

KAUAI & HAWAII

MARCH 23 – 31, 2008

LEADERS: BOB SUNSTROM & BRIAN GIBBONS

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**KAUAI and HAWAII:
The Garden Isle and the Big Island
March 23 – March 31, 2008**

Leaders: Bob Sundstrom and Brian Gibbons

(Tour Report, Itinerary and lists compiled by Bob Sundstrom)

Our Kauai and Hawaii tour began on emerald-green Kauai, the oldest geologically and most lush of the main Hawaiian Islands. On our first day, seabirds were the featured celebrities. At Kilauea Point, pairs of glistening Red-tailed Tropicbirds flew in courtship displays along the refuge cliffs. One tropicbird would first hover a few feet above the other, then both would begin to circle one another in a tight, vertical ring—all while flying backwards. The elegant seabirds were close enough to see every detail, right down to their wire-like red tail streamers. Huge Laysan Albatrosses glided by, with rarely a flap of their long, arched wings. In the shade of nearby ironwood trees, an enormous downy albatross chick awaited its parents' return, now and then exercising its stubby gray wings. Wedge-tailed Shearwaters had begun to return to their nest burrows, evidenced by one we watched and photographed at arm's-length. We also had fine views here of White-tailed Tropicbirds, Red-footed Boobies, and Great Frigatebirds.

On our second day, we drove up along scenic Waimea Canyon. Red Junglefowl brightened the dense forest edge, as Japanese Bush-Warblers sang loudly, and husky Erckel's Francolins strode along the roadside. Waimea Canyon was spectacular. At one overlook, at least 15 White-tailed Tropicbirds glided in view at the same time, perhaps 1,000 feet below, along the majestic green and rust canyon walls. While walking native forest trails at 4,000 feet elevation, we watched some of Kauai's endemic bird species: chartreuse male Anianiaus, the curve-billed Kauai Amakihi, and family groups of Elepaio, the islands' endemic monarch flycatcher. A pair of Pueos, the islands' endemic owl, flew slowly just above the forest canopy, their feathers golden-blond in the tropical sun.

We flew on to Hawaii, the Big Island, with five full days to explore a nice diversity of habitats and take in the geologically youngest island's primal forces at work. We had lunch in prime Hawaiian Hawk-watching country, on a veranda overlooking the famed Kona coffee country and Kealahou Bay over 1,000 feet below. Mixing birding with local specialties, we visited an old-time Macadamia nut roaster and a Kona coffee grower. The day's birds included our first views of the endemic hawk, plus superb views of tiny Red Avadavats, Gray Francolins, Saffron Finches, and Yellow-billed Cardinals.

Over ensuing days we sought out the Big Island's endemic forest birds in both dry and wet tropical forests, on the lee and windward slopes of 13,000+ft. Mauna Kea. We had great luck in finding the endangered Palila, a Hawaiian endemic honeycreeper closely tied to the native, yellow-blossoming mamane trees. At a unique refuge on the windward side, we watched raucous, scarlet Iiwis—the islands' most charismatic native bird, with its long, curved red bill perfectly designed for nectar-feeding in the native flowers. Here too we had excellent looks at the endangered Akepa—the bright orange males exciting wows of appreciation—as well as a number of other island endemics. And with three nights at the national park lodge, the Volcano House,

we took in the amazing sights of an active volcano: a stroll through an ancient lava tube, the sight of Black Noddies nesting on black lava sea cliffs, and an evening lava viewing.

On our final night on Hawaii, just as sunset and the brief tropical twilight gave way to dark, we watched in awe as hot, crimson lava streamed from a lava tube into the ocean, setting off massive steam clouds and sprays of fiery cinders. An apt finish to a fine tour, featuring many wonders of natural history, many exceptional dining experiences, and lots of fresh, tropical breezes.

