

Photo

## Forest Birds

# Maui 'Akepa

*Loxops coccineus ochraceus*

### SPECIES STATUS:

Federally Listed as Endangered

State Listed as Endangered

State recognized as endemic

Hawaii Natural Heritage Ranking GH—known only from historical occurrences

**SPECIES INFORMATION:** The Maui 'akepa is a small, sexually dichromatic, insectivorous, Hawaiian honeycreeper with a laterally-crossed lower mandible, which was presumably used to pry open leaf and flower buds. Almost nothing is known about this bird. Early naturalists reported that they fed on small beetles and other insects, or alternatively, on caterpillars and spiders. Perkins (1903) also noted that they drank 'ohi'a (*Metrosideros polymorpha*) nectar. One nest was reported from the terminal foliage of a tall 'ohi'a tree. This differs from the cavities preferred for nesting by the Hawai'i subspecies.

**DISTRIBUTION:** If it exists, Maui 'akepa survive on the northeastern rifts of Haleakala between 1700 and 2000 meters (5500 – 7000'). Early records included the northwestern rift above Olinda as well as Kipahulu Valley. There has been no reliably detectable population of Maui 'akepa since 1970.

Map distribution

**ABUNDANCE:** The Hawaii Forest Bird Survey estimated an abundance of  $230 \pm 290$  birds, but this was based on potentially confusing auditory detections. No 'akepa were found during the Hawai'i Rare Bird Search (1995-1999). This species may have been extinct for decades.

**LOCATION AND CONDITION OF KEY HABITAT:** All likely sightings of Maui 'akepa in this century have been in wet montane 'ohi'a forest from 1700 to 2100 meters (5500 – 7000') on the northwest rift of Haleakala. Historic range extended from 600 meters to timberline (2000 – 9000') across a range of habitats. Areas where 'akepa were most recently reported are managed as Forest Reserve or Natural Area Reserve by the state of Hawaii or by the National Park Service. Although the condition of these forests varies from intact to degraded, management can be considered stable.

**THREATS:** Reasons for decline are thought to be the same as for other Hawaiian honeycreepers. The most important are presumed to be predation by rats and mortality from introduced avian diseases.

**CONSERVATION ACTIONS:** No specific conservation actions were targeted specifically for the Maui 'akepa before 1995, when it was included in a rare bird search. If it is extant, it may benefit from surveys, habitat restoration and predator control in the locations where it was last reported. 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 regular Maui forest bird population and habitat condition surveys.

**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.

Lepson, J.K., and L.A. Freed. 1997. 'Akepa (*Loxops coccineus*). In the Birds of North America, No. 294 (A. Poole and F. Gill, eds.). The Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, PA and the American Ornithologists's Union, Washington, D.C.