

FALL HAWAII

OCTOBER 10 – 18, 2007

LEADER: BOB SUNDSTROM

COMPILED BY: BOB SUNSTROM

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Leaders: Bob Sundstrom

Itinerary and Lists Compiled by Bob Sundstrom

Mid October is an ideal time for an autumn respite in the tropical Pacific. Our Fall Hawaii tour makes the most of the natural history of three of the main islands—Hawaii, Kauai, and Oahu—over the course of nine days. One-of-a-kind endemic forest birds, spectacular seabirds, unique tropical forests, and the most accessible volcanic realm in the world all add to its appeal, which is complemented by wonderful, balmy weather, superb food, and nice lodging.

Our tour began on Oahu, with a sunset dinner in Waikiki overlooking the Pacific and those famous beaches. The next morning we saw dainty, elegant White (Fairy) Terns even before breakfast. As we sat down for breakfast, again overlooking the ocean, Wedge-tailed Shearwaters and Brown Boobies skimmed the horizon, beyond the snorkelers over the reef. The day's birding took us up a shady valley trail, then to a forested hillside overlooking Honolulu, and then all the way north to the land of big surf and a wintering spot for Bristle-thighed Curlews. We scoped at close range four of five of these rare shorebirds, as they stood atop fence posts, calling into the breeze. Yes, we even saw the eponymous bristles! And nearby: a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper.

By mid-morning of the second day, we stood on the island of Kauai, overlooking the blue Pacific and thousands of seabirds. Spooky Great Frigatebirds hung overhead, ready to chase after the thousands of Red-footed Boobies that streamed by or perched on the nearby sea cliff. Fledgling Wedge-tailed Shearwaters peeked out from burrows. A White-tailed Tropicbird flapped by, trailing long, lustrous tail plumes. Then a glistening Red-tailed Tropicbird flew in to circle at close range, the epitome of beauty in a seabird. A pair of Hawaii's native geese, the Nene, escorted downy goslings across the refuge.

A second day on Kauai found us in tropical forest at 4,000 feet. Forest birds found only on these islands, like Apapanes, Elepaios, and Kauai Amakihi, emerged from the native vegetation. En route to the forest we drove along the rim of Waimea Canyon, a chasm half-a-mile deep and colored in tones of copper and emerald. Here were more tropicbirds, which nest on ledges in the canyon. From one view we counted nearly 20 tropicbirds, gliding along the cliffs.

On to the island of Hawaii, or the Big Island. Well-named, the Big Island encompasses more area and habitats than Oahu and Kauai combined, and boasts five volcanic peaks—two of them very much alive. Arriving in Kona the morning of Day #5, we opted for a lunch spot amidst the Kona coffee farms and with a view of Kealakekua Bay 1,500 feet below. Before we had even emerged from the van, someone spotted our first Hawaiian Hawk of the trip. Endemic to the Big Island, it is the only native hawk in the islands. As one hawk soared nearby, it was joined by three more—an entire family group of the birds known in Hawaiian as I'o. Lunch with a view tasted all the better after seeing our first Big Island endemic, and we were joined on the veranda by several gold dust day geckos, small multi-hued lizards that clung to the railings.

Day #6 brought us our best forest birding of the tour. In Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge, a closed area we have special permission to enter, we saw scores of Iiwis—unique, scarlet Hawaiian honeycreepers—probing the red blossoms of native ohia trees with their long, red, sickle-shaped bills. Tangerine-colored Akepas were admired as they foraged through the leaves, as were Hawaii Creepers that “nuthatched” their way along trunks and branches. The top of the most-wanted list at Hakalau, however, was a look at an Akiapolaau, or Aki’ for short. The Aki’, found only on Hawaii and numbering in the few hundreds, has among the most extravagant bill designs of any bird. The upper half of the bill is long and very slender, and curves downward. The lower mandible is short, straight, and thicker. Aki’s excavate like a woodpecker with the short lower bill and then tease out prey with the wiry upper bill. Well, after a bit of walking and careful searching we were fortunate to come upon a rare Aki’, as it foraged on the thick canes of the native raspberry, pecking and probing. This special bird allowed us to approach closely to study its unique behavior. We experienced a moment of exultation, in a magnificent native forest, on the side of one of the world’s most massive, extinct volcanoes.