ITINERARY SKETCH

- Day 1 Sunday, March 23:** Arrivals Lihue, Kauai, and get-acquainted dinner at hotel restaurant. First of three nights in Kapaa.
- Day 2 Monday, March 24:** Today we drove counter-clockwise around Kauai from Kapaa to the north shore, with stops near Kapuna Rd., at Kilauea Pt. National Wildlife Refuge, Hanalei National Wildlife Refuge, and Wainiha Rd. Seabirds were the featured celebrities today. Red-tailed Tropicbirds flew close by the lighthouse cliffs, often performing backward circles of courtship flight. We had excellent views of Laysan Albatross, White-tailed Tropicbird, Red-footed Booby, and Great Frigatebird. Wedge-tailed Shearwater adults sat at the rim of their nest burrow, and a huge, gray Laysan Albatross chick waited for adults in the shade of ironwood trees. Other sightings today included Nene, Koloa (Hawaiian Duck), Hawaiian forms of Common Moorhen and Black-necked Stilt, and White-rumped Shama. Dinner at Coconuts in Kapaa. Night in Kapaa.
- Day 3 Tuesday, March 25:** An early morning departure took us first to breakfast in Kalaheo, before driving up along Waimea Canyon, stopping to bird at a couple of spots before reaching Kokee State Forest, where we birded the native forest along Pihea Trail and the roadside. After lunch at the Kokee general store, we worked back down along Waimea Canyon. At Puu Hina Hina Overlook, the canyon view was spectacular, and 15 White-tailed Tropicbirds were in view at the same time, most over 1000 feet below. Back at sea level on Kauai's west shore, we drove through Kekaha and along the island's west shore into a heavy rainstorm. Headed back to Kapaa by late afternoon. Today's highlights included great views of Kauai endemic bird species Anianiau, Kauai Amakihi, and Kauai's *sclateri* Elepaio, plus our first Apapanes. Wonderful views of Pueos (Hawaiian Short-eared Owl) soaring over the forest canopy, from the Pihea Trail. Red Jungle Fowl crowed from the forest edge, Japanese Bush-Warbler sang loudly, and we had good views of Erckel's francolins. Dinner at hotel; final night in Kapaa.
- Day 4 Wednesday, March 26:** Today an early flight to Kona (via Honolulu) got us to the Big Island in time for lunch overlooking the famed Kona coffee country. After lunch at Coffee Shack with a breathtaking view of Kealahou Bay and the Pacific, we visited an old time Macadamia nut roaster and a Kona coffee roaster. Heading north from Kona, we birded the country club grounds near Puu Anahulu, where we had superb views of Red Avadavats, Erckel's Francolins, and other birds. At the tiny Waimea airport, we found our first Gray Francolin of the trip, then a few more near the horse arena. Also today our first Saffron Finches, Yellow-billed Cardinals, and Yellow-fronted Canaries. Dinner at Merriman's. First of two nights in Kamuela/Waimea.

- Day 5 Thursday, March 27:** After breakfast in Waimea, we drove out the Saddle Rd. to bird near Puu Laau on the dry side of Mauna Kea. It took a bit of searching, but by mid-morning we had great luck in finding a number of endangered Palila, as they foraged in yellow blossoming mamane trees. Here also, we saw the pale *bryani* form of Elepaio and lots of Common Amakihis. Enroute we saw a few Pueo, Sky Larks, and many gallinaceous birds including Green Pheasant. After lunch at Merriman's and a break, we drove along the northwest Kohala coast to Hawi, where we once again glimpsed Hawaiian Hawk. The return drive over Kohala crossed lush pastures toward a brilliant rainbow. Night in Waimea.
- Day 6 Friday, March 28:** Driving south from Kamuela/Waimea after breakfast, we stopped again near Puu Anahulu, then continued toward Kona and beyond, stopping for lunch in Naalehu. Then drove on to Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, and visited Puu Puai and Devastation Trail before checking in at the lodge. First of three nights at Volcano House in the National Park.
- Day 7 Saturday, March 29:** An early departure from the Volcano House took us down through Hilo for a four-wheel drive excursion to the east side of Mauna Kea into Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge. There we birded until mid-afternoon under sunlit skies, but with a great deal of native bird activity all day. Raucous, scarlet Iiwis were seen many times, and we had excellent views of the endangered endemics Akepa (bright orange males) and Hawaii Creeper (foraging and singing just overhead), as well as Omao and Elepaio. Returning through Hilo, we visited the Wailoa Ponds before dinner at Café Pesto, then returned to Volcano for a second night at Volcano House.
- Day 8 Sunday, March 30:** A full day in and near the national park: Breakfast overlooking Kilauea Caldera, and then birding in Bird Park on the Mauna Loa Rd., with great views of Kalij Pheasants and small flocks of Red-billed Leiothrix. Melodious Laughing-Thrushes sang and slinked through the trees. Mid-morning began a tour of Volcanoes Park by exploring Thurston Lava Tube, before driving down Chain of Craters Road to the end of road, stopping enroute to look at the pahoehoe and a'a flows and "Pele's hair" in the Mauna Ulu lava fields. Near the end of the road we watched Black Noddies roosting and flying along the black lava sea cliffs. After lunch at the Country Club and a midday break, we drove down to Hilo for an early dinner in preparation for viewing an ongoing lava flow after dark south of Kalapana. The group walked across the pahoehoe flows of recent years to an overlook, and as dark set in we had wonderful views of red lava streaming out of a lava tube into the ocean. Final night at Volcano House.
- Day 9 Monday, March 31:** A final breakfast overlooking Kilauea Caldera at the Volcano House, then on to Hilo for departures.

