

FRIENDS OF HAKALAU FOREST NWR INTERVIEW

Q1. When did you realize you wanted to be an author and what inspired you to start writing?

Writing was part of my education, beginning with term papers and leading to a Master's thesis and PhD dissertation. Various technical and popular publications resulted and were needed for job evaluations. My more creative and popular writing was less job-oriented and began with an article in the magazine *Colorado Outdoors* about dove hunting; the inspiration was sharing knowledge via accessible environmental outlets with the public; I wanted to try my hand with non-technical/popular writing. Later, I was also inspired to further share with my children my thoughts and feelings about the environment and my work, in poetry and prose.

Q2. Your former work was on the impact of invasive species on the ecosystems in Hawai'i from a conservation perspective. What inspired you to shift your focus to birds in Hawai'i and poetry/prose?

I consider my former work as research in conservation biology in general (in the past, known as "wildlife ecology and conservation"). I conducted management-oriented research on hunted and nongame species, on Endangered and Threatened species, and on species and areas of special concern. In Hawai'i, I administered and led management-oriented research, some of which included bird research, in Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park, in Haleakalā National Park and in the Kona National Park Service areas. (The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service did the bulk of the research on forest birds, including the landmark Forest Bird Survey on many of the Hawaiian Islands.)

Birds in Hawai'i Today was created during my retirement and was a 3-year effort. I perceived a need for a relatively inexpensive and comprehensive introductory single volume on the research and management of alien and native birds in the Islands. The intent was to present and build on important previous efforts, less as an identification and historical resource than as an ecological, management and research introduction for the reader. The inclusion of photography, poems and prose was designed to appeal to the combination of human logic and emotions that is needed for understanding the challenges and for conservation action.

Q3. Who is your target audience for the poetry and prose book, and where can the book be purchased?

The target audience includes all people interested in an in-depth introduction to the native and alien birds in Hawai'i today. I hope that the book will be useful for educators and others interested in Hawai'i's rapidly changing avifauna and its diversity and beauty, together with the environmental threats, needs and habitat protection required today. *Birds in Hawai'i Today* can be purchased at Basically Books (Petroglyph Press) in Hilo, HI (basicallybooks.com), Four Pines Bookstore in Bemidji, MN ([Hello@fourpinesbookstore.com](mailto>Hello@fourpinesbookstore.com)) and from the author (napohaku@paulbunyan.net). Other venues in the Islands and on the U.S. Mainland are currently being explored and pursued.

Q4. Are your books available in audiobook format?

This book and my six previous post-retirement works are not currently available in audiobook format. All of them can be purchased at napohaku@paulbunyan.net.

Q5. What was the most surprising thing you learned while researching/writing this book?

Eight (8) species of endemic Hawaiian birds were removed from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife List of Endangered Hawaiian birds in 2021 because of presumed extinction. Several more species are in serious danger of undergoing the same fate in upcoming decades.

Q6. Do you have a favorite Hawaiian bird (either from the book or in general)? Why or why not?

My favorite Hawaiian bird would have to be the Nēnē (Hawaiian Goose). It is an iconic bird that represents Hawai‘i as the State Bird and is a good example of cooperative management and research efforts. The current status of the Nēnē is a tribute to the people involved in its recovery. Nēnē are large enough to be visible to most people and abundant enough to be encountered with a little effort. Nēnē can now be found on several of the Hawaiian Islands. Nēnē are distinct *terrestrial* geese, different in habitat and habits from most other geese. Nēnē were the first avian species I studied on my arrival in Hawai‘i; I had a small part in producing a management plan and publications about them, together with real experts on the bird (Paul Banko, Ron Walker, Ron Bachman and other State Division of Forestry and Wildlife personnel) and Hawai‘i Volcanoes and Haleakalā National Park managers (Howard Hoshide, Ron Nagata and others). Additionally, my daughter Beth wrote an (unsolicited) poem (“Nēnē Makua kāne”) about her experiences in following a radio-tagged pair of birds with me in the Ka‘u Desert on the Big Island.

Q7. What is your favorite poem (either from the book or in general)?

Since I no longer live in the Islands, I now relate to the ‘Ūlili and the Kōlea, which also spend time elsewhere. (I wish I could go back and forth like they do!) I also appreciate the seasonality of their lives, something I experience here with Minnesota winters. And one final attraction: they make authentic Hawaiian music, often with an ocean view. I especially enjoyed writing these two poems.

Q8. What do you like to do when you are not writing?

I enjoy birding in several areas of Minnesota (including my neighborhood), Wisconsin, North Dakota and other places as opportunities arise. Some winters, my wife and I visit the Alabama and Florida coasts of the Gulf of Mexico. Reading, walking, playing the native American flute and practicing Taiji are other preoccupations.

Q9. If your audience wants to learn more about birds in Hawai‘i, where can they go?

I suggest joining a bird-oriented outdoor group such as the Hawaii Audubon Society and participating in their activities. Birders need to get out and enjoy Creation in protected and relatively undisturbed areas where people go to see birds. State, federal, NGO and private areas all have birds, but most native species are found in protected areas at higher elevations. Seabirds can be seen from shore and in boats, and on available marine birding trips. Hawaii Audubon Society bird guides are a good place to start for identifying birds. And find somebody with whom to birdwatch, who knows more about birds than you.

Other references to Hawai‘i bird sights and sounds are found in *Birds in Hawai‘i Today* (Further Reading and References and other sections) and other new as well as old literature. But there is no better approach than finding other birders and getting out where the birds are, with people who know them. Listening for bird songs and calls, looking for their activity and watching them, and a good pair of binoculars are essential. Audio recordings are available but should be used sparingly: Hawai‘i's birds have enough to deal with, including declining and disappearing habitat and introduced mosquitoes, predators and diseases. Spend your time in diverse and undisturbed habitat. Slow down. Look ... and – especially – listen. ebird and the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology in Ithaca NY are important computer sources for finding and learning about birds nationwide.

Q10. What are you working on next?

In addition to marketing the current book remotely in Hawai‘i and on the U.S. Mainland, I am writing a booklet on “Spiritual Poems and Prayers for Family, Friends and a Few Other Folks.”

Chuck Stone, October 2022