

**KAUAI & HAWAII:
THE GARDEN ISLE AND
THE BIG ISLAND**

MARCH 21 – 29, 2006

LEADERS:

BOB SUNDSTROM

BARRY ZIMMER

COMPILED BY:

BOB SUNDSTROM

VICTOR EMANUEL NATURE TOURS, INC.

2525 WALLINGWOOD DRIVE, SUITE 1003

AUSTIN, TX 78746

WWW.VENTBIRD.COM

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Our March two-island Hawaii tour began with a pre-trip option for a one-day, oceangoing catamaran trip offshore from Kauai. It was a sunny day with surprisingly smooth waters. Our route took us first from Port Allen across an ocean passage to the island Lehua, where the boat anchored for snorkeling. Both Laysan and Black-footed albatrosses flew along the slopes of Lehua, where both species were nesting. An immaculate white Red-tailed Tropicbird flew several times right over the boat, and White-tailed Tropicbirds, Red-footed and Brown boobies, and Great Frigatebirds were also in the air. Small groups of Wedge-tailed Shearwaters and Black Noddies glided over the waves. An endangered Hawaiian monk seal swam right alongside the boat, and we had a leisurely study of a pod of pilot whales. By lunchtime we were cruising just offshore along the rugged and beautiful 4,000 ft. Na Pali cliff coastline, on the north side of Kauai. Spinner dolphins swam at the bow, and humpback whales were seen spy-hopping, “mule-kicking,” and breaching.

Our main Kauai & Hawaii tour began with two full days on emerald-green Kauai. On our first day we drove up along scenic Waimea Canyon. Red Junglefowl brightened the misty forest edge, Japanese Bush-Warblers sang loudly, and we had good views of both Black and Erckel’s francolins. In Kokee State Forest we birded the native forest trails, finding great views of Kauai endemic bird species: Anianiau, Kauai Amakihi, and Kauai’s Elepaio, plus our first Apapanes. In the afternoon we worked back down along Waimea Canyon and, at one overlook, the clouds parted miraculously for a moment, revealing the majestic green and rust Waimea Canyon walls, 3,000 feet high. Back at sea level on Kauai’s west shore, we watched a Barn Owl chase off a Pueo (Hawaiian Short-eared Owl), a Brant was a surprising rarity in a flooded cane field, and a Laysan Albatross improbably flew back and forth above the fields.

Seabirds were the featured celebrities on our second day on Kauai. At Kilauea Point, an elegant Red-tailed Tropicbird flew repeatedly close by the lighthouse cliffs, later to engage in courtship flight with another. We also 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. When we first arrived at Kilauea, a Pueo soared over the lighthouse at the same moment as a Laysan Albatross—a very unusual visual pairing.

We flew on to Hawaii, the Big Island, where we stayed for five full days. On the first day we watched the islands’ only native hawk species, the I’o or Hawaiian Hawk, as it soared above the slopes of volcanic Hualalai. After lunch with a breathtaking view of Kealakekua Bay and the Pacific, we visited an old-time Macadamia nut roaster and a Kona coffee coop and roaster. The following day on the leeward slopes of 13,000+ ft. Mauna Kea, we had great luck in finding a number of endangered Palila, a Hawaiian endemic honeycreeper closely linked to the native yellow blossoming mamane trees. For three nights we stayed at the Volcano House lodge in Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, on the rim of Kilauea volcano. We took one full day to make 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 damp 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.

Our full day in the national park began with breakfast overlooking Kilauea Caldera, and then birding in Bird Park on the Mauna Loa Road, with amazing views of Kalij Pheasants right along the trail, a trio of allo-preening Red-billed Leiothrix, and several Melodious Laughing-Thrushes singing and slinking through the trees. Mid-morning we walked through a huge, extinct lava tube and watched White-tailed Tropicbirds circle the rim of Halemaumau Crater. After lunch near the park and an afternoon break, we stopped at Jaggar Museum before driving down Chain of Craters Road, stopping en route 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, and then our group walked across the pahoehoe lava flows of recent years to an overlook. As sunset and then dusk arrived, we had some wonderful views of red lava streaming out of a lava tube into the ocean. Every few minutes a shower of red molten rock shot upwards into air, like volcanic fireworks—an apt finish to a fine tour, featuring many wonders of natural history, many fine restaurants, and lots of fresh, tropical breezes.