BIRD LIST

BIRD LIST LOCATION KEY:

H = Hawaii (the Big Island)

K = Kauai

Note: species in *bold italics* are Hawaiian Islands endemic species or subspecies
species in **CAPITALIZED BOLD ITALICS** are endangered Hawaiian endemics
species in **plain bold** are otherwise especially noteworthy sightings, rare or unusual

GEESE & DUCKS:

Greater White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons*) – H; two adults at Hilo's Waiakea Pond
NENE (*Branta sandvicensis*) – K,H; Seen best on Kauai at Kilauea Pt. NWR and Hanalei
NWR. Hawaii's state bird is endangered.

Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*) – H; two at Hilo's Wailoa Pond, origin unknown

Cackling Goose (*Branta hutchinsii*) – K; one at Hilo's Wailoa Pond, likely the *leucopareia* race

Gadwall (*Anas strepera*) – H; a drake at Hilo's Wailoa Pond represented a very rare sighting

KOLOA [HAWAIIAN DUCK] (*Anas wyvilliana*) – K; dozens at Hanalei NWR on Kauai

Northern Pintail (*Anas acuta*) – K,H

GALLINACEOUS BIRDS:

Chukar (*Alectoris chukar*) – H; along the ranch road into Hakalau NWR

Black Francolin (*Francolinus francolinus*) – K,H. Males were calling at many spots in the drier
regions of both islands, and we were able to scope a crowing male along the northwest
side of Kohala.

Gray Francolin (*Francolinus pondicerianus*) – H. First seen at the Waimea airstrip.

Erckel's Francolin (*Francolinus erckelii*) – K,H. First seen along the road on Kauai near
Waimea Canyon, we later saw a number of them – some very close at hand – on the Big
Island from Puu Anahulu to the road into Hakalau.

Japanese Quail (*Coturnix japonica*) – Mary saw one along the road to Puu Laau

Red Junglefowl (*Gallus gallus*) - K; well established in the wild in the Kokee area

Kalij Pheasant (*Lophura leucomelana*) - H; very close views

Ring-necked/Common Pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*) – K,H

Green Pheasant (*Phasianus versicolor*) - H; species split by Clements from Common Pheasant
(*P. colchicus*) Clements in 2000; seen along the Saddle Rd., where we turned around and
went back for a better look.

Common Peafowl (*Pavo cristatus*) – H; a hen along the road on the southwest part of the island

Wild Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) - H

California Quail (*Callipepla californica*) - H

TUBENOSES:

Laysan Albatross (*Diomedea immutabilis*) – K. At Kilauea Pt. National Wildlife Refuge,
spectacular views of adults flying right along the edge of the lighthouse bluff at eye level.
A large, gray chick was scoped on the grassy nesting area under the ironwood trees.

