

SPRING HAWAII

FEBRUARY 26–MARCH 6, 2020



White Tern pair at “nest” ©Brennan Mulrooney

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Our Fall Hawaii tour visited three of the four main Hawaiian islands. We spent time exploring Oahu, Kauai, and the Big Island of Hawaii, in that order. Each island had its own distinct character, and each island offered unique birds for us to pursue.



Bristle-thighed Curlew ©Brennan Mulrooney

In addition to the wonderful birds of the islands, we were treated to an unending succession of amazing views and scenes: stark lava cliffs meeting tumultuous seas, forest-clad mountains rising up into the clouds, waterfalls cascading into incredible canyons, and more than a couple of breathtaking rainbows. On Oahu we made the most of our brief stay, starting with a tremendously successful pre-breakfast visit to Kapiolani Park right across the street from our Waikiki Hotel. Our main

focus was finding the unique and beautiful White Tern, which uses the giant banyan trees in the park for roosting and nesting. We talked about how they don't build nests, but instead merely lay their single egg in a slight depression on a horizontal branch. We assumed that some of them were incubating eggs based on their behavior, but neither Erik nor I had ever seen an egg. Soon after we mentioned this, we noticed that a White Tern was approaching another that was sitting on a likely branch. As the arriving bird approached, the sitting bird stood up and stepped aside, revealing the brown speckled egg it had been incubating. The group stood, awestruck, cameras clicking as the pair exchanged incubating duties. It was a truly wonderful moment to witness. Perhaps not surprisingly, though it was one of the first birds we saw on our first morning of birding, it was voted favorite bird of the tour!

On Kauai we had a wonderful visit to Kilauea Point National Wildlife Refuge. Kauai is the only main island without a mongoose population and therefore is of critical importance to ground nesting birds. At Kilauea Point large numbers of Laysan Albatross nest each spring, and they put on quite a show for us. At the end of the point we stood and watched as they came sailing by at incredibly close range. In addition to the albatross, we enjoyed the antics of the Red-footed Boobies that have a huge breeding colony on



Laysan Albatross ©Brennan Mulrooney



Red-billed Tropicbird ©Brennan Mulrooney

the refuge. We saw many struggling to fly against the wind as they brought branches in their bills to build nests on the opposite hillside. Great Frigatebirds hung in the air waiting for their next victim to approach with an easy meal to steal. White-tailed Tropicbirds drug their long white tail streamers through the air, looking more like a child's kite than a real bird, and Red-tailed Tropicbirds performed bizarre backward

wheeling courtship displays just off the end of the point. Not to be overshadowed by the amazing seabird spectacle, an adult Hawaiian Goose (Nene) paraded its young downy chick across the lawn for the crowd to enjoy. This refuge is a hugely important nesting area for this endangered species, which also happens to be the state bird of Hawaii.

After a rainy day in the upper elevation forests of Kauai, we dropped down to the sun-drenched coast where we encountered a bird that may not be globally rare but is certainly a bird that is very rarely encountered in the US—a Gray-tailed Tattler! We enjoyed excellent views of this wintering vagrant as it foraged in close proximity to the locally common Wandering Tattler. This gave us excellent opportunities to really study the distinguishing characteristics (spoiler alert:



Gray-tailed Tattler ©Brennan Mulrooney



Palila ©Brennan Mulrooney

there aren't very many!). These two species are very similar, but when you get to see them side by side, it makes the task of identification a whole lot easier.

Our last leg of the trip brought us to the island of Hawaii, or as it's often called, the Big Island. Starting on the dry side of the Island, we found a variety of introduced birds including Gray and Black francolins, Indian Peafowl, Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse, Rosy-faced Lovebirds, African Silverbills, and Yellow-billed Cardinal. A walk on the beach turned up a Green (Sea) Turtle foraging just feet from us in shallow water. As we headed mauka (toward the mountain), we encountered our first Hawaiian Hawks soaring high above the slopes of Mauna Loa. These hawks are thought to be most closely

related to Short-tailed Hawks, and we noted their similar shape and behavior. A visit to the highly endangered Mamane-Naio forests of the dry slopes of Mauna Kea produced great looks at the endemic Palila. The Palila looks and sounds very much like a Pine Grosbeak, only yellow instead of pink. We also encountered the handsome Mauna Kea race of Hawaii Elepaio here and had excellent looks at the Hawaiian race of Short-eared Owl known on the islands as Pueo. Due to the lack of diurnal raptor competition in Hawaii, these owls have shifted their behavior to be active all day long as opposed to the crepuscular nature of their mainland cousins. On the wet side of the island we visited the magnificent Hakalau National Wildlife Refuge. Here we walked among towering Ohia trees festooned with scarlet flowers and massive Koas covered in lichens. The flowers were very popular with the crimson-colored Apapane and scarlet-hued Iwi. The massive, decurved coral-colored bill of the Iwi makes it perhaps the most iconic of the endemic honeycreepers, and we relished the repeated views we got here. Zipping among the crowns of the tall Ohia trees we spotted the tangerine-tinged Hawaii Akepa. The normally skulky Omao