ITINERARY SKETCH

- Day 1 Tuesday, March 21:** Arrivals Lihue, Kauai, and get-acquainted dinner at Coconuts Restaurant in Kapaa. First of three nights in Kapaa.
- Day 2 Wednesday, March 22:** 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 trails and the roadside. After lunch at the Kokee general store, we worked back down along Waimea Canyon. At Puu Hina Hina Overlook, the clouds parted miraculously for a moment, revealing the majestic green and rust Waimea Canyon walls, 3000 feet high. Back at sea level on Kauai's west shore, we visited the Kekaha Ponds and stopped at wet fields between Kekaha and Polihale. Today's highlights included great views of Kauai endemic bird species Anianiau, Kauai Amakihi, and Kauai's Elepaio, plus our first Apapanes. A Barn Owl flew in to challenge a Pueo (Hawaiian Short-eared Owl), Red Jungle Fowl brightened the misty forest edge, Japanese Bush-Warbler sang loudly, and we had good views of both Black and Erckel's francolins. A "Black" Brant was a surprising rarity in a wet cane field north of Kekaha, and a Laysan Albatross improbably flew back and forth above the fields. Dinner at Wrangler's in Waimea. Night in Kapaa.
- Day 3 Thursday, March 23:** 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. A Red-tailed Tropicbird flew repeatedly close by the lighthouse cliffs, later to engage in courtship flight with another. We also 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. When we first arrived at Kilauea, a Pueo soared over the lighthouse at the same moment as a Laysan Albatross – a very unusual visual pairing. Other nice sightings included Nene, Koloa (Hawaiian Duck), Hawaiian Common Moorhen, and White-rumped Shama. Dinner at Coconuts in Kapaa. Dinner at Mema Thai; final night in Kapaa.
- Day 4 Friday, March 24:** Today we took an early flight to Kona (via Honolulu), arriving in time to drive south toward the famed Kona coffee country. After lunch at Coffee Shack with a breathtaking view of Kealakekua Bay and the Pacific, we visited an old time Macadamia nut roaster and a Kona coffee coop and roaster. Heading north from Kona, we drove briefly up Kaloko Dr. where we saw our first I'o (Hawaiian Hawk) of the tour, a much wanted species. Farther north at the country club grounds near Puu Anahulu, we had a wonderful view of a pair of

dust-bathing Gray Francolin. 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 Saturday, March 25: 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 before lunch 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 number of Pueo, including birds perched on fence posts right along the road. After Barry's fine picnic lunch, we returned to Waimea for a break. Late afternoon, we drove south to Puu Anahulu area, to bird mainly near the Big Island Country Club. Night in Waimea.

Day 6 Sunday, March 26: Driving south from Kamuela/Waimea after breakfast, we made a series of birding stops enroute to Kona, finding Warbling Silverbills in the game management area north of Puu Anahulu, and then more waxbills along the roadside below Puu Lani. Near Honokohou Harbor, a walk down the beach took us to Aimakapa Pond and some great views of Hawaiian Coots, as well as Wandering Tattlers and other shorebirds, and a flock of Lesser Scaup. Further south, we had a terrific scope view of a perched, dark-morph Hawaiian Hawk, before stopping for another fine, scenic lunch at the Coffee Shack. Then we drove on to Hawaii Volcanoes National Park. First of three nights at Volcano House in the National Park.

Day 7 Monday, March 27: 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 damp 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 had dinner at Café Pesto, before returning for a second night at Volcano House.

Day 8 Tuesday, March 28: 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 amazing views of Kalij Pheasants right along the trail, a trio of allo-preening Red-billed Leiothrix, and several Melodious Laughing-Thrushes singing and slinking through the trees. Mid-morning began a tour of Volcanoes Park by exploring Thurston Lava Tube and then Halemaumau Crater and Puu Puai cinder cone and Devastation Trail. After lunch near the park and an afternoon break, we stopped at Jaggar Museum 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, and then the group walked across the pahoehoe flows of recent years to an overlook. As sunset and then dusk arrived we had some wonderful views of red lava streaming out of a lava tube into the ocean and, every few minutes, spurting upwards into air with a shower of red chunks of molten rock. Dinner and final night at Volcano House.

Day 9 Wednesday, March 29: A final breakfast overlooking Kilauea Caldera at the Volcano House, then on to Hilo for departures.

BIRD LIST

BIRD LIST LOCATION KEY:

H = Hawaii (a.k.a. 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]

TUBENOSES:

Laysan Albatross (*Diomedea immutabilis*) – K. The first Laysans seen were one or two that soared in from the shoreline north of Kekaha, actually flying over the cane fields as much as a mile inland – an unlikely sight! Others were seen 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 at Kilauea NWR.

Wedge-tailed Shearwater - (*Puffinus pacificus*) – K. We scoped a pair at the mouth of their nest burrow at Kilauea Pt., where they sat under the naupaka perhaps fifteen feet from the scope. The adults were just beginning their nesting season at the refuge.

TROPICBIRDS, BOOBIES, and FRIGATEBIRDS

White-tailed Tropicbird (*Phaeton lepturus*) – K,H. Several of these beautiful seabirds were seen in flight at Kilauea Pt., others from the Puu Hina Hina overlook as they flew in Waimea Canyon on Kauai. The best views were of several flying around inside the rim of Halemaumau Crater in Kilauea Caldera, in Hawaii Volcanoes National Park.

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

Brown Booby (*Sula leucogaster*) – K; seen flying by at Kilauea Pt.