With two days now left on the Big Island, we tracked down the endemic specialty bird of the dry tropical forest, the bright yellow Palila. We came face-to-face with the Pueo, Hawaii’s version of Short-eared Owl, on a roadside fence post. There were handsome Black Francolins, a study in black and chestnut, spangled with gold, and Red Avadavats, the color of ripe strawberries, and not much bigger. There was a full day to explore Hawaii Volcanoes National Park: craters and lava tubes, lava flows from recent decades, a forest studded with massive tree ferns, and Black Noddies perched in black lava sea caves. And then, too soon it seemed, we were all headed back to the mainland.

DAY BY DAY ITINERARY

- Day 1** Wednesday, October 10: Arrival in Honolulu (Oahu) and get-acquainted dinner at New Otani Hotel. Night in Waikiki.
- Day 2** Thursday, October 11: Oahu. Birding near Waikiki and Honolulu in morning, including Kapiolani Park, Pia Valley, and Tantalus Drive. Midday across H-2 to Haleiwa on North Shore for lunch. Afternoon birding near Kahuku. Returned to Waikiki via H-2. Night in Waikiki.
- Day 3** Friday October, 12: Morning flight from Honolulu to Lihue (Kauai). Birded late morning at Kilauea Pt. NWR. After lunch in Kilauea, birded Hanalei NWR before driving south to the ResortQuest hotel. First of two nights in Kapaa.
- Day 4** Saturday, October 13: Early morning departure for Kokee Forest in northwest part of Kauai, breakfast in Kalaheo. Birded various sites in forest with break for lunch at Kokee General Store. Late afternoon birded the Kekaha area at the sand pits and the road toward Polihale State Park. Night in Kapaa.
- Day 5** Sunday, October 14: Morning flight from Lihue via Honolulu to Kona on the island of Hawaii. Drove south from Kona to hawk-watch and have lunch overlooking the coast near Captain Cook. Drove north, stopping to bird near Puu Anahulu before arriving at Kamuela Inn. Dinner at Merriman’s and first of two nights in Kamuela/Waimea.
- Day 6** Monday, October 15: Early breakfast and departure for Hakalau Forest NWR (Pua Akala section) on the windward side of Mauna Kea. Birded along the road in and intensively

along various trails at Hakalau until mid-afternoon, before retracing the route to Kamuela/Waimea for a second night there.

Day 7 Tuesday, October 16: After an early breakfast, drove the Saddle Rd. to bird the Puu Laau area on west side of Mauna Kea. Late morning, returned to Waimea to collect bags, have lunch, and then bird the horse arena. After crossing the Saddle Rd. to Hilo, birded at Waiakea Pond in Hilo before driving up to Hawaii Volcanoes National Park. Checked in at Volcano House and took late afternoon break before dinner. First of two nights at Volcano House in the National Park.

Day 8 Wednesday, October 17: Visited many spots in or near the national park today: Bird Park, Thurston Lava Tube, Halemaumau Crater, and Jaggar Museum before lunch. Afternoon down Chain of Craters Rd. to Mauna Ulu lava fields, black sea cliffs and Black Noddies, returning with a stop at Puu Puai/Devastation Trail. Farewell dinner in Volcano Village.

Day 9 Thursday, October 18: After breakfast at the Volcano House, drove to Hilo for departures from the local airport.

BIRD LIST

BIRD LIST LOCATION KEY

O = Oahu **K** = Kauai **H** = Hawaii (Big Is.)