Short-eared Owl ©Brennan Mulrooney



liwi ©Brennan Mulrooney

provided excellent views coming out to the middle of the path to forage on the ground in front of us. We noted that the Hawaii Elepaios that we encountered in this humid forest were much darker than their dry side counterparts. Normally we have to really work to get looks at Hawaiian Creepers, but on this unusually sunny day it was one of the first birds we found! And it wasn't too much longer until we found the grail bird of Hakalau, the incomparable Akiapolaau. Aki's are almost always

found in Koa trees, and that's where we found an adult with its very vocal chick from last year's brood. This species has a very long fledging period, and it's not unusual to find the young still accompanying their parents almost a year after hatching.

We finished our trip with a day and a half in Volcanoes National Park where we explored amazing volcanic landscapes and traveled from fog-enshrouded forests down to dramatic lava cliffs plunging into the ocean. We found nesting Black Noddies perched on the black lava ledges just above pounding surf. We also enjoyed views of the amazing Holei Sea Arch. Near the visitor center we took an eerie stroll through the recently reopened Thurston Lava Tube and found Pele's tears and hair along the Devastation Trail. We walked through steam pouring out of vents along the edge of the giant Halemaumau Crater, but the lava pool below was quiet and out of sight.

All in all, it was an amazing adventure in one of the most unique destinations in the world. Not only did we see tremendous natural



Black Noddy ©Brennan Mulrooney

beauty and spectacular flora and fauna, we renewed old friendships and forged new ones. It really was a great trip.



Kalalau Valley ©Brennan Mulrooney

ITINERARY

27 February 2020 - Kapiolani Park before breakfast, Wiliwilinui Ridge Trail, Wa'ahila Ridge SRA, Punaluu Beach, James Campbell NWR, Kahuku Golf Course

28 February 2020 - Fly to Kauai, Kapuna Rd, Kilauea Point National Wildlife Refuge, Princeville, Hanalei National Wildlife Refuge

29 February 2020 - Koke'e State Park, Pu'u O Kila overlook at end of road, Kaluapuhi Trail, Kalalau Valley Lookout, Waimea Canyon Overlook, Salt Ponds Park

1 March 2020 – Flight to Kona, Aimakapa Pond, lunch in Captain Cook, Makalei Golf Course, Makani Club

2 March 2020 – Gilbert Kahale Recreation Park bathrooms then all day in Hakalau NWR.

3 March 2020 – Old Saddle Road to Palila Forest Discovery Trail at Pu'u La'au, Waikoloa Village, Hamakua Macadamia Nut Company, then around the north side of Mauna Kea to Hilo

4 March 2020 - Volcanoes National Park, Bird Park, Thurston Lava Tube, Devastation Trail, Kilauea Iki, Volcano Village, Chain of Craters Road to Holei Sea Arch, Visitor Center, Volcano House

5 March 2020 – Return to Volcanoes NP, Bird Park, and Kilauea Caldera/Halemaumau Crater, Steam Vents, optional afternoon to Hawaii Tropical Botanical Garden

6 March 2020 – Return flights home

BIRDS

Waterfowl

Cackling Goose
Hawaiian Goose (Nene) (E)
Northern Shoveler
Hawaiian Duck (Koloa) (E)
Mallard (I)
Ring-necked Duck
Lesser Scaup

New World Quail

California Quail (I)

Pheasants, Grouse & Allies

Indian Peafowl (I)
Erckel's Francolin (I)
Black Francolin (I)
Gray Francolin (I)
Red Junglefowl (I)
Ring-necked Pheasant (I)
Kalij Pheasant (I)
Wild Turkey (I)

Pigeons and Doves

Rock Pigeon (I)
Spotted Dove (I)
Zebra Dove (I)
Mourning Dove (I)

Sandgrouse

Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse (I)

Rails, Gallinules & Coots

Anatidae

Branta hutchinsii
Branta sandvicensis
Spatula clypeata
Anas wyvilliana
Anas platyrhynchos
Aythya collaris
Aythya affinis

