

# Wanderer in the Western Pacific

by Michael W. Gillette  
U.S.S. Enterprise

During my enlistment in the Navy, I've had the rare opportunity to visit many exotic places which most people merely dream of seeing. My current duty assignment is onboard the nuclear aircraft carrier Enterprise CVN-65. We left our home port at the Naval Air Station Alameda, California, on the 4th of April of this year on our way to a seven-month cruise of the Western Pacific.

I had mixed feelings about going overseas again for such a lengthy time, mainly due to the fact that I'd miss our birds at home in Lompoc, California. My sister, Andrea, and myself had just added on to our aviaries and acquired some new birds. The Redrumps were nesting and had five eggs, which were due to hatch very soon. It was a very trying period knowing that my time was growing short at home. On the other hand, I was looking forward to seeing friends I had made the previous years in Hobart, Tasmania and Subic Bay, Phillipines. Finally, I did set in my mind that I would have to leave the states and would make the best of the whole affair.

Our first inport visit enroute to Subic Bay was on the island of Oahu, Hawaii. We were tied up at the carrier pier in Pearl Harbor during the two brief days we were there. The aft section of the Enterprise faced the Arizona memorial and many parts of Japanese-sunk ships of the raid on Pearl Harbor were visible in the clear waters.

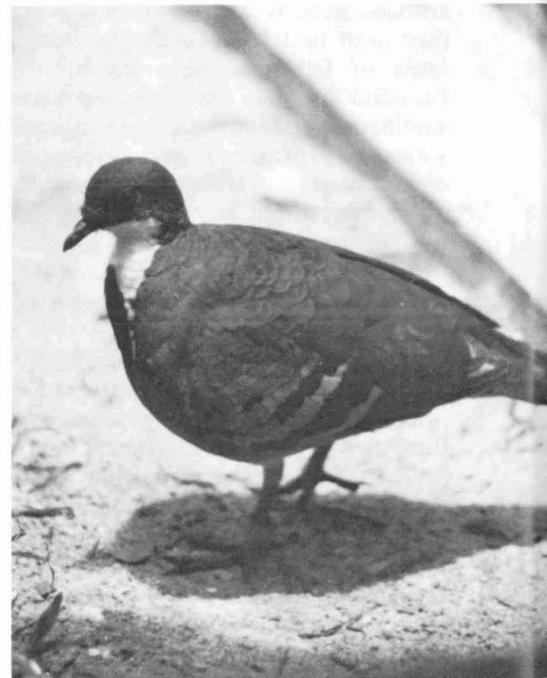
A friend of mine onboard the ship told me of the Honolulu Zoo, which was suppose to have one of the best collections of birds anywhere. Well, I had to see it and get some pictures of the birds; I thought to myself. On arriving at the zoo and viewing what they had, it became

clear to me that my friend had no real appreciation for the collection at the San Diego Zoo. Maybe I set my comparative idea of a fine bird collection too high — after all, San Diego Zoo is hard to beat! Their birds were in very good health and the aviaries were extremely spacious and nicely planted. However, I truly expected something a good deal more elaborate for the year-round tropical weather they can take advantage of in Hawaii.

Most of the birds we saw at the Honolulu Zoo were introduced species. I was very startled, to say the least, when we came across several separate pair of Brazilian Cardinals feeding out of sidewalk trash cans. They were very easy to approach, but would take to flight when a camera was pointed in their general direction. I managed to find a book store and purchased a more recent copy of *Birds of Hawaii* by George Munro, and a small but complete and very well illustrated pamphlet of *Hawaii's Birds* printed by the Hawaiian Audubon Society.

