airport. The minibuses are returned and we say our farewells to David. The midday flight to San Francisco is only five hours, but already it's dark when we arrive. Here I leave the group to continue their journey to Washington and Heathrow, while I meet friends for a short break in California.

Thursday, 25 April

I hear that the rest of the journey is uneventful: the Heathrow flight lands on time in the evening, and all the luggage soon appears. Meanwhile I enjoy three days of relaxed California birding with my friends, before heading home myself.

Acknowledgements

I can't imagine a successful Hawaiian bird tour without David Kuhn at the helm – so many thanks David for all the planning, listening, bird-finding, driving, making phone-calls, other logistics, and of course your good company and explaining all things Hawaiian to us. United and Hawaiian Airlines ensured that we reached our destinations on time; also thanks to Patrick on the Big Island for additional driving and guiding. Most of all, thanks to you all for participating in the tour with good humour and patience at all times. I hope we may meet up on another Ornitholiday again soon. Thanks also to Peter Munro and Iain Elliot for the photographs that illustrate this report.

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July 2013

Itinerary and Weather

Wherever possible, minimum and maximum **shade** temperatures are given. Sometimes our coldest temperatures were at altitude in the middle of the day. Location letters are for the islands: see below.

11 Apr	O	Arrive Honolulu 1820. To Waikiki. Dry, 27°C (81°F)
12 Apr	O	Waikiki: Tantalus Drive. Kahuku Golf Course & James Campbell Wildlife Refuge. Rabbit Island and East Point. Mostly sunny, one light shower, 22-28°C (72-82°F)
13 Apr	O	Waikiki: Wailupe Valley & Queen Kapiolani Park. Pm to Halona Blowhole. Dry, partly sunny, 22-29°C (72-84°F)
14 Apr	O>B	Honolulu Airport to Hilo (Big Island). Volcano National Park (NP). Sunny, cool at altitude, 16-28°C (61-82°F)
15 Apr	B	Hilo. Mauna Loa road in Volcano NP. Pm Kalopa State Park. Dry, partly sunny, 22-26°C (72-79°F)
16 Apr	B	Hilo. Volcano NP: Pu'u O'o; Mauna Kea 4x4 road. Sunny a.m, cloudy pm, cool at altitude. 15-22°C (59-72°F)
17 Apr	B	Hilo. Hakalau Wildlife Refuge. Wet a.m, clearing. 22°C (72°F)
18 Apr	B>M	Hilo Airport to Kahului, Maui. Keilia Wildlife Refuge. Pm Hosner Grove & Haleakala Volcano. Dry, partly sunny, cold at altitude: 5-31°C (41-88°F)
19 Apr	M	Kahului. Half group to Waikamoi Preserve. Other half to Kanoha Pond, Kihei Pond, Keilia Wildlife Refuge. Pm whale-watching cruise from Ma'alea. Dry, partly sunny in lowlands, 21-29°C (70-84°F); cool and wet at Waikamoi.
20 Apr	M>K	Kahului Airport to Lihue, Kauai. Princeville; Kilauea Lighthouse. Sunny (one tropical shower) 22-32°C (72-90°F)
21 Apr	K	Lihue. Po'ipu. Kilauea Lighthouse. Princeville taro fields. Wet a.m; dry, cloudy pm. 22-26°C (72-79°F)
22 Apr	K	Lihue. Waimea Canyon Road to Koke'e. pm Wailua Waterfall and River mouth. Mostly wet. Cool at altitude. 13-22°C (55-72°F)
23 Apr	K	Lihue. Alakai Swamp Trail. Pm Pelagic from Kekaha. Mostly dry, sunny pm. 22-28°C (72-82°F)
24 Apr	K	Lihue Airport depart 1315. Dry, sunny, 22-26°C (72-79°F)

CHECKLIST OF BIRDS SEEN DURING TOUR

No of days recorded	Location	Abundance Scale (max. seen on 1 day)
1 2h means seen on 1day and heard on 2 other days	O = Oahu B = Big Island of Hawaii M = Maui K = Kauai	1 = 1 – 4 individuals 2= 5 - 9 3 = 10 - 99 4 = 100 - 999 5 = 1000 - 9999

Species in **bold** are Hawaiian endemics. Names in *italics* are introductions with the year (or approximate year) of introduction. Two notes updating nomenclature ^(1,2) follow the list.

