

Photo

Forest Birds

O‘ahu ‘Alauahio

Paroreomyza maculata

SPECIES STATUS:

Federally Listed as Endangered

States Listed as Endangered

State recognized as endemic

Hawaii Natural Heritage Ranking G1—Critically imperiled

SPECIES INFORMATION: O‘ahu ‘alauahio, or O‘ahu creeper, are small, sexually dichromatic, insectivorous Hawaiian honeycreepers endemic to the island of O‘ahu. ‘Alauahio glean or probe for invertebrates as they creep along trunks and branches. Perkins (1903) reported that the species fed on caterpillars, spiders and Carabid beetles. Like other Hawaiian “creepers”, ‘alauahio joined foraging flocks during non-breeding seasons. Little is known about the breeding biology of ‘alauahio, but it is presumed similar to the Maui creeper (*Paroreomyza montana*).

DISTRIBUTION: The current range is unknown due to paucity of sightings, but it is presumed to include mid-elevation forests in valleys. This species may be extinct. Complete historical range is unknown, though Perkins (1903) called them “common enough” in both the Ko‘olau and Wai‘anae ranges.

ABUNDANCE: Unknown. Possibly extinct. The last well-documented sighting was of two birds in 1985. O‘ahu was not included in the Hawai‘i Rare Bird Search in the late 1990’s, so it is possible that populations still exist in remote valleys.

LOCATION AND CONDITION OF KEY HABITAT: Unknown. ‘Alauahio may prefer mid-elevation forests of ‘ohi‘a (*Metrosideros polymorpha*) and koa (*Acacia koa*). Perkins (1903) reported that the species was partial to large koa trees, but that they also occurred in areas without koa. Three observations from intensive field work in 1978 were all in mixed koa/‘ohi‘a forest between 300 and 600 meters (1000 – 2000 feet). Areas with historical records of ‘alauahio are largely under either state Forest Reserve or U.S. Military management. In these areas, the habitat can probably be considered stable (barring fires from military training activities).

THREATS: Causes of the decline of ‘alauahio are unknown. ‘Alauahio would have encountered the same threats as other Hawaiian forest birds: habitat loss and degradation, predation by

introduced mammals, and avian disease. The latter may have been especially severe on O'ahu as there is no habitat above the range of the mosquitoes which carry avian diseases.

CONSERVATION ACTIONS: No actions specifically target O'ahu 'alauahio. A newly established National Wildlife Refuge in the Ko'olau range is near some of the most recent sightings, but whether the species still exists in the area is unknown. Should this species be rediscovered, the Rare Bird Recovery Protocol contained in the USFWS Recovery Plan for Hawaiian Forest Birds would be enacted.

MONITORING:

- Include suspected 'alauahio habitat in any future rare bird surveys on O'ahu.

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.