The following is my account of readily encountered introduced species and when they were introduced:

Species	Introduced
Barred Dove ( <i>Geoplia striata striata</i> ) . . . . .	1922
Spotted Dove ( <i>Streptopelia chinensis chinensis</i> ) . . . . .	1928
Peaceful Dove ( <i>Geopelia striata tranquilla</i> ) . . . . .	1922
House Sparrow ( <i>Passer domesticus</i> ) . . . . .	1871
House Finch ( <i>Carpodacus mexicanus frontalis</i> ) . . . . .	1870
Lavender Finch ( <i>Estrilda caerulescens</i> ) . . . . .	Before 1930
Cordon-Bleu ( <i>Uraeginthus angolensis</i> ) . . . . .	Before 1930
Orange-Cheeked Waxbill ( <i>Estrilda melpoda</i> ) . . . . .	Before 1930
White-Eye ( <i>Zosterops palpebrosus japonicus</i> ) . . . . .	1929
Strawberry Finch ( <i>Amandava amandava</i> ) . . . . .	1936
Virginia Cardinal ( <i>Richmondia cardinalis</i> ) . . . . .	1929
Brazilian Cardinal ( <i>Paroaria cucullata</i> ) . . . . .	1928
Common Mynah ( <i>Acridotheres tristis</i> ) . . . . .	1865



Male Bartlett's Bleeding-Heart Pigeon.



*Blue-Backed Kingfisher trying to keep cool by stretching its wings and tail feathers while panting rapidly.*

There are many other introduced species to the Hawaiian islands, however, they don't frequent heavily human populated areas. Unfortunately, my time was very limited, so I didn't get to explore the island of Oahu thoroughly for some of the native birds. I was hoping to get pictures of the unique Hawaiian Honeycreepers at the Honolulu Zoo, but there were none to be seen. I'll go back to Hawaii in the future to pursue my bird watching and photography when I'm no longer limited to a short visit.

After another week at sea, we arrived at Subic Bay, Phillipines for a ten-day inport period. This was a well needed and deserved break in all of the at sea time. I spent most of my time at a nearby beach collecting small sea shells, snorkel diving for tropical marine fish and getting a terrible sunburn which was my start to a fine tan.

All along, I had very serious intentions of going to Manila to visit the zoo and the Phillipine Department of Wilelfare, where they keep many of the native birds for public viewing. Also, I wanted to get to the Cartimar Market in Pasay City, which is a suburb of Manila. Cartimar Market is known for its many pet shops and has birds available from all over the Far East, Australia and, if course, the Phillipines at very reasonable prices. I was never able to swing the necessary off time to get to Manila, but will take leave there the next time we are in Subic Bay in late August. I'll give a full report on my visit to Manila when it eventuates.

We left Subic Bay on the 27th of May and arrived in Hong Kong on the 11th of June for a five-day R and R visit. Hong Kong is a rest and relaxation port for all U.S. ships, and the Enterprise was to be

no exception to the rule. As it turned out, Hong Kong has proven to be the highlight of this year's long deployment for me.

Our first day in Hong Kong, I accompanied a good friend of mine over to Fenwick Pier, which is the shuttle boat landing for U.S. servicemen from their ships anchored out in the bay. The Orientals are very apprehensive about having a nuclear powered vessel in their nearby surrounding waters, so the Enterprise had to anchor a considerable distance out in the bay from Fenwick Pier. This served two useful purposes: 1. It made the natives feel safer and 2. The shuttle boats, which brought us to and from the ship, were able to sell more beer and sandwiches due to the extended distance we had to travel.

We finally arrived at Fenwick Pier and immediately went across Harcourt Road to the China Fleet Club. The China Fleet Club is owned by the British Royal Navy and is a sort of consolidated shopping center. The prices are fair and the merchants there are reputable. I met a German couple who owned the stereo shop in the China Fleet Club. They gave me directions to get to two streets where I was suppose to be able to find various birds in an open air market place type setting — just what I was looking for! The two streets were parallel and very close to each other — Li Yuen Street and Li Yuen Street West. So, after a brief visit to the local Hong Kong McDonalds, we headed out in search of these streets. As it turned out, the streets were very easy to find, but there were no birds in sight except for one Japanese White-Eye in a very small cage. I tried to inquire about any pet birds in the neighboring area, but

