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"Freedom of the Press belongs to those who own one."

A. J. Liebling of the New Yorker

May 1, 2001



Taking the Point Position...

T *here is a local chapter of Concerned Citizens here on this idyllic island of Kauai, but mostly they are trying to preserve the land from development so they can continue to grow pot.*

I'd gladly leave their pot fields alone if they would also stop trying to preserve chickens along with all the other living things. The history of the Sandwich Islands says that native plants washed up on these shores and prospered at a rate of one new plant species every 10,000 years. Of course the Hawaiians denuded the plant life in the 1700s and have since replaced everything with orchids from South America and Hibiscus from China, but that is another story. You can drive for hours in Hawaii and never see an indigenous plant.

The same is true of animal life. Damn few animals washed naturally onto these shores. A few bird species, but nothing else. What does exist came in dugout canoes as food or later as food or pets.

Then there are the chickens. "Jungle fowl" is what the environmentalists call them. You and I call them chickens. They are the progeny of domestic chickens and Filipino fighting fowl, all of which were freed by the 220 MPH winds of the last great hurricane, Iniki, in 1992. With no natural enemies, except me, these damned things have taken over the Island of Kauai. There is too much fighting fowl in each one for the meat to be edible, and too much domestic chicken for the



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damned things to be worth a spectator sport. They are sort of a feathered version of the Cowardly Lion.

Each year, there are more. And more. The roads are getting slippery with road kill, but the damned tourists feed the stupid things at roadside viewing places and the local chapter of Concerned Citizens protests their killing. The tourists swerve to miss them, and the locals swerve to hit them. The roads are filled with swerving motorists, only a few of whom are high on Maui Wowie. The stoned drivers are the safest, because both the tourists and the locals will do ANYTHING to (hit) or (miss) the damned birds, while the smokers of Kauai Ditch Weed are at least trying to stay ON the road!

One of my friends tells these stupid tourists that the chickens that surround their cars at viewing points are the endangered Ne'Ne birds - and the tourists take lots of pictures and feed them more, amid squeals. I have considered killing him and kayaking his body deep into the interior of the Rain Forrest.

The roosters are beautiful birds. Colorful plumage from their fighting fowl ancestry, but they don't know dawn from a hole in the ground...they crow all night long. Tourists don't care because they sleep in the white noise of air conditioning at Princeville or the Marriott, but our place is right beside a great waterfall and we sleep with the door open so as to hear the peaceful crashing water. And the roosters.

Probably 99% of the local homes have neither heat nor air conditioning, so all the locals remain at the mercy of roosters, if not the power companies.

We live on 10 acres overlooking the ocean, so the chickens have lots of room to roam and multiply. If they get too close to the house, Bonnie, the big Labrador takes out after them with great woofs and howls, feet trying to get purchase on the wood deck - at 2 a.m. Listening to Bonnie chase crowing roosters all night is not especially restful, particularly since she has never caught one.

Kauai does not have good experience with importing predators. Decades ago the sugar cane farmers imported a bunch of mongoose to eradicate the rats that were decimating local cane fields. Unfortunately, it turns out that the rat is nocturnal and the mongoose is decidedly not - so they have coexisted peacefully except at the margins.

Kauai cleaned up many of its abandoned cars after a critical article in the Wall Street Journal a year or so ago.

Note to the WSJ: It is time for a chicken article.

Top 10 Ways to Know You are in Kauai

- 1. The hospital cafeteria is a recommended eating place**
- 2. The speed limit is set by the slowest car on the 2-lane highway**
- 3. Anywhere you really want to go is over 4 one-lane bridges**
- 4. When a letter falls of a sign, they just rename the beach**
- 5. Coconut tree height limits building heights**
- 6. A top polo game is between Budweiser and Smith Chiropractic**
- 7. Maharishi Anybody would beat Bush or Gore**
- 8. Nothing on the island moves when the surf is up**
- 9. Chicken is certainly NOT an endangered bird**
- 10. Your car has never seen 60 MPH**

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"Be wary of strong drink. It can make you shoot at tax collectors – and miss."

Robert Heinlein