Odontophoridae

Callipepla californica

Phasianidae

Pavo cristatus
Pternistis erckelii
Francolinus francolinus
Francolinus pondicerianus
Gallus gallus
Phasianus colchicus
Lophura leucomelanos
Meleagris gallopavo

Columbidae

Columba livia
Streptopelia chinensis
Geopelia striata
Zenaida macroura

Pteroclididae

Pterocles exustus

Rallidae

A single bird at Kilauea
Great looks on Kauai and Big Island
Big Island
Several at Hanalei NWR
All probably introduced
Big Island
Big Island

Big Island

Big Island
Kauai and Big Island
Kauai and Big Island
Big Island
A few pure looking birds on Kauai
Kauai and Big Island
Big Island
Big Island

Daily
Daily
Daily
Big Island

Big Island

Common Gallinule (Hawaiian)	<i>Gallinula galeata sandvicensis</i>	Oahu and Kauai
Hawaiian Coot (E)	<i>Fulica alai</i>	All three islands
Stilts & Avocets	Recurvirostridae	
Black-necked Stilt (Hawaiian)	<i>Himantopus mexicanus knudseni</i>	All three islands
Plovers and Lapwings	Charadriidae	
Pacific Golden-Plover	<i>Pluvialis fulva</i>	Daily
Sandpipers & Allies	Scolopacidae	
Bristle-thighed Curlew	<i>Numenius tahitiensis</i>	Excellent looks on Oahu
Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	All three islands
Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>	Oahu and Big Island
Gray-tailed Tattler	<i>Tringa brevipes</i>	A lifer for both leaders! This rarity had been present on Kauai for some time, but it was still a challenge to locate. Eventually we had great views
Wandering Tattler	<i>Tringa incana</i>	All three islands
Gulls, Terns & Skimmers	Laridae	
Laughing Gull	<i>Leucophaeus atricilla</i>	Big Island
Glaucous-winged Gull	<i>Larus glaucescens</i>	Another known rarity that cooperated nicely on Oahu
Brown Noddy	<i>Anous stolidus</i>	Big Island for those that went to the botanical garden
Black Noddy (melanogenys)	<i>Anous minutus melanogenys</i>	Big Island only. Great flyby views as well as a few perched birds that let us see their orange feet
White Tern	<i>Gygis alba</i>	It's rare for a bird seen only on the first day of birding to get voted favorite of the trip, but this was a special encounter as we watched a pair exchange incubating duties of their single egg. Just stunning!
Sooty Tern	<i>Onychoprion fuscatus</i>	Large numbers were seen flying well offshore from Oahu
Tropicbirds	Phaethontidae	
White-tailed Tropicbird	<i>Phaethon lepturus</i>	Kauai
Red-tailed Tropicbird	<i>Phaethon rubricauda</i>	Kauai, we watched courtship displays from Kilauea Point
Albatrosses	Diomedidae	
Laysan Albatross	<i>Phoebastria immutabilis</i>	Amazing views on Kauai
Black-footed Albatross	<i>Phoebastria nigripes</i>	Very distant views of a bird flying off the coast of Big Island. Rarely found on this tour!
Frigatebirds	Fregatidae	
Great Frigatebird	<i>Fregata minor</i>	Kauai

Boobies & Gannets
 Brown Booby
 Red-footed Booby
Hérons, Egrets & Bitterns
 Cattle Egret (I)
 Black-crowned Night-Heron
Hawks, Eagles & Kites
 Hawaiian Hawk (Io) (E)
Owls
 Short-eared Owl (Pueo)
Falconiformes
 Merlin

Old World Parrots
 Rose-ringed Parakeet (I)
 Rosy-faced Lovebird (I)
Monarch Flycatchers
 Hawii Elepaio (E)

Kauai Elepaio (E)
 Oahu Elepaio (E)

Larks
 Eurasian Skylark (I)
Bulbuls
 Red-vented Bulbul (I)
Bush-Warblers & Allies
 Japanese Bush-Warbler (I)
White-eyes, Yuhinas & Allies
 Warbling White-eye (I)
Laughingthrushes & Allies
 Chinese Hwamei (I)
 Red-billed Leiothrix (I)
Starlings
 Common Myna (I)
Mockingbirds & Thrashers
 Northern Mockingbird (I)
Thrushes & Allies
 Omao (Hawaiian Thrush) (E)

Old World Flycatchers
 White-rumped Shama (I)
Waxbills & Allies
 Common Waxbill (I)
 African Silverbill (I)

Sulidae
Sula leucogaster
Sula sula
Ardeidae
Bubulcus ibis
Nycticorax nycticorax
Accipitridae
Buteo solitarius
Strigidae
Asio flammeus
Falconidae
Falco columbarius