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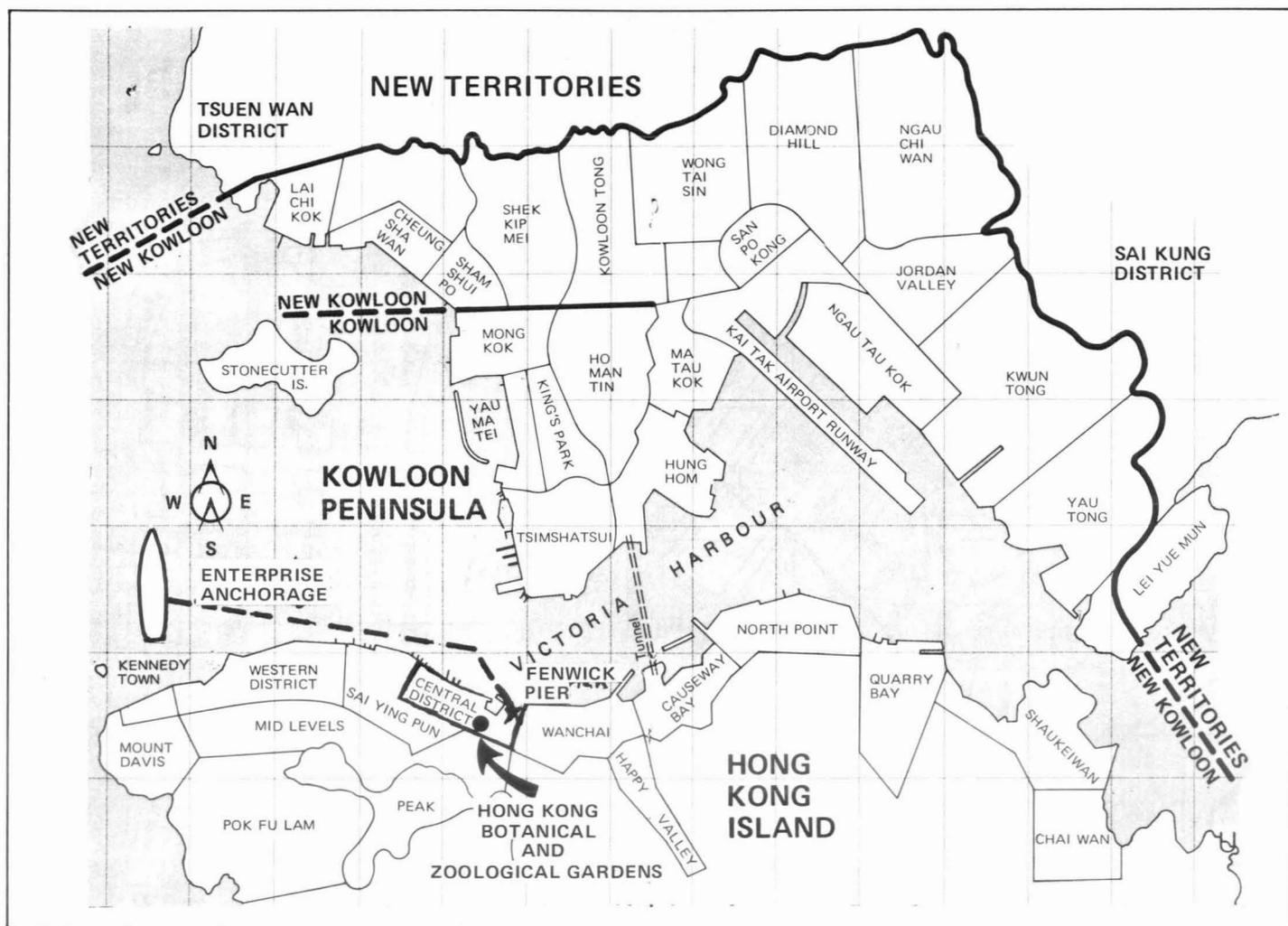
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they either didn't understand my question or merely ignored it and tried to sell me their various trinkets.

My friend felt as though I had lead him on a wild goose chase and was obviously a bit put out with me. I was completely disgusted about the whole situation but would try again when I was out on my own or with someone who had a more sympathetic and patient attitude toward my interest in birds. The day was getting late and I wanted to make a hotel reservation for the third and fourth days in Hong Kong before everything was booked up. After I made my reservations at the Hyatt Regency and did a little haggling over a camera, I went back to the ship to get some rest.

I was very tired on my second and third days there, so I merely relaxed on-board the ship and in my hotel room. It was great not having to be at any particular place at any particular time and to catch up on a little television watching.

