

# Story: One Might Know

May 10, 2026

Acts 17:22-31

John 14:15-21

This story didn't take place on our island, because although one of the birds in it lives on Hawai'i, the other doesn't. I took this picture on Kauai, though both birds also live on O'ahu.

The one on the left, swimming in the water, with its red beak and red on its forehead, is an ala'e 'ula, or Hawaiian gallinule. The one on the right, standing on long thin pink legs with white and black feathers and a very long straight black beak, is an ae'o, or Hawaiian black-necked stilt.

Both of them like to search for food in roughly the same kinds of places: relatively still and shallow water, like old fish ponds or coastal marshes. They don't eat the same food, however. The ala'e 'ula likes plant roots and seeds and shoots, and enjoys a snail or two. The ae'o mostly looks for fish, but will snap up water insects when it finds one.

Actually, the ala'e 'ula will eat those insects, too, but neither of them is so fond of a diet of bugs to get very upset about it.

On this day the ae'o was getting somewhat upset, but not about bugs. It was fish. He couldn't find many. Oh, one or two swam his direction, but where were the rest of them? He was getting hungry, and he was also getting irritated with the world. Being hungry does that to some people, and to some birds as well.

"Where are the fish?" he squawked in frustration.

"You can't find fish?" asked an ala'e 'ula a short way away.

"No, I can't, and is that any of your business?" he said rudely.

"No, I suppose not," said the ala'e 'ula, who'd been feeding quite happily on roots and shoots and therefore wasn't hangry with the world. "Would you like me to tell you if I find some fish?"

"You do what you want to do," said the ae'o irritably, and as the ala'e 'ula swam off to another section of the fishpond, grumbled to himself, "It's not as if you'll be of any help."

It wasn't very long, though, before the ala'e 'ula swam back toward the hungry, grumpy ae'o.

"Say, friend," he said. "Take a look over there. There's a good sized school of fish milling around eating flies."

“How would you know?” demanded the ae’o, who couldn’t make out the flies on the water from where he stood.

The ala’e ‘ula shrugged. “One might know if one looks under water,” he said. “I was pulling up a root and there they were, all around. When I got my head out of the water I saw the flies swimming on the surface.

“I suppose you could make a meal of the flies if you have to,” he said thoughtfully, “but I imagine you like the fish better.”

“One might know,” muttered the ae’o as he stepped over to where the ala’e ‘ula had been, “but one probably doesn’t. More fool I.”

Then he saw the milling flies, and he saw the ripples where the fish had risen to the surface. He saw the water swirl as they swam beneath. In a moment he was there, and dipping his beak, and catching his fish, and feeling better than he had all day.

“I guess one might know at that,” he said when the ala’e ‘ula found him again shortly after.

“One might know,” said the ala’e ‘ula.

“Even better,” said the ae’o, “one might share what one knows. And the world gets a little bit better than it was.”

by Eric Anderson