SPRING HAWAII

FEBRUARY 26–MARCH 6, 2020

LEADERS: BRENNAN MULROONEY & ERIK BRUHNKE
LIST COMPILED BY: 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. 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
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:
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 Iiwi. The massive, decurved coral-colored bill of the Iiwi 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
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
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
Calipepla californica

Phasianidae
Pavo cristatus
Pternistis erckelii
Francolinus francolinus
Francolinus pondicerianus
Gallus gallus
Phasianus colchicus
Lophura leucomeleanos
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
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
Big Island
Big Island
Common Gallinule (Hawaiian)  
*Gallinula galeata sandvicensis*  
Oahu and Kauai

Hawaiian Coot (E)  
*Fulica alai*  
All three islands

**Stilts & Avocets**  
Black-necked Stilt (Hawaiian)  
*Himantopus mexicanus knudseni*  
All three islands

**Recurvirostridae**

**Plovers and Lapwings**
Pacific Golden-Plover  
*Pluvialis fulva*  
Daily

**Charadriidae**

**Sandpipers & Allies**
Bristle-thighed Curlew  
*Numenius tahitiensis*  
Excellent looks on Oahu

Ruddy Turnstone  
*Arenaria interpres*  
All three islands

Sanderling  
*Calidris alba*  
Oahu and Big Island

Gray-tailed Tattler  
*Tringa brevipes*  
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  
*Tringa incana*  
All three islands

**Laridae**

Gulls, Terns & Skimmers  
Laughing Gull  
*Leucophaeus atricilla*  
Big Island

Glaucous-winged Gull  
*Larus glaucescens*  
Another known rarity that cooperated nicely on Oahu

Brown Noddy  
*Anous stolidus*  
Big Island for those that went to the botanical garden

Black Noddy (melanogenys)  
*Anous minutus melanogenys*  
Big Island only. Great flyby views as well as a few perched birds that let us see their orange feet

White Tern  
*Gygis alba*  
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  
*Onychoprion fuscatus*  
Large numbers were seen flying well offshore from Oahu

**Tropicbirds**

White-tailed Tropicbird  
*Phaethon lepturus*  
Kauai

Red-tailed Tropicbird  
*Phaethon rubricauda*  
Kauai, we watched courtship displays from Kilauea Point

**Phaethontidae**

**Albatrosses**
Laysan Albatross  
*Phoebastria immutabilis*  
Amazing views on Kauai

Black-footed Albatross  
*Phoebastria nigripes*  
Very distant views of a bird flying off the coast of Big Island. Rarely found on this tour!