SPECIES	No of days recorded	Locations	Abundance Scale	SCIENTIFIC NAME
Laysan Albatross	3		K 3	<i>Diomedea immutabilis</i>
Wedge-tailed Shearwater	6	O	K 5	<i>Puffinus pacificus</i>
Sooty Shearwater	1		K 3	<i>Puffinus griseus</i>
Newell's Shearwater	1		K 3	<i>Puffinus newelli</i>
Bulwer's Petrel	1		K 1	<i>Bulweria bulwerii</i>
Hawaiian Petrel	1	1h M	K 1	<i>Pterodroma sandwichensis</i>
Band-rumped Storm-Petrel	1		K 1	<i>Oceanodroma castro</i>
White-tailed Tropicbird	2		K 2	<i>Phaeton lepturus</i>
Red-tailed Tropicbird	3	O	K 3	<i>Phaeton rubricauda</i>
Brown Booby	3	O	K 1	<i>Sula leucogaster</i>
Red-footed Booby	6	O	K 4	<i>Sula sula</i>
Great Frigatebird	5	O	K 2	<i>Fregata minor</i>
<i>Western Cattle Egret (1959)</i>	14	O B M	K 4	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>
Black-crowned Night-Heron	8	O B M	K 2	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>
Hawaiian Goose (Nene)	3	B	K 3	<i>Branta sandvicensis</i>
<i>Mallard</i>	2	M	K 1	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
Hawaiian Duck (Koloa)	2		K 2	<i>Anas wyvilliana</i>
Northern Shoveler	2	M	K 3	<i>Anas clypeata</i>
Hawaiian Hawk ('Io)	2	B	K 1	<i>Buteo solitarius</i>
<i>Black Francolin (1959)</i>	2	1h M	K 1	<i>Francolinus francolinus</i>
<i>Grey Francolin (1958)</i>	-	1h M	-	<i>Francolinus pondicerianus</i>
<i>Erckel's Francolin (1957)</i>	3	B	K 2	<i>Francolinus erckelii</i>
<i>Chukar (1923)</i>	2	B M	K 2	<i>Alectoris chukar</i>
<i>Kalij Pheasant (1962)</i>	3	B	K 1	<i>Lophura leucomelanos</i>
<i>Red Junglefowl (pre 1776)</i>	5		K 4	<i>Gallus gallus</i>
<i>Common Pheasant (1865)</i>	5	B M	K 2	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>
<i>Wild Turkey (1815)</i>	2	B	K 2	<i>Meleagris gallopavo</i>
<i>California Quail (1890s)</i>	2	B	K 2	<i>Callipepla californica</i>
Common Moorhen (Gallinule)	4	O	K 1	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
Hawaiian Coot	5	O M	K 3	<i>Fulica alai</i>
Pacific Golden Plover	13	O B M	K 4	<i>Pluvialis fulva</i>
Hawaiian Stilt	4	O M	K 3	<i>Himantopus mexicanus knudseni</i>
Wandering Tattler	6	B M	K 1	<i>Heterosceles incanus</i>
Bristle-thighed Curlew	1	O	K 2	<i>Numenius tahitiensis</i>
Ruddy Turnstone	8	O B M	K 3	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>
Sanderling	3	O M	K 3	<i>Calidris alba</i>
Long-billed Dowitcher	2	M	K 1	<i>Limnodromus scolopaeus</i>
Wilson's Phalarope	1	M	K 1	<i>Phalaropus tricolor</i>
Laughing Gull	1	O	K 1	<i>Larus atricilla</i>
Common Tern	1	O	K 1	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>
Sooty Tern	4	O	K 4	<i>Sterna fuscata</i>
Brown Noddy	3	O	K 1	<i>Anous stolidus</i>
Black Noddy	1	B	K 2	<i>Anous minutus</i>
White (Fairy) Tern ¹	2	O	K 2	<i>Gygis alba</i>
<i>Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon) (after 1761)</i>	6	O M	K 4	<i>Columba livia</i>
<i>Spotted Dove (c1900)</i>	13	O B M	K 4	<i>Streptopelia chinensis</i>
<i>Zebra Dove (1922)</i>	13	O B M	K 3	<i>Geopelia striata</i>
<i>Mourning Dove (1964)</i>	1	M	K 2	<i>Zenaida macroura</i>

