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Some Observations on the Laysan Duck, *Anas wyvilliana laysanensis*

Author(s): Vernon E. Brock

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Yellow-billed Tropic Bird, *Phaëthon lepturus catesbyi*, on the North Florida Coast.—Arthur H. Howell ('Florida Bird Life,' 1932: 81–82), records the occurrence of the Yellow-billed Tropic Bird in Florida as follows: Audubon, eight or ten birds seen at the Dry Tortugas, 1832; Maynard, a single bird seen near the Florida Keys, 1881; Brewster, a single specimen taken at Merritt's Island, 1886; Pennock, a single bird seen at St. Marks, 1919.

As far as is known by the writer this present specimen is the only one of this species taken on the north Florida Coast.

On September 7, 1950, this bird was picked up by Mrs. A. W. Sears on Ponte Vedra Beach, St. John's County, apparently exhausted by the hurricane of September 6. It was taken to her home where she set out food, but it would not eat. The next day she took it to the beach and released it, where it was picked up by Mr. Hutchinson I. Cone, Jr. who took it to his home and attempted to feed it. It refused food and died September 9.

Mr. Cone brought the specimen to me and I made a study skin of it. It was later identified as an immature Yellow-billed Tropic Bird by Dr. Pierce Brodkorb of the Department of Biology, University of Florida, Gainesville.

On September 9 the writer, accompanied by Messrs. S. A. Grimes and Wilbur Gary, went to Ponte Vedra Beach and to Jacksonville Beach where Mr. Grimes found a primary from a Yellow-billed Tropic bird—possible proof that other birds of this species had visited the north Florida Coast.—REG. R. MCKAY, *Jacksonville Children's Museum, Jacksonville 4, Florida.*

The Pinnated Bittern, *Botaurus pinnatus*, in Paraguay.—*Botaurus pinnatus* (Wagler), the Pinnated Bittern, has a wide distribution in South America from Colombia, Venezuela, and Trinidad south to western Ecuador on the Pacific coast, and through central and eastern Brazil (Mato Grosso, Goiaz, Pernambuco, Baía, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo) to Uruguay and the Province of Buenos Aires, Argentina. In the interior it has not been recorded to date in Bolivia, and it is reported from Paraguay for the second time in the present note. There are also two authentic records for Nicaragua, from San del Norte and the Río Menco, though the species has not been found elsewhere in Central America. The U. S. National Museum has one skin from near Orloff, in the Paraguayan Chaco, taken April 11, 1950, by O. O. Miller. The collector noted that the species was rare, but apparently it is known to the Indians since the name Pin-pin-ay is recorded on the label, together with an observation on the usual bittern habit of posing so that the bird is distinguished with difficulty from its background of rushes.—ALEXANDER WETMORE, *Smithsonian Institution, Washington, 25 D. C.*

Some Observations on the Laysan Duck, *Anas wyvilliana laysanensis*.—On June 23, 1950, the MV Hugh M. Smith, fisheries research vessel of the Pacific Oceanic Fishery Investigations, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, stopped at Laysan Island during a voyage of research. The author, who was aboard the vessel as a collaborator of the Fish and Wildlife Service, went ashore to tag green turtles and observe reef fishes and sea birds. While engaged in these tasks, counts were made of the Laysan Duck.

Thirty-three Laysan Ducks were counted during the course of a walk about the central lagoon of Laysan Island, of which 26 were adults and seven were young. The young ducks were still downy and were observed in two small flocks of four and three birds, respectively, each behind an adult female.

Four of the birds counted were flushed out of the beach morning glory which thickly covers patches which are acres in extent; these birds only flushed when accidentally approached within four feet or less. The remainder of the birds counted were found along the shores of the lagoon and were passed without flushing, at least for any distance. These facts make it most unlikely that any of these ducks were counted more than once, and there may have been ducks in the beach morning glory that were not flushed. Hence, these counts of the ducks of Laysan are undoubtedly less, by an unknown amount, than the actual number of birds on the island.

At the present time the population of the Laysan Duck appears to be on the increase. Fisher (Bull. U. S. Fish Comm., 23 (pt. 3): 769-807, 1903) estimated the total population to be less than 100 birds at the time of his visit in May of 1902. Munro, ('Birds of Hawaii,' Tongg Publ. Co., Honolulu, 1944) gave the following estimates made by various observers:

Year	Number of Ducks	Observer
1911	6	Professor Dill
1925	20	Dr. Wetmore
1936	11	Mr. Coultas

The number observed during the visit of the MV Hugh M. Smith exceeds all previous estimates except that of Fisher. The apparent increase in the duck population, as indicated by these counts, may be due to the comparative infrequency of visits during the last decade and also to the restoration of the vegetative cover following the disappearance of rabbits from the island. The description and photographs of Laysan Island given by Fisher for 1902 would fit the conditions observed at the time of my visit, which was not the case for the other observers listed.

The Laysan Finch, *Telespiza flavissima*, is yet quite abundant. No examples of the Laysan Rail, *Porzanula palmeri*, were seen, however.—VERNON E. BROCK, *Board of Agriculture and Forestry, Honolulu 1, T. H.*

Rat Snake Overpowers Red-shouldered Hawk, *Buteo lineatus*.—On the morning of December 3, 1950, Mr. J. M. Heiser, my son Stephen, his friend William Green, and I saw a Red-shouldered Hawk lying behind a small bush within the area of the San Jacinto Battlefield near Houston. It was on its back, its feathers ruffled, its wings half-extended and relaxed, its legs limp. The mouth and eyes were open; it was not struggling. Only on second glance did we see that a large snake was wrapped tightly about the hawk's neck. Holding the hawk's legs, I removed the snake. The thick of its body formed one loop about the bird's neck, and its tail region formed another. I had to exert considerable force to release the loops. When the hawk was free, it hung limp in my hand for a few seconds, and then started struggling. I released it, and it flew away, apparently not seriously injured. The snake proved to be a Lindheimer's Rat Snake, *Elaphe obsoleta lindheimeri*. It was just over four feet long and nearly two inches in diameter. We could find no injury on its body, and it was still full of energy. We released it, and after a few threatening gestures in our direction, it crawled away. I have no doubt that, without our intervention, the hawk would have been dead in a few more minutes. Since the Red-shouldered Hawk preys on snakes, and the Lindheimer's Rat Snake sometimes preys on birds, one wonders which animal was the aggressor in this encounter.—GEORGE G. WILLIAMS, *The Rice Institute, Houston, Texas.*

Aerial Feeding of Duck Hawk, *Falco p. anatum*.—During the summers of 1949 and 1950, the writer has had exceptional opportunities to observe the tremendous bat flights which issue from the largest bat cave in the United States, the Ney Cave,