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. Seen very well at Kilauea, chasing boobies and hanging motionless in the air above the lighthouse.

HERONS:

Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*) – K,H

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

GEESE & DUCKS:

NENE (*Branta sandvicensis*) – K,H; Seen first on Kauai at Kilauea Pt. NWR and Hanalei NWR, and later at Big Is. Country Club on Hawaii. Hawaii's state bird is endangered.

Brant (*Branta bernicla*) – K; Barry spotted one of the "Black Brant" forms north of Kekaha in a flooded field. A rare visitor to Hawaii.

KOLOA [HAWAIIAN DUCK] (*Anas wyvilliana*) – K; a few near Kekaha, and dozens at Hanalei NWR on Kauai

Lesser Scaup (*Aythya affinis*) - H; eighteen at Aimakapa Pond

EAGLES, HAWKS & ALLIES:

IO [HAWAIIAN HAWK] (*Buteo solitarius*) - H. We saw our first soaring hawks along Kaloko Dr. and, two days later, a perched dark morph along the road south of Kona. Also some nice views of I'o during the day at Hakalau Forest NWR.

GALLINACEOUS BIRDS:

Black Francolin (*Francolinus francolinus*) – K,H. Males were calling at many spots in the drier regions of both islands, and we had some nice views of their showy black, rust, and buff plumage.

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.

Gray Francolin (*Francolinus pondicerianus*) – H. Our best views were of a dust-bathing pair in late afternoon at the Big Is. Country Club near Puu Anahulu.

Chukar (*Alectoris chukar*) – H; along the Saddle Rd.

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

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

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

Wild Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) - H

California Quail (*Callipepla californica*) - H

MOORHENS & COOTS:

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

HAWAIIAN COOT (*Fulica alai*) – K,H; seen closest at Aimakapa Pond, where the species enormous all-white frontal shield was especially obvious

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 in May.

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 in the wet fields north of Kekaha.

Wandering Tattler (*Heteroscelus incanus*)- K,H; 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

OWLS:

Pueo [Short-eared Owl - Hawaiian subspecies] (*Asio flammeus sandwichensis*) – K,H. Seen interacting with a Barn Owl north of Kekaha on Kauai. This handsome owl was seen a number of times, sometimes perched at the roadside, on the east side of Mauna Kea and on the drive out from Hakalau NWR.

LARKS to BULBULS:

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

BULBULS:

Red-vented Bulbul (*Pycnonotus cafer*) – seen on Oahu at the Honolulu airport during the wait for the flight to Kona.

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).

OLD WORLD WARBLERS

Japanese Bush-Warbler (*Cettia diphone*) – K,H; heard and seen in the mist along Waimea Canyon; heard several other places.

THRUSHES and BABBLERS

White-rumped Shama (*Copsychus malabaricus*) – K; seen by some right at Aloha Beach Resort, and later on the north shore of Kauai.

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

Melodious Laughing-Thrush (*Garrulax canorus*) – K,H; heard at a variety of spots, and seen at Bird Park as several sang and called and moved sneakily from tree to tree.

Red-billed Leiothrix (*Leiothrix lutea*) - H; an allopreening trio at Bird Park

MIMIDS

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

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

EMBERIZIDS

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

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

Yellow-billed Cardinal (*Paroaria capitata*) - H; all along the west half of the Big Island

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

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

Anianiau (*Hemignathus parvus*) - K; several bright yellow-green males foraged in the open

AKIAPOLAAU (*Hemignathus munroi*) – H. Just at the end of the walk in Hakalau Forest NWR, a juvenile male Aki' began calling, but was off in an area inaccessible from the trail.

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

Akekee (*Loxops caeruleirostris*) - K. A Kauai endemic, we watched a pair foraging overhead in among the leaves of an ohia tree.

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

Lavender Waxbill (*Estrilda caerulescens*) – H; along the roadside below Puu Lani

Black-rumped Waxbill (*Estrilda troglodytes*) – H; ditto

Warbling Silverbill (*Lonchura malabarica*) – H

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

Chestnut Mannikin (*Lonchura malacca*) - K; lots of these handsome exotics

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

MAMMALS, HERPS & BUTTERFLIES:

Humpback Whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) – K
Spinner Dolphin (*Stennella longirostris*) – K
Small Indian Mongoose (*Herpestes auropunctatus*) – H
Feral Pig (*Sus scrofa*) – K,H
Gold Dust Day Gecko (*Phelsuma laticauda*) - H; rainbow-colored gecko at the Coffee Shack
Common House Gecko (*Hemidactylus frenatus*) – K,H
Green (American) Anole (*Anolis carolinensis*) – K
Cane Toad (*Bufo marinus*) – K
Common Coqui (*Eleutherodactylus coqui*) – frog heard calling “ko – kee” around Hilo

BUTTERFLIES :

Blackburn’s Blue – H
King Kamehameha Butterfly – H
Monarch – K,H
Gulf Fritillary – K