Rose-ringed Parakeet (pre 1867)	5	O			K	3	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>	
Short-eared Owl	1				K	1	<i>Asio flammeus</i>	
Eurasian Skylark (1865)	3		B	M		2	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	
Red-vented Bulbul (c1965)	2	O				3	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>	
Red-whiskered Bulbul (c1965)	2	O				1	<i>Pycnonotus jocosus</i>	
Hawaii Elepaio	3		B			1	<i>Chasiempis sandwichensis</i>	
Oahu Elepaio	1	O				1	<i>Chasiempis gayi</i>	
Kauai Elepaio	2				K	1	<i>Chasiempis sclateri</i>	
Japanese Bush-Warbler (1929)	1	3h		M	K	1	<i>Cettia diphone</i>	
White-rumped Shama (1931)	6	1h	O		K	1	<i>Copsychus malabaricus</i>	
Omao (Hawaiian Thrush)	3		B			1	<i>Myadestes obscurus</i>	
Hwamei ² (from 1918)	1	2h			K	1	<i>Garrulax canorus</i>	
Red-billed Leiothrix (from 1918)	4	2h	O	B	M	1	<i>Leiothrix lutea</i>	
Northern Mockingbird (from 1928)	3				K	1	<i>Mimus polyglottos</i>	
Common Myna (1865)	14		O	B	M	K	4	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>
Japanese White-eye (1929)	13		O	B	M	K	3	<i>Zosterops japonicus</i>
Northern Cardinal (1929)	11	1h	O	B	M	K	2	<i>Cardinalis cardinalis</i>
Red-crested Cardinal (1930s)	9		O	B	M	K	3	<i>Paroaria coronata</i>
Saffron Finch (1960s)	2			B			1	<i>Sicalis flaveola</i>
Western Meadowlark (1931)	1				K	1	<i>Sturnella neglecta</i>	
House Finch (1869)	12	1h	O	B	M	K	2	<i>Carpodacus mexicanus</i>
Yellow-fronted Canary (1965)	1		O			1	<i>Serinus mozambicus</i>	
Palila	1			B		1	<i>Loxioides bailleui</i>	
Hawaii Amakihi	5	1h		B	M	2	<i>Hemignathus virens</i>	
Oahu Amakihi	1		O			1	<i>Hemignathus chloris</i>	
Kauai Amakihi	2				K	1	<i>Hemignathus kauaiensis</i>	
Anianiau	2				K	1	<i>Hemignathus parvus</i>	
Akiapola'au	1			B		1	<i>Hemignathus munroi</i>	
Hawaii Creeper	2			B		1	<i>Oreomystis mana</i>	
Maui Creeper (Alauahio)	2				M	1	<i>Paroreomyza montana</i>	
Akepa	1			B		1	<i>Loxops coccineus</i>	
Akeke'e	1				K	1	<i>Loxops caeruleirostris</i>	
I'iwi	4			B	M	3	<i>Vestiaria coccinea</i>	
Apapane	8			B	M	K	3	<i>Himatione sanguinea</i>
House Sparrow (1871)	13		O	B	M	K	3	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
Common Waxbill (1970s)	2		O			2	<i>Estrilda astrild</i>	
Nutmeg Mannikin ³ (1865)	2				M	K	2	<i>Lonchura punctulata</i>
Chestnut Mannikin (<i>Munia</i>) (1959)	4				M	K	3	<i>Lonchura malacca</i>
Java Sparrow (c1964)	3		O		K	1	<i>Padda oryzivora</i>	