Thursday, our fourth day in Hong Kong, turned out to be the best day of the whole visit. Another friend of mine, Ron Beckwith, who is considered more patient and is an accomplished photographer, accompanied me to the Hong

Kong Botanical and Zoological Gardens. Ron had heard that it might be a good place to go look for birds. His information proved to be a gold mine.

The framework of the aviaries was made of galvanized pipe and overlaid with  $\frac{1}{2}$ "x $\frac{1}{2}$ " welded wire. All of the metal, frame and wire, was painted black for optimum unobstructed viewing and picture



*Masked Hawfinch pausing in between drinks for a picture.*

taking by the public. If rust was present anywhere I'd put money on the line for it to be found. The aviaries had large spacious flights no less than 8' x 8' x 25' with adjoining shelters where the birds' various foods and nest boxes were located. Perches were supplied in form of large tree branches, otherwise the aviaries were heavily planted with shrubs and grass which provided roosting spots for the smaller birds. Actually, the mere size of each aviary contributed to the meticulous state of cleanliness and not a one was overcrowded in the least.

I counted at least one bird keeper for every aviary. As I learned, the keepers were responsible for every aspect of their assigned aviary; from the feeding of birds to monitoring nesting activities. One of the keepers in charge of the aviary which included a nesting pair of Blue-Streaked lorries, noted my interest in the female Grand Eclectus parrot in the same aviary. She told me in her best Chinese accented English that the Eclectus parrots had raised several babies last year, however, they were late going to nest this year because the Blue-Streaked lorries wouldn't let them near their nest box due to the proximity of the lorries' nest

box which had babies in it.

I can't begin to express how very impressed I was with the whole aviary set up at Hong Kong. The birds were in the very best health I've ever seen anywhere and many of the rarer species were breeding freely. My future plans have been altered to incorporate many of the things I saw there. Should the opportunity ever arise for those who are interested in beautiful birds or plants to visit the Hong Kong Botanic and Zoological Gardens, do so — it's well worth your time!

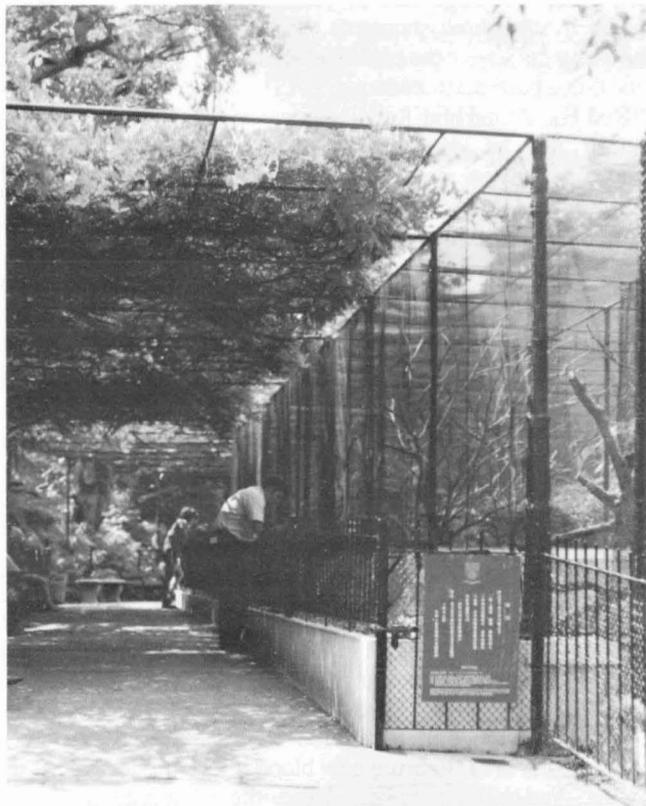
We left the gardens late in the afternoon so Ron could check out a few ivory shops before we had to go back to the ship. Any merchant in Hong Kong can be bargained with over anything he or she sells. I paid no more than half price on everything I bought there, so you can really save some money if your willing to haggle a little.

All in all, this years visit to Hong Kong was my most memorable one. I hope to go back to pursue the open air bird market again in the near future after I've brushed up on my Chinese. ■

Photos by Ron Beckwith



*Entrance of the Hong Kong Botanic and Zoological Gardens. The aviaries are slightly up hill and behind the trees.*



*End view of aviaries and the author taking notes.*

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