

# Story: The Sweet Bug Mystery

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Jeremiah 31:7-14

John 1:1-18

The 'elepaio has the reputation for being the most curious bird of the forest, but once there was an 'apapane who was as curious as nearly any 'elepaio. He had questions about everything. Why were his feathers brown when he was younger, and why did they turn red? Why did some trees have blossoms and others didn't? Why did the days grow shorter and longer again?

He found answers to some of his questions, and he didn't find answers to others of his questions. He never gave up asking them, though, and he never gave up trying to find out.

One morning, while enjoying a late morning snack of bugs, it suddenly occurred to him: Why do bugs taste sweet?

I'm not sure that bugs would taste sweet to you or to me, but the bugs he was eating that day definitely tasted sweet to him. He hadn't thought about it before, but why should a bug taste sweet? Shouldn't they be salty, or tangy, or something like that? Why sweet?

He asked around to see if anyone else knew, but nobody did. They hadn't thought about it, and they weren't all that interested. "If they taste good, that's all that matters," said one of his friends, and didn't help any further. So the 'apapane decided to watch and see what sweet bugs ate.

What they ate, he discovered, was a lot of things that he also ate. Those bugs ate fruit. They ate ohia nectar. They even ate other bugs who were eating sweet fruit and nectar. The sweetness of what they ate was being carried along to make them at least somewhat sweet.

"That's amazing!" he said to himself. "But now the question is: Why is fruit sweet? Why is nectar sweet?"

Again, he went to friends and family to ask, and again they didn't know. "It tastes good; that's all that matters," said the same friend. So he began to watch the trees, to see what they did to produce sweet fruit and flowers.

I'm afraid that being an 'apapane rather than a human being meant that he never did learn the answer to that. He could see that the trees spread their leaves to the sun, but he couldn't see the way that the green of the leaves combined water from the roots with energy of the sun to make the sweetness that made the tree grow. He couldn't see that sweet sap being

concentrated in the flowers to make nectar, and later in the fruits to feed the seeds of later trees. People have microscopes and chemistry equipment and lots of years asking and answering these questions. He didn't.

He had to admit that he wouldn't answer the question of sweet nectar, at least until he learned something new. For him, sweet nectar would remain a sweet mystery.

It never stopped him from enjoying it, though.

*by Eric Anderson*