Notes

- 1 White Tern: Since an Australian species is now officially called Fairy Tern, this Pacific and Indian Ocean species has had to be renamed.
- 2 Hwamei was formerly known as Melodious Laughingthrush.
- 3 In Asia, Nutmeg Mannikin is known as Scaly-breasted Munia.

But we were too late for these that once occurred on the islands we visited:

Species	Scientific Name	Island	Last recorded
Oahu Thrush	<i>Myadestes woahensis</i>	Oahu	1824
Oahu O`o	<i>Moho apicalis</i>	Oahu	1837
Oahu `Akialoa	<i>Hemignathus ellisianus</i>	Oahu	1837
Kioea	<i>Chaetoptila angustipluma</i>	Hawai'i	1859
Oahu Nukupu`u	<i>Hemignathus lucidus lucidus</i>	Oahu	1860
Lesser Koa Finch	<i>Rhodacanthis flaviceps</i>	Hawai'i	1891
Ula-ai-hawane	<i>Ciridops anna</i>	Hawai'i	1892
Oahu `Akepa	<i>Loxops coccinea wolstenholmii</i>	Oahu	1893
Kona Grosbeak	<i>Chloridops kona</i>	Hawai'i	1894
Hawai'i `Akialoa	<i>Hemignathus obscurus</i>	Hawai'i	1895
Greater Koa Finch	<i>Rhodacanthis palmeri</i>	Hawai'i	1896
Hawai'i Mamo	<i>Drepanis pacifica</i>	Hawai'i	1898
Greater `Amakihi	<i>Hemignathus sagittirostris</i>	Hawai'i	1900

Hawai'i O`o	<i>Moho nobilis</i>	Hawai'i	1934
Kaua'i `Akialoa	<i>Hemignathus ellisianus procerus</i>	Kaua'i	1965
Kaua'i O`o (`O`o `a`a)	<i>Moho braccatus</i>	Kauai	1985

MAMMALS

Long-snouted Spinner Dolphin	1			K	3	<i>Stenella longirostris</i>	
Bottle-nosed Dolphin	1			K	1	<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>	
Humpback Whale	7	O		M	K	2	<i>Megaptera novaeangliae</i>
Hawaiian Monk Seal	1			K	1	<i>Monachus schauinslandi</i>	
Mouflon	1		B			1	<i>Ovis orientalis</i>
Lesser Indian Mongoose	4		B	M		1	<i>Herpestes auropunctatus</i>
Mule (Oregon Black-tailed) Deer	1			K	1	<i>Odocoileus hemionus</i>	

OTHER ANIMALS included Green Turtle (*Chelonia mydas*), House Gecko (*Hemidactylus frenatus*), and Green Anole Lizard (*Anolis carolinensis*).

DRAGONFLY: Green Darner (*Anax junius*).

BUTTERFLIES: Kamehameha (*Vanessa tameamea* - endemic), Monarch (*Danaus plexippus*), and Citrus Swallowtail (*Papilio xuthus*). The blue seen on Oahu may have been the only other endemic butterfly, *Udara blackburni*, but there are other blues in the islands.

This list represents those birds and other animals seen by party members of this tour.



Laysan Albatross



Hawaiian Goose (Nene)



Bristle-thighed Curlew



Hawaiian Duck (Koloa)



Oahu Elepaio



Palila



Hawaiian Monk Seal



Red-tailed Tropicbird

Front cover: I'iwi

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