NOTE: species in ***CAPITALIZED BOLD ITALICS*** are endangered Hawaiian endemics
species in ***bold italics*** are other Hawaiian Islands endemic species or subspecies
species in **lower case bold** are uncommon to rare, or unusual sightings for Hawaii

GEESE & DUCKS:

Greater White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons*) – H; one at Hilo's Waiakea Pond

NENE (*Branta sandvicensis*) – K,H. Seen on Kauai at both national wildlife refuges, and at Hakalau and Volcanoes Park on the Big Island. One pair at Kilauea refuge had small, gray goslings. Hawaii's endangered state bird.

Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*) – H; a small flock at Hilo's Waiakea Pond, origin unknown

Cackling Goose (*Branta hutchinsii*) – K; one at Kilauea Pt., which may now be residing there

Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) – likely a few of wild origin at Hilo's Waiakea Pond

KOLOA [HAWAIIAN DUCK] (*Anas wyvilliana*) – O,K; seen well at Hanalei NWR

Northern Pintail (*Anas acuta*) – K,H

Ring-necked Duck (*Aythya collaris*) – H; one female at Waiakea Pond

GALLINACEOUS BIRDS:

Black Francolin (*Francolinus francolinus*) – K,H; great views of beautiful males near Puu Anahulu on the Big Island.

Gray Francolin (*Francolinus pondicerianus*) – O,H. First glimpsed along the pineapple fields on Oahu, we had closed views of a small group at the Kamuela/Waimea arena.

Erckel's Francolin (*Francolinus erckelii*) – K,H; lots of excellent views along the roadside Red Junglefowl (*Gallus gallus*) – K; at higher elevations in Kokee Forest

Kalij Pheasant (*Lophura leucomelana*) – H; close-ups of these exotic pheasants in Bird Pk.
Ring-necked Pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*) – K,H
Wild Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) – H; various flocks along the Saddle Rd. and enroute to Haleakala on the east side of Mauna Kea
California Quail (*Callipepla californica*) – H; near Puu Laau

TUBENOSES:

Wedge-tailed Shearwater (*Puffinus pacificus*) – O,K,H. Flying adults were seen at a distance at Waikiki and Kilauea, and then much closer near the end of the Chain of Craters Rd. on Hawaii (a surprising location). Downy, near-fledglings sitting at the mouth of their natal burrows at Kilauea Pt. NWR.

TROPICBIRDS, BOOBIES, and FRIGATEBIRDS

Red-tailed Tropicbird (*Phaeton rubricauda*) - K. A lustrous adult Red-tailed Tropicbird flew repeatedly close by the lighthouse at Kilauea Pt. This species was an unusual sighting for October, not typical on the Fall Hawaii tour,

White-tailed Tropicbird (*Phaeton lepturus*) – K,H. Our best views of these magnificent seabirds was at Halemaumau Crater on the Big Island. Also seen at Kilauea Pt. and in Waimea Canyon on Kauai.

Red-footed Booby (*Sula sula*) - K; close views of adults and tawny immatures at Kilauea Pt.

Brown Booby (*Sula leucogaster*) – O,K; scoped on the islet off Kilauea Pt.

Great Frigatebird (*Fregata minor*) - O,K; superb views at Kilauea Pt. NWR

HERONS AND IBISES:

Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*) - O,K,H

Black-crowned Night-Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) - O,K

EAGLES, HAWKS & ALLIES:

I'O [HAWAIIAN HAWK] (*Buteo solitarius*) – H. Just south of Captain Cook we were treated to an apparent family group all soaring at the same time, some jousting in flight: two adults and two immatures. A dark morph was seen at Hakalau refuge and J.J. saw another hawk near Puu Puai in Volcanoes Park. Others along the Saddle Rd.

