

Photo

Forest Birds

Kaua'i 'O'o

Moho braccatus

SPECIES STATUS:

Federally Listed as Endangered

State Listed as Endangered

State recognized as endemic

Hawaii Natural Heritage Ranking GH—known only from historic records

SPECIES INFORMATION: Kaua'i 'o'o were large, vociferous honeyeaters (family *Melapagidae*) endemic to Kaua'i. 'O'O fed on arthropods, snails, 'olapa (*Cheirodendron* spp.) fruits and nectar from 'ohi'a (*Metrosideros polymorpha*), lobelia, and other flowering plants. Early naturalists reported extensive use of 'ie'ie (*Freycinetia arborea*) flower bracts. The only known nests were in the cavities of large 'ohi'a snags. Little is known about its breeding biology.

DISTRIBUTION: Unknown. Possibly extinct. 'O'O were last known from deep stream valleys of the central Alaka'i Wilderness Preserve, but were historically very common from near sea level to montane interior forests across Kaua'i.

ABUNDANCE: Possibly extinct. Last detected in 1987. Surveys in 1989, 1994, 1996 and 2000 failed to detect Kaua'i 'o'o.

LOCATION AND CONDITION OF KEY HABITAT: Unknown. The last known habitat of the Kaua'i 'o'o was in dense 'ohi'a (*Metrosideros polymorpha*) forests in the central Alaka'i. The 'ie'ie flower bracts reportedly favored by 'o'o are not found in the last remaining occupied habitat. This, combined with their preference for cavity nests, may indicate that the last known populations were surviving in marginal habitat. Lower elevation forests previously occupied by 'o'o suffered from habitat destruction and/or degradation. High elevation forests that were the last refuge of the species were damaged by hurricanes in 1982 and 1992. The area where last seen is managed by the state as Wilderness Preserve. Although the condition of these forests varies from intact to degraded, management can be considered stable.

THREATS: Causes of the decline of this species are unknown. Kaua'i 'o'o would have encountered the same threats as other Hawaiian forest birds: habitat loss and degradation, predation by introduced mammals, and avian disease. The simultaneous decline of all *Moho* spp. in Hawai'i strongly suggests disease as a major limiting factor. Additionally, 'o'o were exploited for their feathers, which were used in Hawaiian featherwork articles such as capes and kahili.

CONSERVATION ACTIONS: No actions specifically target Kaua'i 'o'o. If it exists, it likely benefit from management actions undertaken on behalf of other endangered forest birds on Kaua'i. Should this species be rediscovered, the Rare Bird Recovery Protocol contained in the USFWS Recovery Plan for Hawaiian Forest Birds would be enacted.

MONITORING:

- Continue forest bird population and habitat condition surveys on Kaua'i.

RESEARCH PRIORITIES:

- None at this time.

References:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2003. Draft Revised Recovery Plan for Hawaiian Forest Birds. Region 1, Portland, OR. 428pp.

Sykes, P. W., Jr., A. K. Kepler, C. B. Kepler, and J. M. Scott. 2000. Kaua'i O'o (*Moho braccatus*), O'ahu O'o (*Moho apicalis*), Bishop's O'o (*Moho bishopi*), Hawai'i O'o (*Moho nobilis*), and Kioea (*Chaetoptila angustipluma*). In *The Birds of North America*, No. 535 (A. Poole and F. Gill, eds.). The Birds of North America, Inc., Philadelphia, PA.