

Story: The I'iwi in the Flock

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John 15:16

It was summertime. The nests around the ohī'a and koa forests had had their eggs, had had their cheeping chicks, and had been emptied. Young birds were flying about with their parents and aunts and uncles. The summer flocks were coming together.

Much of the year, the honeycreepers of the Hawaiian forests don't gather in big flocks. They move about by themselves or in twos or threes. But in summertime, they gather, and they gather 'amakihi with 'akepa with 'alawi and even some 'apapane. But not, most of the time, i'iwi. When nesting time comes back around the flocks disperse. In summer, they fly together.

A young i'iwi watched a flock of 'amakihi and 'akepa and 'apapane skimming the trees as they searched bugs and blossoms. He turned to his grandfather. "Should we fly with them?"

"Oh, no!" humphed his grandfather. "They don't have the right kind of beak."

In fact, none of the birds in the flock had the long curving bill that the i'iwi did.

He asked his grandmother, "Should we fly with them?"

"Oh, no!" said his grandmother. "They don't have the right color feathers."

The 'apapane came closest, but he had to admit that you could see the difference.

"Should we fly with them?" he asked his friends, and they all said, "No! They can't do what we do!" in different ways.

A day later, all by himself, he approached the flock, and perched next to an 'amakihi.

"You don't have a long curved bill," he remarked.

"No," said the 'amakihi, somewhat puzzled. "I don't."

"It seems to work well enough," said the i'iwi.

"It works pretty well, I think," said the 'amakihi.

“It might be awkward to get into an ohī’a blossom from below,” said the i’iwi, and the ‘amakihi admitted this was true.

“You don’t have bright red feathers,” said the i’iwi.

“True,” said the ‘amakihi. “Mine are bright yellow.”

“Do they get you places?” asked the i’iwi.

“They got me here,” said the ‘amakihi.

“Can you do all the things I can do?” asked the i’iwi.

“Probably not,” said the ‘amakihi. “Can you do all the things I can do?”

“Probably not,” said the i’iwi.

Then he asked, “Do you mind if I fly along with your flock?”

“With your red feathers and curved beak and things I can’t do?” said the ‘amakihi. “Join us and welcome.”

That’s how an i’iwi became part of a summertime flock.

by Eric Anderson