



Birds of the Summit District

'Au i ke kai me he manu ala.
"Cross the sea like a bird."

Millions of years ago, the first ancestors of the endemic birds of Hawai'i found themselves on the most remote archipelago in the world. These birds, who either flew here or were blown off course, found ways to survive in a new environment. Their descendants, acted upon by the forces of time and isolation, evolved to become unique species found nowhere else on earth.

The first people to settle the Hawaiian archipelago from Polynesia found healthy islands covered in birds, including flightless species. There were as yet no predators except other birds. Over the next 1,000 years, settlers would bring rats, dogs, pigs, cats, mongoose, introduced birds, and mosquitos.

Habitat loss, predators, and mosquito-borne diseases led to the native birds' decline. Currently climate change is a threat. Higher elevations are getting warmer, allowing mosquitos to breed in areas that were formerly too cool.

Conservationists work hopefully and tirelessly to safeguard the homes of the remaining endemic Hawaiian birds. Places like Haleakalā National Park protect the best habitats for these birds. You too can help by staying on trail, driving carefully, not littering, and enjoying these birds from a distance.

Honeycreepers

'Apapane

(Himatione sanguinea)

Status: Not threatened.
Endemic.

'Apapane are found busily working 'ōhi'a lehua blossoms for nectar and insects. Look for these red, black, and white honeycreepers in the Hosmer Grove area and at Palikū Cabin in the backcountry. The short black bill helps distinguish 'apapane from the similarly-colored 'i'iwi. Calls are various, changeable, chatty.

This busy feeder stops at most flowers for just a few seconds.



White "underpants" and a distinctive whirring sound in flight identify this red and black beauty.

'I'iwi

(Vestiaria coccinea)

Status: Threatened, Vulnerable.
Endemic.

Adult 'i'iwi are an astonishing red, with striking black wings. The slender, long, pale orange-colored bill is unmistakable. These honeycreepers seek flower nectar in native and non-native trees in the Hosmer Grove area and around Palikū Cabin. Creaks, gurgles, and a "rusty hinge" sound are characteristic of the call.

Hawaiian royalty prized brilliant 'i'iwi feathers for capes.



The graceful decurved beak of this red jewel is the easiest way to identify this honeycreeper.

'Amakihi

(Chlorodrepanis virens)

Status: Not threatened.
Endemic.

Look for brilliantly green-yellow 'amakihi in the Hosmer Grove area, Kalahaku Overlook, and at Palikū cabin in the backcountry. Females are slightly less vibrant. Both forage for blossom nectar and insects. 'Amakihi are well known for their "scoldy" manner, often delivering a buzzy "tseet" at birdwatchers.

'Amakihi may be developing a resistance to introduced avian malaria.



The "bandit mask" over the eye and curved bill distinguish the 'amakihi.

'Alauahio

(Paroreomyza montana)

Status: Endangered.
Endemic to East Maui.

Look for this round, quick, grey-green little forest bird creeping along branches and trunks looking for insects. 'Alauahio like forested slopes, such as Hosmer Grove and the adjacent Waikamoi Preserve. Their song consists of a repeated whistled phrase described as: "whichy-wheese-whurdy-whew".

Small flocks of these bold birds sometimes approach birdwatchers.



Look for a straight bill and the yellow blush on the forehead, face, and belly of this small, yellow-green forest bird.

Kiwikiu (Maui Parrotbill)

(*Pseudonestor xanthophrys*)

Status: Endemic. Critically Endangered. Presently only ~500 birds remain.

Stocky *kiwikiu*, olive green above and yellow below, are named for their parrotlike bills, which they employ to split branches in search of insects in high elevation wet forests. Check for the distinctive black eye stripe as you search the Hosmer Grove area and near Palikū Cabin in the backcountry. Its call is a short “chip,” chirped every three to five seconds. Its song consists of slow, rich “cheer” notes.

The kiwikiu’s original name was lost. In 2010, the Hawaiian Lexicon Committee renamed it “Kiwikiu:” “Kiwi” for its curved beak and “kiu” for its secretive behavior.



PHOTO BY C. ROBBY KOHLEY

The Maui Parrotbill is aptly named. A strong and curved bill, sharp and serious, is the best identifier of this extremely rare treasure.

Ground-Nesting Birds

Nēnē

(*Branta sandvicensis*)

Status: Endangered. Endemic.

Nēnē prefer grasslands and shrublands below 8500ft., so look for them near the cabins in the backcountry, at Kalahaku Overlook, and often along roads (so drive very carefully). *Nēnē* are small geese with distinctive “stripey” furrows on their white necks, a black head, bill and feet, and a mostly brown body. They forage steadily all day on grass tips, leaves, flowers, and berries. Like all geese, *nēnē* honk while flying. If encountered on the ground they produce the low “nay-nay” sound that they are named for.

Nēnē were extinct on Maui until a troop of Boy Scouts carried young birds into the backcountry in 1962, releasing them to breed.



NPS PHOTO

The “stripes” on the elegant neck of this Hawaiian native goose mark it as distinct from any other goose.

Pueo

Hawaiian Short-Eared Owl

(*Asio flammeus sandwichensis*)

Status: Endangered. Endemic.

Unlike most owls, *pueo* are day flyers and can be seen over open spaces like meadows and shrublands, where they hunt introduced rodents and small mongoose. Look for them at dusk and dawn. This subspecies of the American short-eared owl has striking bright gold eyes and a streaked, buffy brown and white body, and feathered legs.

Before people introduced rodents and mongoose to Hawai‘i, pueo hunted other birds.



PHOTO BY MARK KIMURA

The brilliant yellow eyes of this Hawaiian owl glow from a face feathered in browns and golds.

‘Ua‘u

Hawaiian Petrel

(*Pterodroma sandwichensis*)

Status: Endangered. Endemic.

‘*Ua‘u* are seabirds that only come to land to breed, between May and September. Listen to their low “oooo ah ooo” call as they return to their burrows at night in the walls of the summit wilderness around Hōlua Cabin and along the Halemau‘u Trail. Listen as well from Leleiwi and Kalahaku Overlooks. While at sea, ‘*ua‘u* feed on squid and fish, and bring food back to the chick in the burrow. Researchers often find squid beaks in the crater.

‘Ua‘u travel as far as Alaska and Japan during two-week-long feeding trips.



PHOTO BY JIM DENNY

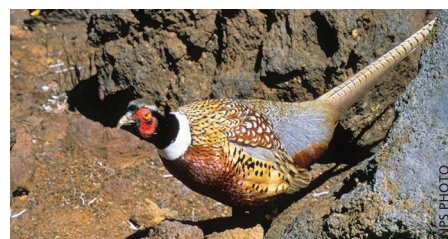
A grey head, back and wings contrast with a snowy underside on this seabird. Its legs are pink and black.

Common Non-native Birds in Haleakalā National Park

Both the Eurasian chukar and the Asian ring-necked pheasant were introduced to Hawai‘i for hunting. Both species can be seen in pastures and open shrublands. The chukar in particular seems to have adapted well to the mountain’s cold, dry summit. Do not mistake it for the *nēnē*. Please do not feed these or any birds in the park.

Ring-Necked Pheasant

(*Phasianus colchicus*)



NPS PHOTO

Chukar

(*Alectoris chukar*)



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