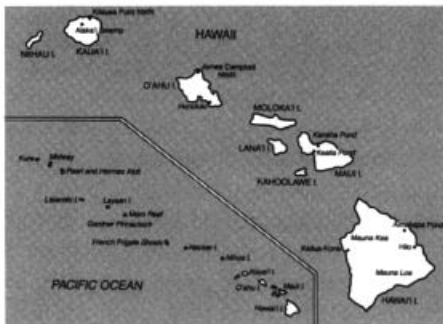


hawaiian islands region



ROBERT L. PYLE

Despite a little rain relief in late spring and summer, precipitation totals remained abnormally low in much of the state through most of fall. Habitats were drier and more fire-prone, and mid-year nesting was upset and delayed for some species. Migrant and wintering shorebirds and ducks came with some species diversity to keep birders interested, but total numbers of common species were low, continuing the pattern of recent years compared to a decade ago.

Abbreviations: H. (Hawai'i Island); K. (Kaua'i Island); M. (Maui Island); O. (O'ahu Island); J.C.N.W.R. (Jas. Campbell N.W.R., O'ahu); W.T.P. (Water Treatment Ponds).

GREBES THROUGH STILTS

One remaining Pied-billed Grebe was found at Kona W.T.P. near Kailua-Kona, H., through the fall (RD, MM, et al.), but none have been reported at nearby Aimakapa Pond where the breeding colony was established more than a decade ago. An excellently described **Bare-necked Grebe** seen daily Nov. 10–26 on the lake at Laysan I. (FWS) is the 2nd state record preceded by one bird on O'ahu in early 1983. The banded female **Short-tailed Albatross** (*Endangered*) regular in winter for >10 years at a specific spot on Sand I., Midway, returned this year Oct. 20 and was observed dancing with a Black-footed Albatross Nov. 16 (FWS). Eighteen Hawaiian (Dark-rumped) Petrels (*Endangered*) were retrieved this fall in the shearwater aid program on Kaua'i, indicating continued nesting activity on this island. Three were dead and 15 were banded and released (TT). One of these petrels (known throughout Hawaii as 'U'au) was seen flying over Kilauea Pt., K., Aug. 8 (JD, CM), and

two together were reported off Keanae Pt., M., Aug. 18 at 6:30 p.m. (MSa). Newell's Shearwaters (*Threatened*) picked up on Kaua'i in the shearwater aid program this fall totaled 819, of which 77 were found dead and 742 were banded and released. This increase of 11% over last year is encouraging after the nearly steady decline annually since Hurricane *Iniki* in 1992 (TT).

One Snow Goose, a rather rare straggler to Hawaii, was observed frequently Aug. 1–12 on Moloka'i at Kaunakakai W.T.P. and at Kakahai'a N.W.R. (AD et al.). Good numbers of N. Pintails and N. Shovelers, the most common wintering duck species, were reported in Oct. and Nov. at numerous favored habitats on most main islands. Pintails reached counts of 35 at Punamano Unit, J.C.N.W.R. (PD) and 40 at Opaepula Pond, H. (MM). Counts of shovelers at Kealia Pond N.W.R., M., started from 116 at first arrival Oct. 2, peaked at 314 Nov. 2, then fell off to 264 (MN), far more than at all other localities combined.

Nesting of Hawaiian (Black-necked) Stilts (*Endangered*) was generally later this year but was successful in at least some localities. At Hanalei N.W.R., K. the first stilt hatched Aug. 3, a late date (CM). At the ponds surrounding the Chevron oil storage tanks at Campbell Industrial Park, O., hatching success was 60% and fledging success 80% (of the hatchlings); and at the Cyanotech ponds near Kailua-Kona, H., hatching success was 90%, with very high fledging success (KE).

PLOVERS THROUGH TERNS

Pacific Golden-Plovers had returned in good numbers by early Aug. throughout the state, joining the tiny over-summering population that actually was a bit larger this year. Three color-banded adults returned to their precise territories at Bellows Field in Waimanalo, O., as they have done annually for 18 years since their original banding in 1980–81 at the start of a long-term plover research project (PB). A big influx of plovers arrived at Kilauea Pt., K., at the n. tip of the northernmost main Hawaiian Island (CM). Some were seen coming in from the sea, and many remained through the day foraging in the grassy areas around the refuge headquarters. Numbers roosting at night on Mokuiae islet just off Kilauea Pt. increased

noticeably through this period. On the same day at nearby Hanalei N.W.R., 23 of 27 plovers in one group still had >50% of summer plumage (CM). Single birds deemed to be Semipalmated Plovers were noted regularly at Ki'i Unit, J.C.N.W.R., Aug. 28 through Nov. (m. ob.), and two were seen together Nov. 29 (PD, CM, KP). Single birds also were reported at Kaelepu Sanctuary in Kailua, O., Sep. 8 & 17 (LT), and at Kealia Pond, M., Oct. 16 & 17 (MN, TP). Much farther west, single birds at Midway beginning Oct. 30 (FWS) and at Laysan Nov. 23 (FWS) have a bit better geographic likelihood for consideration as Com. Ringed-Plovers.

