IUCN 2016 World Conservation Congress – resolution 104 Honolulu, Hawai‘i

1. REQUESTS the Director General to support SSC in engaging with existing initiatives to help advance Hawaiian bird conservation, and form a new working group of stakeholders to elevate the issue, support conservation implementation, and report on progress – including to the 2020 IUCN World Conservation Congress

* As of January 2020, there has not been any directed efforts by the SSC to support engagement with existing initiatives. The Reintroduction Specialist Group of the SSC has been informally supportive of translocations and conservation activities of some local groups.

1. CALLS ON the Governments of the United States and the State of Hawai‘i to urgently and fully implement the Hawaiian Bird Conservation Action Plan, Hawaiian Forest Bird Recovery Plan, and other relevant Hawaiian bird recovery plans, to seek additional resources from partners as are needed to avoid any additional bird extinctions and declines in the Hawaiian Islands, and to expedite the review, exploration and development of all appropriate techniques to control or eradicate invasive alien mosquitoes and other invasive alien species;

* Strategic conservation actions are underway for a suite of Hawai‘i forest birds following the recommendations in existing planning documents. These include:
  + Nihoa Millerbird – translocations of millerbirds from Nihoa to Laysan Island in 2011 and 2012 have resulted in establishment of a second breeding population for this single island endemic. Surveys in 2017 suggest that the global population has increased by at least 30%. There were comprehensive surveys of both islands’ populations in 2019, and the formal analysis will be completed in 2020.
  + Palila – more than 11,000 native plants were planted in 2019 to restore and expand Palila habitat. Population estimates continue at approximately 1,000 birds remaining in the wild. A conservation goal is to create a second population of Palila on Mauna Kea. Towards that end, eight captive-bred birds were released in a restored area on the northern slope. They encountered unexpectedly high levels of predation by the native Pueo (Short-eared Owl) and ‘Io (Hawaiian Hawk). We are developing plans to mitigate this threat before moving ahead with another wild translocation
  + Maui Parrotbill (Kiwikiu) – Towards the goal of establishing a second population of Kiwikiu, a small trial reintroduction of 13 birds was conducted in October 2019. Seven were wild birds and the other six were reared in captivity. The transport and release were successful and the health and safety of the birds were rigorously monitored through every step of the process. Unfortunately, at least 11 of the birds fell victim to avian malaria, transmitted by introduced mosquitoes. Post release mosquito surveys found much higher levels of mosquitoes than ever before seen at this site, despite frequently treating the few water pools that could support mosquito growth with larvicide. These results have increased calls for a landscape scale solution to invasive mosquitoes in Hawai‘i.
  + Kaua‘i –Puaiohi, ‘Akeke‘e and ‘Akikiki – extensive predator control was maintained across the accessible habitat, 464 acres, for these three species, in an attempt to reduce nest loss to rats. There are now small populations of ‘Akeke‘e and ‘Akikiki for captive propagation, but neither species successfully produced a fledgling in 2019.
  + ‘Alalā – An additional seven ‘Alalā were released in September 2019, bringing the total number released to 27 birds. Three pairs formed breeding pairs, two pair built nests, and the female of one pair sat on her nest for several weeks suggesting possible (but unconfirmed) eggs.
  + Hawai‘I ‘Akepa, ‘Akiapola‘au, Hawai‘i Creeper, and ‘I‘iwi - Progress has been made in fencing and pig control in Hakalau National Wildlife Refuge, but pigs remain in several areas of the refuge. Removing pigs improves forest quality and reduces disease transmission by eliminating mosquito breeding sites created by pig activity. An additional 4,047 ha was added to the Hakalau Forest’s Kona Unit – an area that can support these species, but is also important ‘Alalā habitat. The Ka'ū Forest bird surveys were completed in 2019 and are being analyzed. This area has some of the largest remaining populations of these four species.
* Conservation actions for seabirds in Hawaii with an emphasis on the three endemic Hawaiian seabirds are proceeding.
  + Translocations of Hawaiian Petrel and Newell’s Shearwater into a predator proof fenced restoration area called Nihoku at Kīlauea Point National Wildlife Refuge continued in 2019, all 20 Newell’s Shearwaters and 19 of petrels successfully fledged giving the project a 97% fledging rate for the year. To date 90 petrels and 67 shearwaters have been moved, with a 98% success rate.
  + Three sea-level rise (SLR) vulnerable seabird species were translocated to a predator proof enclosure at James Campbell NWR. Bonin petrels, Tristram’s storm-petrels and Black-footed albatross were all moved from vulnerable locations in Papahanaumokuakea Marine National Monument to this SLR resilient site on Oahu with hopes of establishing new breeding populations.
  + New predator proof fences are on track to be built on Kaua‘i, Lāna‘i, Maui and Moloka‘i to protect seabirds and all have the potential to benefit Newell’s Shearwater and Hawaiian Petrel to varying degrees in the future.
