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Nomenclature of the Kauai Amakihi and Kauai Akialoa (Drepanidini)

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The nomenclature used by the 6th edition of the AOU Check-list (AOU 1983) for the Hawaiian finches (Drepanidini) follows the revision by Pratt (1979a). The rationalization for resorting to a work, the pertinent portions of which are as yet unpublished, was that Pratt's classification had been adopted in general by Berger (1981). Most of Pratt's departures from the long-influential classification of Amadon (1950) are justifiable, even commendable, reversions to earlier systematic practices. His placement of the "amakihis" (*sagittirostris* Rothschild, 1892; *parva* Stejneger, 1887; and the "superspecies" *virens* Gmelin, 1789) in the genus *Hemignathus,* however, was an innovation with no precedent in the entire literature of Hawaiian ornithology, for at no point had the trivial names associated with these birds ever appeared in combination with the generic name *Hemignathus,* even as a printing error.

It was almost inevitable that such an extensive merger, involving 9 nominal taxa in the "amakihi" group and 11 among *Hemignathus,* would result in the creation of homonyms. Pratt detected one of these, noting that the name *wilsoni* Rothschild, 1893a, used for the subspecies of Common Amakihi of Maui (and subjectively for the populations of Molokai and Lanai as well) has priority over *wilsoni* Rothschild 1893b, used for the Akiapolaau of Hawaii, if both of these are included in the genus *Hemignathus.* He therefore substituted the new name *Hemignathus munroi* for the Akiapolaau, for which the AOU Check-list (AOU 1983) gives the original citation as Dissertation Abstracts (Pratt 1979b), certainly an undesirable, although valid, vehicle for the introduction of new names. Incidentally, Berger (1981) did not use this new name and thus improperly carried two taxa named *wilsoni* in the genus *Hemignathus.*

Pratt (1979a), the AOU Check-list committee (AOU 1983), and all others who have followed these sources, have overlooked the fact that the name *stejnegeri* Wilson, 1890, in the combination *Hemignathus stejnegeri* or *Hemignathus virens stejnegeri,* is not available for the Kauai Amakihi. This combination is a junior homonym of *Hemignathus stejnegeri* Wilson, 1889, a name bestowed earlier on the Kauai Akialoa, a bird that has since been almost universally known by the younger name *Hemignathus procerus* Cabanis, 1890, which was actually published several months after Wilson's name (Olson and James, MS). On grounds of priority, the Kauai Akialoa should be known as *Hemignathus stejnegeri,* but the proper name for this bird does not affect the question of homonymy of the name for the Kauai Amakihi, which regardless cannot be known as *Hemignathus stejnegeri.* If the Kauai Amakihi, whether recognized as a full species or as a subspecies of *virens,* is to be referred to the genus *Hemignathus,* a new name will have to be proposed for it, as no other is available. In our view, this is unneccessary, as we disagree with Pratt and consider that the amakihis do *not* belong in the genus *Hemignathus.* Pratt's (1979a) reasons for including the amakihis in *Hemignathus* involve mainly similarities in plumage (simple, unpatterned green and yellow) and voice (also simple), whereas differences in myology (presence versus absence of the plantaris muscle, Raikow 1977), and cranial osteology (e.g., the deep medial groove on the ventral maxilla, the shorter retroarticular processes of the mandible, the abruptly constricted nasals and long, attenuated premaxillae observable in *Hemignathus* [*sensu* Amadon 1950] as opposed to the Amakihi's), argue that these are distinct lineages that should be maintained in separate genera.

The amakihis may either be combined with the akepas in the genus *Loxops* Cabanis, 1847, as Amadon (1947, 1950) was the first to propose; segregated in a genus *Viridonia* Rothschild, 1892, to include both the Greater *(sagittirostris)* and "Common" Amakihis *(virens + stejnegeri),* and the Anianiau *(parva);* or be further split into two genera, *Viridonia* for *sagittirostris* and *Chlorodrepanis* "Perkins" in Wilson and Evans, 1899, for the remainder (the genus *Magumma* Mathews, 1925, is also available for *parva* should this group be even further split). Any one of these courses would be less misleading than placing the amakihis in *Hemignathus,* and if adopted would also result in reinstating the name *Hemignathus wilsoni* for the Akiapolaau.