MOORHENS & COOTS:

COMMON MOORHEN [Hawaiian subspecies] (*Gallinula chloropsis sandvicensis*) – O,K; seen near Kahuku on Oahu and at Hanalei NWR and elsewhere on Kauai

HAWAIIAN COOT (*Fulica alai*) – O,K,H; this endemic coot sports an oversized white frontal shield

SHOREBIRDS:

Pacific Golden-Plover (*Pluvialis pacifica*) – O,K,H; widely seen

BLACK-NECKED STILT [Hawaiian subspecies] (*Himantopus mexicanus knudseni*) – O,K,H; showing distinctly more black on the face and neck than the North American stilts

Wandering Tattler (*Heteroscelus incanus*) – H; a few on the Kona lava shoreline

Bristle-thighed Curlew (*Numenius tahitiensis*) – O. Yes, we saw even the bristles! Close views, great scope views of four perched on posts near a corral. The juvenile plumaged bird had the best bristles, perhaps 2-3 inches in length. A much anticipated highlight.

Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*) - O,H; in fields and along shorelines

Sanderling (*Calidris alba*) – O,K

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper (*Calidris acuminata*) – O; a distinctively plumaged juvenile near Kahuku was a very nice addition to the tour sightings

JAEGERS, GULLS, & TERNS:

Black Noddy (*Anous minutus melanogenys*) – H. Great good views along the black volcanic cliffs near the end of Chain of Craters Rd. in Volcanoes National Park. The form we saw is currently considered the light morph of *A. n. melanogenys*, and is restricted to the southeastern Hawaiian islands. Its orange feet and a gray wash on the upper surface of the tail are distinctive.

White Tern [Common Fairy Tern] (*Gygis alba*) – O. A sprite-like, glistening white tern, we had memorable views at Waikiki's Kapiolani Park of terns flying and perched in trees.

SANDGROUSE, PIGEONS & DOVES:

Rock Pigeon (*Columba livia*) - all three islands

Spotted Dove (*Streptopilia chinensis*) - all three islands

Zebra Dove (*Geopelia striata*) - all three islands

OWLS:

Pueo [*Short-eared Owl - Hawaiian subspecies*] [*Asio flammeus sandwichensis*] – H. Superb views along the Saddle Rd. and the road into Hakalau. Perhaps a half dozen seen.

MONARCHS, FANTAILS, and ALLIES

Elepaio (*Chasiempis sandwichensis*) – O,K,H. Elepaio forms may be split by island into three separate species. Altogether, we saw: the Kauai form (*sclateri*), and the Hawaii forms *bryani* (Puu Laau) and *ridgewayi* (at Hakalau Forest NWR). The Oahu form (*gayi*) was heard close by, but somehow escaped our eyes.

LARKS

Sky Lark [formerly Eurasian Skylark] (*Alauda arvensis*) – H; seen well in the Mauna Kea area

BULBULS

Red-vented Bulbul (*Pycnonotus cafer*) – O

Red-whiskered Bulbul (*Pycnonotus jocusus*) – O; at the New Otani and along Pia Valley

THRUSHES

White-rumped Shama (*Copsychus malabaricus*) – O,K; good views on both the smaller islands.

Omao [*Hawaiian Thrush*] (*Myadestes obscurus*) – H. An island endemic, seen well at Hakalau NWR and in Volcanoes Park. Its “police whistle” calls became a familiar sound.

BABLERS

Melodious Laughing-Thrush (*Garrulax canorus*) – K,H. Seen along the back roads near Polihale, on Kauai. Heard widely in the Kokee forest and around Volcanoes Park.

Red-billed Leiothrix (*Leiothrix lutea*) – O,H. Nearly always a tough bird to see, we had repeated views of these little jewels while search the Pia Valley for Oahu's Elepaio. Seen also in Bird Park on the Big Island.

WHITE-EYES

Japanese White-eye (*Zosterops japonicus*) – O,K,H; ubiquitous on the three islands

MIMIDS

Northern Mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottus*) – K,H; although very local in Hawaii, we saw a few individuals at a variety of spots on both islands.