Wedge-tailed Shearwater - (*Puffinus pacificus*) – K. Arm’s-length views of a few adults at the mouth of their nest burrows at Kilauea Pt. The adults were just beginning their nesting season at the refuge.

TROPICBIRDS, BOOBIES, and FRIGATEBIRDS

White-tailed Tropicbird (*Phaeton lepturus*) – K. Several of these beautiful seabirds were seen in flight at Kilauea Pt., others from the Kalalau and Puu Hina Hina overlooks at higher elevations on Canyon on Kauai.

Red-tailed Tropicbird (*Phaeton rubricauda*) - K. We had superb views of these elegant seabirds at Kilauea Pt., with several in their courtship flight of hovering in reverse circles. One of the highlights of the tour!

Red-footed Booby (*Sula sula*) - K. Very close views at Kilauea Pt. of boobies flying by, some carrying nest material; the adjacent hillside hosted a thousand or more nesting pairs.

Great Frigatebird (*Fregata minor*) – K. Also at Kilauea.

HERONS:

Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*) – K,H

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

EAGLES, HAWKS & allies:

IO [HAWAIIAN HAWK] (*Buteo solitarius*) - H. It took some looking, but we ultimately had good views of soaring hawks, with perhaps the best views a light and dark morph pair soaring at Hakalau Forest NWR.

MOORHENS & COOTS:

COMMON MOORHEN [Hawaiian subspecies] (*Gallinula chloropus sandvicensis*) - K

HAWAIIAN COOT (*Fulica alai*) – K,H

SHOREBIRDS:

Pacific Golden-Plover (*Pluvialis pacifica*) – K,H. Widespread on both islands, with some nearly in full breeding plumage, ready for the flight to their Alaskan breeding grounds.

BLACK-NECKED STILT [Hawaiian subspecies] (*Himantopus mexicanus knudseni*) – K,H.

A darker faced subspecies of this widespread stilt species, we had our first views of them at Hanalei NWR.

Wandering Tattler (*Heteroscelus incanus*)- K; wintering migrants

Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*) – H

Sanderling (*Calidris alba*) - H

JAEGERS, GULLS, & TERNS:

Black Noddy (*Anous minutus*) - H. This Pacific form of Black Noddy has grayish-white dusting on the upper tail surface and orange feet. Good scope views of noddies on cliff ledges as other flew by along the black sea cliffs near the end of Chain of Craters Rd.

SANDGROUSE, PIGEONS & DOVES:

Rock Dove (*Columba livia*) – K,H

Spotted Dove (*Streptopilia chinensis*) – K,H
Zebra Dove (*Geopelia striata*) – K,H
Mourning Dove (*Zenaida macroura*) - H

OWLS:

Pueo [*Short-eared Owl - Hawaiian subspecies*] (*Asio flammeus sandwichensis*) – K,H. The handsome owl was seen a number of times, with very good views of flying birds from the Pihea Trail on Kauai and on the drive into Hakalau NWR.

LARKS:

Sky Lark (*Alauda arvensis*) – H; a determined singer

MONARCHS, FANTAILS, and allies

Elepaio (*Chasiempis sandwichensis*) – K,H. We saw several distinct forms of this endemic on the two islands. It is likely that the Kauai form (*sclateri*) will be designated a distinct species, separate from the Hawaii forms in the near future. On the Big Island we saw the forms *bryani* (Mauna Kea dry side) and *ridgewayi* (at Hakalau).

WORLD WARBLERS

Japanese Bush-Warbler (*Cettia diphone*) – K,H; heard and seen quickly in Kokee Forest; heard several other places.

THRUSHES and BABBLERS

White-rumped Shama (*Copsychus malabaricus*) – K; a very attractive introduced thrush

Omao [*Hawaiian Thrush*] (*Myadestes obscurus*) - H; seen very well during the walk in Hakalau Forest NWR, and heard at Hawaii Volcanoes National Park

Melodious Laughing-Thrush (*Garrulax canorus*) – K,H; heard and seen by different members of the tour group at a variety of spots

Red-billed Leiothrix (*Leiothrix lutea*) - H; seen best at Bird Park

MYNAS

Common Myna (*Acridotheres tristis*) – K,H; widespread, especially around human habitation

WHITE-EYES

Japanese White-eye (*Zosterops japonicus*) – K,H; widespread, in most habitats

MIMIDS

Northern Mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*) – K,H.