Psittaculidae
Psittacula krameri
Agapornis roseicollis
Monarchidae
Chasiempis sandwichensis

Chasiempis sclateri
Chasiempis ibidis

Alaudidae
Alauda arvensis

Pycnonotidae
Pycnonotus cafer

Scotocercidae
Horornis diphone

Zosteropidae
Zosterops japonicus

Leiothrichidae
Garrulax canorus
Leiothrix lutea

Sturnidae
Acridotheres tristis

Mimidae
Mimus polyglottos

Turdidae
Myadestes obscurus

Muscicapidae
Copsychus malabaricus

Estrildidae
Estrilda astrild
Euodice cantans

Oahu and Kauai
 Awesome looks on Kauai

Common most days
 Seen most days

Big Island only

Great looks. Kauai and Big Island

Seen briefly by a couple folks on Big Island. Very few records for Hawaii!

Oahu and Kauai
 Close views on Big Island

We saw the Mauna Kea form at Pu'u La'au and the Hilo form at Hakalau

Good looks at Koke'e
 Found with surprising ease on Oahu

Big Island

Common on Oahu

Great looks at Volcanoes

Seen daily

Scope views on Big Island
 Big Island

Everywhere

Kauai

Excellent views in Hakalau and in Volcanoes

Oahu and Kauai

Oahu
 Big Island

Scaly-breasted Munia (I)	<i>Lonchura punctulata</i>	Kauai and Big Island
Chestnut Munia (I)	<i>Lonchura atricapilla</i>	Kauai and Big Island
Java Sparrow (I)	<i>Lonchura oryzivora</i>	Oahu and Big Island
Old World Sparrows	Passeridae	
House Sparrow (I)	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	Seen daily
Finches, Euphonias & Allies	Fringillidae	
Palila (E)	<i>Loxioides bailleui</i>	Excellent views at Pu'u La'au
Apapane (E)	<i>Himatione sanguinea</i>	One of the most common honeycreeper, we saw them well on Kauai and Big Island
		We enjoyed their antics on our day in Hakalau
Iiwi (E)	<i>Drepanis coccinea</i>	The swiss army knife bird, we had prolonged looks at Hakalau
Akiapolaau (E)	<i>Hemignathus wilsoni</i>	Common on Big Island
Hawaii Amakihi (E) (Hawaii)	<i>Chlorodrepanis virens virens</i>	
Oahu Amakihi (E)	<i>Chlorodrepanis flava</i>	Common but hard to see on Oahu
Hawaii Creeper (E)	<i>Loxops mana</i>	Found with record speed at Hakalau
Hawaii Akepa (E)	<i>Loxops coccineus</i>	Darting around high in the Ohia trees at Hakalau
House Finch (I)	<i>Haemorhous mexicanus</i>	Seen most days
Yellow-fronted Canary (I)	<i>Crithagra mozambica</i>	Oahu and Big Island
Troupials & Allies	Icteridae	
Western Meadowlark (I)	<i>Sturnella neglecta</i>	Kauai and Big Island
Cardinals & Allies	Cardinalidae	
Northern Cardinal (I)	<i>Cardinalis cardinalis</i>	Seen most days
Tanagers & Allies	Thraupidae	
Red-crested Cardinal (I)	<i>Paroaria coronata</i>	Oahu and Kauai
Yellow-billed Cardinal (I)	<i>Paroaria capitata</i>	Big Island only
Saffron Finch (I)	<i>Sicalis flaveola</i>	Oahu and Big Island
MAMMALS		
Mongoose	Herpestidae	
Small Indian Mongoose	<i>Herpestes javanicus</i>	Oahu and Big Island
Pigs	Suidae	
Wild Boar (Feral Pig)	<i>Sus Scrofa</i>	Kauai and Big Island
Bison, Sheep & Goats	Bovidae	
Feral Goat	<i>Capra aegagrus hircus</i>	Big Island
Rorqual Whales	Balaenopteridae	
Humpback Whale	<i>Megaptera novaeangliae</i>	Oahu and Kauai

OTHER FAUNA

Monarch
Gulf Fritillary
Cabbage White
Kamehameha Butterfly
Hawaiian (Blackburn's) Blue
Leopard Slug
Gold Dust Day Gecko
Coqui Frog



White-rumped Shama ©Brennan Mulrooney

OTHER MEMORIES

“Big Button!”
♪♪Widespread Slug ♪♪
Ukulele Rock!
Donkey Balls
The Wheels on the Bus...



Red Junglefowl ©Brennan Mulrooney