

## A WARBLER FROM NIHOA

By ALEXANDER WETMORE

THE ISLAND of Nihoa, sometimes known as Moku Manu or Bird Island, the most eastern of the islets included in the Hawaiian Bird Reservation, is located about 125 miles west-northwest of Niihau and 270 miles from Honolulu. In appearance and conformation it is a mere rock, three-fourths of a mile long by a fourth of a mile wide, that on three sides rises in sheer precipices from 300 to 900 feet above the sea, while from the summit the land slopes steeply to the shores of Adams Bay, an indentation on the southeast that offers the only practicable spot for landing. In earlier days Hawaiians came to Nihoa regularly, but in recent times few have attempted a visit, as, except with a favorable wind, heavy surf prevents small boats from approaching the projecting rocks on which a landing must be made.

The steep slopes of the island are covered with a woody-stemmed *Chenopodium*, clumps of grass, and a few other plants, with small groves of the Nihoa palm, *Pritchardia remota* (peculiar to the island), in two or three gulches. Insect life is abundant, and water, bitter with salts leached from the excrement of sea birds, seeps down some of the steep valleys. A species of Drepanid allied to *Telespyza cantans* Wilson, the "finch" of Laysan Island, was discovered here by Lieut. W. H. Munter, of the U. S. Revenue Cutter *Thetis*, and specimens brought to Honolulu to Dr. W. A. Bryan, then at the Bishop Museum, were described (Auk, xxxiv, 1917, p. 71) as *Telespyza ultima*, the specific name being chosen to express the belief that the species represented the last of passerine birds to be discovered in Hawaii.

During the U. S. S. *Tanager* expedition of the summer of 1923 we came to Nihoa first at the end of May, but were unable to land. Returning on June 10 we found the sea more favorable and succeeded in disembarking a light camping outfit and a party of men. I remained on the island until June 16 when the ship returned and I continued west to Necker.

The Nihoa "finch" was present in abundance, and on the morning following our arrival I was pleased to observe another perching bird, related to the Miller-bird, *Conopoderas familiaris* (Rothschild), of Laysan, a species of the family Sylviidae. This Miller-bird was recognized at once as new, a fact substantiated by subsequent comparison. It may be known as

*Conopoderas kingi*, sp. nov.

Characters.—Similar to *Conopoderas familiaris* (Rothschild);<sup>1</sup> but throat, breast and abdomen paler, nearly white; auricular region darker; markings about eye not yellowish; upper surface much darker; bill heavier, averaging very slightly longer; tarsus heavier, slightly longer.

Description.—Type, U. S. Nat. Mus. Cat. No. 287,888; adult male, collected June 11, 1923, on Nihoa Island, Hawaii, by Alexander Wetmore (collector's number, 7318). Crown and upper back dark olive, the feathers margined faintly with grayish; lower back and rump between olive brown and deep olive, the feathers with grayish margins; wings chaetura drab, the coverts margined with olive-brown, the primaries and secondaries with grayish drab; rectrices (much worn) chaetura drab, margined faintly with grayish drab; a line of whitish feathers on upper and lower eyelids; lores mixed whitish and dark olive; cheeks mixed whitish and grayish olive; auricular region grayish olive; throat, middle of breast, and abdomen whitish, sides of neck and breast washed with light grayish olive; flanks dull buffy brown; tibia dull olive-brown; under tail-coverts dark grayish olive; under wing coverts between tilleul-buff and pale olive-buff, the outer ones mottled with dusky; bend of wing whitish, more or less mixed with dusky. Base of mandible brownish, rest blackish; tarsus and toes blackish slate (from dried skin).

<sup>1</sup> *Acrocephalus familiaris* Rothschild, Ann. Mag. Nat. Hist., ser. 6, vol. 10, 1892, p. 109. (Laysan Island.)

**Measurements.**—(In millimeters): Males (9 specimens), wing, 61.0–66.2 (63.9); tail, 57.5–62.0 (60.1); culmen from base, 16.7–18.5 (17.8); tarsus, 22.8–25.6 (24.8).

Females (6 specimens), wing, 61.0–62.9 (61.3); tail, 52.1–60.6 (57.7); culmen from base, 15.8–17.5 (16.5); tarsus, 23.5–24.5 (24.0).

Type, wing, 64.2; tail, 57.5 (worn); culmen from base, 18.5 (approximate); tarsus, 25.6.

**Range.**—Confined to Nihoa Island, Hawaii.

**Remarks.**—Difference in length of bill and tarsus, when compared with *C. familiaris*, is slight, but *kingi* has these parts decidedly heavier. Measurements of a small series of *familiaris* are as follows:

Males (5 specimens), wing, 59.1–64.6 (62.4); tail, 58.2–60.8 (59.8); culmen from base, 16.0–17.2 (16.7); tarsus, 22.0–23.7 (23.2).

Females (3 specimens), wing, 58.0–59.0 (58.6); tail, 53.0–54.0 (53.5); culmen from base, 16.3–16.5 (16.4); tarsus, 21.8–23.2 (22.3).

Nihoa Miller-birds were encountered in heavy growth where they moved about in a leisurely manner, usually near the ground in dense cover, in action somewhat suggestive of vireos of the *Vireosylva* group. The breeding season had ended at the time of my visit, young were fully grown, and most of the adults had begun the post-breeding molt. I estimated the total number of individuals present as near 100. The bird is described from a series of sixteen skins. In conclusion it may be noted that Nihoa marks the northeastern limit for the genus *Conopoderas* in the Pacific.

The species is named in honor of Lieutenant-Commander Samuel Wilder King, to whose interest and seamanship is due much of the success attained by the U. S. S. *Tanager* expedition of 1923.

Washington, D. C., July 1, 1924.

## BRANTA DICKEYI FROM THE MCKITTRICK PLEISTOCENE

(WITH FOUR DRAWINGS)

By LOYE MILLER

IN THE CONDOR for July, 1922 (vol. xxiv, pp. 122-125), students of Recent birds were offered an account of the remarkable collection of bird remains taken from the Pleistocene asphalt of McKittrick, California. Excavation of these beds has been extended since that time through activities of the University of California and of the Carnegie Institution of Washington. One of the fruits of further study of the avifauna of the horizon is a gigantic goose of the genus *Branta* that is unlike any form heretofore made known.

Five species of this genus have previously been recorded from American horizons, as follows:

*Branta hypsibata* (Cope), an extinct species from the Pleistocene of Fossil Lake, Oregon, described by Cope in 1878 (Bull. U. S. Geol. and Geog. Surv. Terr., iv, no. 2, p. 387). The species is later discussed by Shufeldt in a study of the same collection and by him the bird is recorded as "about the size of *Branta canadensis*; but the bones were stouter and of different proportions."

*Branta propinqua* Shufeldt, an extinct species from the Pleistocene of Fossil Lake, Oregon, described by Shufeldt as of smaller size than *B. canadensis* (Journ. Acad. Nat. Sci. Phila., ser. 2, ix, 1892, p. 389).

*Branta meniscula* Wetmore, an extinct species from Upper Pliocene beds near Benson, Arizona, described as smaller than *B. canadensis minima* (Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus., vol. 64, 1924, p. 6). This is really a pigmy goose.