  + A new Hawaiian petrel colony has been found on the Big Island. After four years of persistent effort, Alex Wang, Seabird Biologist and the team from Hawaii Island Natural Area Reserve System finally found the first known nest of Hawaiian Petrel in the Kohala range of the Big Island of Hawaii. This success has been achieved through the use of new tools including miniature satellite tags and automatic song recorders and diligence on the part of the biologists, who have long-suspected that petrels nest in this area. Hawaiian Petrel was recently uplisted by IUCN from Endangered to Critically Endangered due to continuing declines. The species is threatened by non-native predators; finding and protecting nests sites are the most important actions that can be taken for this species
  + The fall 2017 rat eradication on Lehua Island was unsuccessful, however, ongoing monitoring has been unable to detect additional rats for over a year after they were seen at low levels following the eradication. A successful eradication is expected to benefit Newell’s Shearwater and Band-rumped Storm-Petrel.
  + Planning has been completed for the invasive house mouse eradication on Midway; implementation of the project is now scheduled for 2020 and all indications suggest it will proceed as planned. This will benefit Laysan and Black-footed Albatross and other species.
  + On Kauai Island, planning for a new project is underway by Archipelago Restoration to improve long-term breeding success for Newell’s Shearwater, Hawaiian Petrel & Band-rumped Storm-petrel in the Honopu Valley by addressing the threats of predation & habitat modification in the breeding colonies. The main focus is the construction of a predator proof fence & a larger ungulate proof fence, combined with intensive predator control.
* The multi-agency effort to break the mosquito-avian disease cycle to benefit Hawai‘i’s forest birds is increasing.
  + Work is ongoing to develop a *Wolbachia* transinfected *Culex* mosquitoes to suppress or eliminate this avian disease vector in Hawai‘i.
  + A major multi-agency research program is underway to determine genomic variation in parasite, vector, and hosts.
  + Work to support modelling of the mosquito-bird dynamics and possible release parameters for *Wolbachia* transinfected *Culex* mosquitoes began in fall 2019.
  + Communications, outreach, and engagement with the public and other stakeholders has begun, but additional funding is still needed.
* Challenges: despite on the ground advancement of species conservation in Hawai‘i significant challenges remain.
  + Mosquitoes: funding to advance the research and community engagement is very limited and this is slowing down the timeline for deployment and associated conservation gains. Additionally, there is still no funding for constructing and maintaining the facilities required to rear the large numbers of *Wolbachia*-infected *Culex* mosquitoes necessary to successfully suppress wild mosquito populations at the landscape scale.
  + Poor prognosis for future funding: Overall US federal conservation funding for Hawai‘i continues to not meet the demand, and is unlikely to improve significantly under the current administration. One bright spot, the State of the Birds FY 2019 funding was $3.25M (~65% directed to Hawai‘i), a $250,000 increase over the previous year, and the Hawai‘i congressional delegation is attempting to increase this amount in future budgets. A significant portion of these funds are used to support San Diego Zoo Global’s bird conservation centers on Maui and Hawai‘i in support of captive breeding programs for three endemic species including the majority of the global ‘Alalā population.
* In addition to the progress listed above it is important to note that the ‘I‘iwi was added to the US Endangered Species list in 2017 because of its declining populations. The Nēnē was down listed, from federally endangered to threatened. The ‘Io, with a population of approximately 3,000 birds, was delisted from the federal ESA on the last day of 2019, but still is covered by the State ESA and federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

1. RECOMMENDS that Hawaiian birds be formally recognized as a part of the U.S. avifauna, and included in appropriate lists of birds maintained by relevant institutions, such as conservation organisations and birdwatching organisations, sufficient to increase the focus of appropriate constituencies on these birds and their conservation; and

* The American Birding Association added Hawai‘i to its North America list of avifauna in fall of 2016.

4. RECOMMENDS full implementation of the Hawai‘i Interagency Biosecurity Plan that was released by the State of Hawai‘i at the 2016 IUCN World Conservation Congress. <https://dlnr.hawaii.gov/hisc/plans/hibp/>

* As of January 2020, approximately 57% of the management activities have begun, and 31% of these activities have been completed or will be ongoing, with the remaining 26% being in progress. Significant funding will be necessary to complete all the activities, and continue to maintain Hawai‘i’s biosecurity. <https://dlnr.hawaii.gov/hisc/files/2020/01/January-2020-Executive-Summary.pdf>
* Hawai‘i Governor Ige continues to be a strong advocate for biosecurity and the need to combat invasive species <http://westgov.org/initiatives/biosecurity-and-invasive-species-initiative>