Such generic treatments are by nature subjective, whereas the unavailability of the name *stejnegeri* for the Kauai Amakihi is not, being the result of objective application of the rules of nomenclature, which require the Kauai Amakihi to be renamed if it is included in the genus *Hemignathus.*

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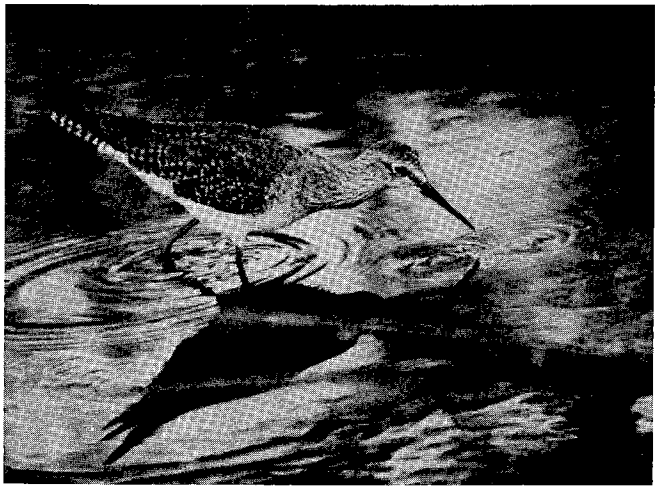

Figure 1. Lesser Yellowlegs at Takapoto Is., Tuamotu Archipelago, December 1984. *Photo by A. Intes*

Lesser Yellowlegs in the Tuamoto Archipelago, French Polynesia

A. Intes

The South Central Pacific is a regular wintering area for some North American birds such as the Bristle-thighed Curlew *(Numenius tahitiensis),* the Wandering Tattler *(Heteroscelus incanus),* and the Lesser Golden-Plover *(Pluvialis dominica).* These birds can be seen in French Polynesia on the Society Islands as well as on the atolls of the Tuamotu Archipelago.

During a visit to Takapoto Island (14°30′ S, 145°20′ W) in the Tuamotus on 9-15 December 1984, I observed several individuals of an unusual species of sandpiper (Figure 1). They had long yellow legs and were similar in size to the Lesser Golden Plover or the Wandering Tattler. Without doubt, I identified these birds as Lesser Yellowlegs *(Tringa flavipes).* At least four individuals were counted in an area 3 km long and 300 m wide.

There are two similar species which could possibly be confused with the birds observed, the Greater Yellowlegs *(Tringa melanoleuca)* and the Wood Sandpiper *(Tringa glareola).* The Greater Yellowlegs is larger, has a longer and thicker bill, and has a different call than the birds seen on Takapoto. The Wood Sandpiper is similar in color and a little smaller in size, but it is an Old World migrant and is much less likely to occur in French Polynesia than the Lesser Yellowlegs.

During the week of observation the birds were encountered every day on freshwater ponds, either among coconut trees or bushes *(Tournefortia argentea* and *Scaevola sericea).* They were never seen on the ocean or lagoon shore of the atoll and were always alone, with only one individual to a pond. The first occupant of a pond aggressively chased intruders of the same species. This behavior is often observed in other wintering or migratory shorebirds.

This record seems to be the first for this species in French Polynesia. One observation from the Cook Islands, recorded by Holyoak and Thibault (1984) refers to either the Greater or the Lesser Yellowlegs, but the description is too vague for positive identification. The Lesser Yellowlegs has not been recorded from Fiji, Tonga, or Samoa (Watling 1982). The birds we observed were no doubt on the margin of their wintering range.

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