EMBERIZIDS

Saffron Finch (*Sicalis flaveola*) - H; a beautiful yellow finch, expanding widely on the Big Island

Red-crested Cardinal (*Paroaria coronata*) – K; a very fancy introduced bird

Yellow-billed Cardinal (*Paroaria capitata*) - H; spreading from Kona all over the Big Island

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

BLACKBIRDS and allies

Western Meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*) - K; on Kauai's north side

INTRODUCED CARDUELINE FINCHES

House Finch (*Carpodacus mexicanus*) – K,H; males tending toward orange to yellow-orange

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

HAWAIIAN HONEYCREEPERS and FINCHES (DREPANIDINES)

PALILA (*Loxoides bailleui*) - H. It took a bit of searching, but we had superb views of this endangered Big Island endemic finch in the dry forest on the west side of Mauna Kea.

Common/Hawaii Amakihi (*Hemignathus virens*) - H; quite common and easily seen in the Palila area, and equally prevalent at Hakalau, with males singing constantly at both sites

Kauai Amakihi (*Hemignathus stejnegeri*) – K; excellent views in Kokee Forest of this amakihi species with the long, decurved bill; surprisingly scarce and quiet

Anianiau (*Hemignathus parvus*) - K; excellent views of bright chartreuse males near the upper lookout in Kokee; altogether, very scarce now

HAWAII CREEPER (*Oreomystis mana*) - H. Another endangered Big Island endemic, we had amazing views of several foraging close overhead, among a number of fine views during the day at Hakalau Forest NWR.

AKEPA (*Loxops coccineus*) - H. Nice looks at tangerine colored males at Hakalau. Another endangered Big Island endemic

Iwi (*Vestiaria coccinea*) – H. A group favorite among the Hawaiian endemics we saw, we were able to watch them all day long at Hakalau Forest NWR, admiring their brilliant red feathers and long, decurved red bills, a nice fit with their varied, reedy voices.

Apapane (*Himatione sanguinea*) - K,H. The most prevalent and widespread of all the Hawaiian endemic forests, this red honeycreeper had a gentle song that became very familiar during our time in the native forest.

OLD WORLD SPARROWS

House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) – K,H

ESTRILDID FINCHES

Red Avadavat (*Amandava amandava*) - H

Indian (Warbling) Silverbill (*Lonchura malabarica*) – H

Nutmeg Mannikin (*Lonchura punctulata*) - K,H

Chestnut Munia/Mannikin (*Lonchura malacca*) - K

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

MAMMALS & HERPS

Humpback Whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) – K

Spinner Dolphin (*Stenella longirostris*) – K

Small Indian Mongoose (*Herpestes auropunctatus*) – H

Feral Pig (*Sus scrofa*) – K,H

Feral Goat (*Capra hircus*)

Gold Dust Day Gecko (*Phelsuma laticauda*) - H; rainbow-colored gecko at the Coffee Shack;
introduced species that originates in Madagascar
Green Anole (*Anolis carolinensis*) – K
Cane Toad (*Bufo marinus*) – K
Common Coqui (*Eleutherodactylus coqui*) – frog heard calling “ko – kee” around Hilo

BUTTERFLIES

(thanks to Judith Brenner and Brian Gibbons)

Citrus swallowtail (*Papilio xuthus*) seen by Brian
Large Orange Sulphur (*Phoebis agarithe*)
Cabbage White (*Pieris rapae*)
Monarch (*Danaus plexippus*)
American Painted Lady (*Vanessa virginiensis*)
Red Admiral (*Vanessa atalanta*)
Pea-blue (*Lampides boeticus*)
Green Hawaiian Blue, or Hawaiian Blue/Blackburn’s Blue (*Vaga blackburnii*) Endemic
Fiery Skipper (*Hylephila phyleus*)