**Diomedeidae**

**Frigatebirds**
Great Frigatebird  
*Fregata minor*  
Kauai
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boobies &amp; Gannets</td>
<td><em>Sula leucogaster</em></td>
<td>Oahu and Kauai</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Sula sula</em></td>
<td>Awesome looks on Kauai</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Bubulcus ibis</em></td>
<td>Common most days</td>
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<td><em>Nycticorax nycticorax</em></td>
<td>Seen most days</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Buteo solitarius</em></td>
<td>Big Island only</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Asio flammeus</em></td>
<td>Great looks. Kauai and Big Island</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Falco columbarius</em></td>
<td>Seen briefly by a couple folks on Big Island. Very few records for Hawaii!</td>
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<td>Herons, Egrets &amp; Bitterns</td>
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<td><em>Cattle Egret</em></td>
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<td><em>Black-crowned Night-Heron</em></td>
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<td>Hawks, Eagles &amp; Kites</td>
<td><em>Hawaiian Hawk</em> (Io) (E)</td>
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<td><em>Short-eared Owl (Pueo)</em></td>
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<td><em>Merlin</em></td>
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<td>Owls</td>
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<td><em>Red-footed Booby</em></td>
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<td><em>Brown Booby</em></td>
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<td>Old World Parrots</td>
<td><em>Psittacula krameri</em></td>
<td>Oahu and Kauai</td>
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<td><em>Agapornis roseicollis</em></td>
<td>Close views on Big Island</td>
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<td><em>Chasiempis sandwichensis</em></td>
<td>We saw the Mauna Kea form at Pu’u La’au and the Hilo form at Hakalau</td>
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<td><em>Chasiempis sclateri</em></td>
<td>Good looks at Koke’e</td>
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<td><em>Chasiempis ibidis</em></td>
<td>Found with surprising ease on Oahu</td>
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<td><em>Alauda arvensis</em></td>
<td>Big Island</td>
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<td>Common on Oahu</td>
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<td><em>Horornis diphone</em></td>
<td>Great looks at Volcanoes</td>
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<td>Seen daily</td>
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<td><em>Garrulax canorus</em></td>
<td>Scope views on Big Island</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Leiothrix lutea</em></td>
<td>Big Island</td>
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<td>Everywhere</td>
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<td><em>Acridotheres tristis</em></td>
<td>Kauai</td>
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<td>Excellent views in Hakalau and in Volcanoes</td>
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<td><em>Mimus polyglottos</em></td>
<td>Oahu and Kauai</td>
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<td>Oahu</td>
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<td><em>Myadestes obscurus</em></td>
<td>Big Island</td>
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<td>Old World Flycatchers</td>
<td><em>Copsychus malabaricus</em></td>
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<td><em>Estrilda astrild</em></td>
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<td><em>Euodice cantans</em></td>
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Scaly-breasted Munia (I)  
Chestnut Munia (I)  
Java Sparrow (I)  
**Old World Sparrows**  
House Sparrow (I)  
**Finches, Euphonias & Allies**  
Palïla (E)  
Apapane (E)  
Iiwi (E)  
Akiapolaau (E)  
Hawaii Amakihi (E) (Hawaii)  
Oahu Amakihi (E)  
Hawaii Creeper (E)  
Hawaii Akepa (E)  
House Finch (I)  
Yellow-fronted Canary (I)  
**Troupials & Allies**  
Western Meadowlark (I)  
**Cardinals & Allies**  
Northern Cardinal (I)  
**Tanagers & Allies**  
Red-crested Cardinal (I)  
Yellow-billed Cardinal (I)  
Saffron Finch (I)  
**MAMMALS**  
Mongeoses  
Small Indian Mongoose  
**Pigs**  
Wild Boar (Feral Pig)  
**Bison, Sheep & Goats**  
Feral Goat  
**Rorqual Whales**  
Humpback Whale

Lonchura punctulata  
Lonchura atricapilla  
Lonchura oryzivora  
Passer domesticus  
Loxioides bailleui  
Himantone sanguinea  
Chlorodrepanis virens virens  
Chlorodrepanis flava  
Loxops mana  
Loxops coccineus  
Haemorhous mexicanus  
Crithagra mozambica  
Sturnella neglecta  
Cardinalis cardinalis  
Paroaria coronata  
Paroaria capitata  
Sicalis flaveola  
Herpestes javanicus  
Sus Scrofa  
Capra aegagrus hircus  
Megaptera novaeangliae

Kauai and Big Island  
Kauai and Big Island  
Oahu and Big Island  
Seen daily  
Excellent views at Pu‘u La‘au  
One of the most common honeycreeper, we saw them well on Kauai and Big Island  
We enjoyed their antics on our day in Hakalau  
The swiss army knife bird, we had prolonged looks at Hakalau  
Common on Big Island  
Common but hard to see on Oahu  
Found with record speed at Hakalau  
Darting around high in the Ohia trees at Hakalau  
Seen most days  
Oahu and Big Island  
Kauai and Big Island  
Seen most days  
Oahu and Kauai  
Big Island only  
Oahu and Big Island  
Oahu and Big Island  
Kauai and Big Island  
Kauai and Big Island  
Big Island  
Oahu and Kauai
OTHER FAUNA
Monarch
Gulf Fritillary
Cabbage White
Kamehameha Butterfly
Hawaiian (Blackburn’s) Blue
Leopard Slug
Gold Dust Day Gecko
Coqui Frog

OTHER MEMORIES
“Big Button!”
♫♪Widespread Slug ♪♫
Ukulele Rock!
Donkey Balls
The Wheels on the Bus…