MYNAS

Common Myna (*Acridotheres tristis*) – widespread on all three islands

BUNTINGS, SPARROWS & ALLIES

Red-crested Cardinal (*Paroaria coronata*) – O,K; a lovely exotic

Yellow-billed Cardinal (*Paroaria capitata*) – H; ditto

Saffron Finch (*Sicalis flaveola*) – H; a rich yellow-orange

TROUPIALS & ALLIES

Western Meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*) – K

SALTATORS, CARDINALS & ALLIES

Northern Cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) – O,K,H

NON-NATIVE CARDUELINE FINCHES

House Finch (*Carpodacus mexicanus*) –O,K,H

Yellow-fronted Canary (*Serinus mozambicus*) – O,H; a handsome exotic from Africa

HAWAIIAN HONEYCREEPERS (DREPANIDINES)

PALILA (*Loxoides bailleui*) – H. Although they were relatively quiet and sneaky, we managed fair views of this endangered Big Island endemic at several stops near Puu Laau on Mauna Kea.

Hawaiian/Common Amakihi (*Hemignathus virens*) – H. Excellent views at Hakalau and Puu Laau.

Kauai Amakihi (*Hemignathus stejnegeri*) – K. An amakihi species with a larger and more down-curved bill, we saw this island endemic very well in Kokee Forest.

Oahu Amakihi (*Hemignathus chloris*) – O. The first Hawaiian honeycreeper species seen on the tour, we saw a few in the tall trees along Tantalus Loop above Honolulu. An Oahu endemic.

Anianiau (*Hemignathus parvus*) – K. Seen only briefly in Kokee Forest, where its scarcity seems to reflect an ongoing decline of native birds in that area.

AKIAPOLAAU (*Hemignathus munroi*) – H. In Hakalau Forest NWR, we had brilliant views of a calling juvenile and it foraged low on the trunks and stems of shrubs and ‘akala, the native raspberry. It was indeed memorable to see this very endangered bird put its unique bill to work as we watched under the canopy of the native forest.

HAWAII CREEPER (*Oreomystis mana*) – H. Also at Hakalau Forest NWR, very good and diagnostic studies of creeping adults and juveniles. A few males singing.

AKEPA – (*Loxops coccineus*) – H. Our first views were of young males and females, but everyone was awestruck when we got a good view of several tangerine orange males (at Hakalau Forest NWR). Also heard singing at several spots in the forest.

Iiwi (*Vestiaria coccinea*) – H. We had to wait until the trip into Hakalau Forest NWR to see Iiwis, but it was well worth the wait. We saw dozens of the unique, scarlet honeycreepers as they probed ohia blossoms with their sickle-shaped red bills.

Apapane (*Himatione sanguinea*) – K,H. The other red honeycreeper, we heard the Apapane’s gentle songs on both Kauai and Hawaii, and we had many good views of Apapanes coming in to feed on red ohia blossoms.

OLD WORLD SPARROWS

House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) – all three islands

WAXBILLS (ESTRILDID FINCHES)

Common Waxbill (*Estrilda astrild*) – O; in Kapiolani Park and elsewhere on Oahu

Red Avadavat (*Amandava amandava*) - H; nice views of bright red avadavats at a bathing spot
African (Warbling) Silverbill (*Lonchura catans*) – H. Various sources indicate that the silverbills on Hawaii are of African origin, rather than Indian. And the dark, rather than white rump we saw on the birds confirms this. So the specific epithet is *catans*.

Nutmeg Mannikin (*Lonchura punctulata*) – O,K,H

Chestnut Mannikin (*Lonchura malacca*) – K; striking chestnut colored birds with black hoods and hefty blue bills

Java Sparrow (*Padda oryzivora*) – O,K,H

MAMMALS and HERPS

MONK SEAL – K; we scoped one of the endangered native seal species hauled out on the shoreline at the base of the cliffs at Kilauea Pt.

Small Indian Mongoose – O,H

Feral Pig – H; at the rest area near Pohakuloa base

Green Sea Turtle – H

Gold Dust Day Gecko – H; lapping up jelly at the Coffee Shack