Single Lesser Yellowlegs were reported on four islands this fall. The much less regular Greater Yellowlegs was observed repeatedly at Ki'i Unit Sep. 20 through Nov. 29 (v. o.) and was reported at Hanalei N.W.R., K., Nov. 16–17 (CM). A Greater and Lesser were seen together once or twice in Oct. at Ki'i Unit. A bird reported as probably a Marsh Sandpiper was observed well at Sand I., Midway, Oct. 25 & 26 (FWS). Confirmation of this as the first record of this species in the Hawaiian Islands awaits careful examination of photographs. A **Willet** was observed well at Cyanotech Ponds near Kailua-Kona, H., Oct. 1–4 (AE, TMC, RD), but not reported thereafter. Five prior sightings in Hawaii are on record; one of them documented with good photos is in the Hawaii Rare Bird Photograph File. Single Spotted Sandpipers, very scarce in Hawaii, were reported Aug. 27 (SO) at National Tropical Botanical Gardens near Lawai, K., and also across the island at Hanalei N.W.R. Sep. 1–8 (CM). One considered a juvenile was reported Sep. 5 at Kona W.T.P. near Kailua-Kona, H. (RD).

Bristle-thighed Curlews resided in and near Ki'i Unit, J.C.N.W.R., through fall and into winter. Reported high counts were 20 Sep. 19 (PB), dropping to 12–14 through the season (m. ob.). Most counts included the one (N. Am.) Whimbrel, much scarcer in Hawaii, observed repeatedly with the Bristle-thigheds (PD, MO et al.). Another scarce visitor, a Bar-tailed Godwit, was at Sand I., Midway Oct. 28 & Nov. 1 (FWS), and two were reported at Cyanotech ponds near Kailua-Kona, H., Nov. 3 (TMC). Dowitchers, many identified as Long-billed, appeared widely in the main islands,

Midway, and Laysan, but only single birds or occasionally two rather than in groups of up to six or more birds often reported in past years. An ad. Black Tern in near basic plumage was observed well at a pond near Pacific Missile Range Facility in n.w. Kaua'i Sep. 1-4, and perhaps beyond (JD, DK, CM). These are rarely recorded in Hawaii.

KINGFISHERS THROUGH 'AKOHEKOHE

Reports of Belted Kingfishers, rather rare stragglers to Hawaii, caused a flurry this fall, as they were difficult to find repeatedly. One was observed well at Nu'upia Ponds near Kane'ohe, O., Oct. 13, but not on repeated visits thereafter (KP). On Hawai'i I., one was reported at Four Seasons resort on the N.

SA 'Alala (Hawaiian Crow, critically *Endangered*) in the wild suffered a disastrous year in 1998. Three more young captive reared birds recently released were found dead in three days Sep. 1-3, bringing the total to eight deaths this year (FWS). Predation by 'Io (Hawaiian Hawk, *Endangered*) was clearly implicated in some of these deaths, and feral cats and weakening by disease may be important factors as well (CK). Two other young released birds were recaptured temporarily for protection to preserve their unique gene pool, thus leaving only two young released birds and four of the original native oldtimers still known to remain in the wild population. The oldtimers are now essentially in senior living retirement, having last produced a fertile egg that hatched in 1996. Despite the dangers, the two recaptured birds that had formed a potential breeding pair last year and 12 other captive reared young birds are slated for release this winter (CK), in an urgent attempt to let these birds develop into wild breeding pairs to replace the now inactive oldtimers.

The captive rearing and release program had been working quite well until last year when 'Io predation and other factors became noticeably important. Two major challenges face the 'Alala Recovery Team: how to deal with one *Endangered* species predating on another *Endangered* species; and how to prepare captive-reared birds to survive in the wild without experienced wild adults to learn from.

Kona coast Oct. 9 (*fide* TP) but not thereafter. Then, one was found across the island at Waiakea Pond in Hilo Oct. 20 (*fide* TP) and later at nearby Loko Waka Pond Nov. 13-15 (AE,DK et al.). Each was reported to be a female, so the Hawai'i I. birds at least may have been the same individual.

Rebounding of the Red-billed Leiothrix on O'ahu after its drastic population crash in late 1960s is well known, and they were "very numerous" on Wa'ahila Trail Aug. 29 this year (PD). A similar crash around the same time on Kaua'i has not been well recognized. A detailed research study of its status on Kaua'i concludes that the species never recovered, and that the original established population became extirpated on Kaua'i during the mid-1970s (TMa, TS, 'Elepaio 58: 39-43).


The Palila (*Endangered*) became famous a decade ago when as a formal plaintiff it won its lawsuit against Hawaii state to require complete and permanent removal of all feral sheep which were deemed to be "taking" the Palila by severely damaging its Mauna Kea habitat, a landmark case in the legal interpretation of "taking" an *Endangered* species. This year the state wildlife agency conducted an aerial hunt Nov. 9-11 to kill and remove sheep in the specified

habitat in compliance with the 1987 judgment because "public recreational hunting in the past three years has not been successful in adequately controlling animal numbers." Two 'Akohekohe (*Endangered*) were seen separately Aug. 12 in native forest along Waikamoi flume road in Koolau State Forest, above Olinda, M., an interesting locality where they have been reported before. One, in a mixed flock of native species, was a young bird molting into ad. plumage and the other was a juvenile, perhaps indicating some breeding in this area (MSa).

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