

THE BLACK-HEADED MUNIA DISCOVERED ON KAUAI

by H. Douglas Pratt

The Black-headed Munia (*Lonchura malacca*) has been established on Oahu since at least 1960 (A. J. Berger, 1977, The exotic birds of Hawaii, Honolulu, Island Heritage Ltd.). It is now abundant in the vicinity of Pearl Harbor and appears to be expanding its range. I have seen flocks of these birds as far north in Oahu's central valley as the agricultural lands below Poamoho Trail, and a specimen has been taken at Laie on the windward coast (Delwyn Berrett, pers. comm.). But until now the species has not been known to be established on any other of the Hawaiian Islands.

During a brief visit to Poipu Beach on the south coast of Kauai in early August 1976, I saw what I believed to be a flock of Black-headed Munias on the golf course behind the Waiohai Hotel. Since I was not carrying binoculars at the time, I was unable to confirm my tentative identification. Recently, I located a substantial population of this species in the sugarcane lands just north of Poipu Beach. On 16 May 1977, Greg Vaughn and I saw several small flocks of Black-headed Munias around the southern end of Waita Reservoir and another flock at Pia Mill Reservoir, both near the town of Koloa. We again saw birds of this species in the same general area on 18 May. On 22 May, I surveyed the cane roads around Waita Reservoir and found Black-headed Munias to be quite common. I saw many groups of two to seven individuals totaling at least 40 to 50 birds. I found them mostly in the weedy margins of the canefields and on grassy roadsides. The birds were quite wary and would not allow me to approach them closely in a car. I thus failed in my attempt to document their presence with a photograph. Spotted Munias (*L. punctulata*) were also common in the area, but did not form mixed flocks with the Black-headed Munias. The latter species is easily distinguished in flight by its bright chestnut-red rump and tail.

Clearly, the Black-headed Munia is established on Kauai, and has probably been a part of that island's lowland avifauna for several years. Whether these birds were intentionally introduced or colonized Kauai from Oahu probably cannot be determined.