

Pacific Missile Range Facility

NATIVE BIRD GUIDE



Native Birds at PMRF

Hawaiian Goose

Nēnē

Nēnē are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. They are endemic to Hawai'i, meaning they are not found anywhere else in the world. They are adapted to walking on Hawai'i's rocky lava flows by having claw like feet and less webbing than other geese. On Kaua'i, they are mainly seen on grasslands, agricultural pastures, and human modified habitat such as golf courses. They graze on grass, seeds, berries, flowers, and occasionally insects. Nēnē are the state bird of Hawai'i. Current threats to the Nēnē include introduced predators including feral cats and dogs, human disturbance (such as getting hit by cars), and habitat loss.



Hawaiian Coot

ʻAlae keʻokeʻo

The Hawaiian Coot is endangered and is endemic to Hawai'i. It has a black head, grey body, and white shield on its face. Its legs and feet are greenish grey and its feet are lobed instead of webbed. They are found in wetlands where they eat seeds, leaves, insects, small crustaceans and fish. The Hawaiian Coot nests year round and constructs its nest on or near water. The Hawaiian Coot is one of the five native and endangered waterbirds in Hawai'i, all of which are facing similar threats. Habitat loss, introduced predators such as feral cats, and disease are among those threats.



Hawaiian Gallinule

ʻAlae ʻula

The Hawaiian Gallinule is endangered and is endemic to Hawaiʻi. It is similar in appearance to the Hawaiian Coot. However, Hawaiian Gallinules can be identified by their red shield and yellow legs in comparison to the Hawaiian Coot's white shield and dark colored legs. They can be found in freshwater habitats such as ponds and wetlands. Their variable diet includes insects, snails, vegetation, seeds, and algae. Nesting year-round, nests are constructed in secretive spots on water hidden in vegetation. Like the other native waterbirds, the Hawaiian Gallinule is threatened by habitat loss, introduced predators such as feral cats, and disease.



Hawaiian Duck

Koloa maoli

The Hawaiian Duck is endangered and is endemic to Hawaiʻi. This species is very secretive and easily spooked by people. They are found in wetland habitats and nest year-round.

Like many ducks, they have a varied diet that includes insects, worms, algae, and seeds and leaves. Today, Kauaʻi is the only island where pure forms of the Hawaiian Duck still exist.

On the other Hawaiian Islands, interbreeding with introduced Mallard ducks have resulted in hybrid individuals. Other threats to the Hawaiian Duck include habitat loss, introduced predators such as feral cats, and disease.

Hawaiian Stilt

Ae'o

The Hawaiian Stilt is endangered and is endemic to Hawai'i. It is a slender waterbird with tall pink legs, white belly, and black head and back. It has a long and thin black bill, which it uses to prey on insects, worms, small crustaceans and fish. It is found in wetlands with shallow water or mudflats. Hawaiian Stilts nest between March and August in mudflats with low vegetation or in ponds. Threats to these elegant waterbirds include habitat loss, introduced predators such as feral cats, and disease.



Pacific Golden-Plover

Kōlea

The Pacific Golden-Plover breeds on tundra in western Alaska and Russia during the summer months. Many individuals spend their winters on the Hawaiian Islands where they are often seen on grasslands, tidal flats, or agricultural fields. Their diet includes mainly insects and occasionally seeds and berries. Pacific Golden-Plovers shed their feathers and grow new ones for the summer breeding season through a process called molting. They molt their feathers once again after nesting.



Hawaiian Short-eared Owl

Pueo

The Hawaiian Short-eared Owl is an endemic subspecies. These charismatic owls can be seen soaring over open fields where they hunt for small mammals and birds during the day. Little information is known about this subspecies of Short-eared Owl as they can be quite secretive in their breeding habits and difficult to observe for long periods of time. These birds are likely relatively new arrivals to the islands, appearing after Polynesian settlement.



Black-crowned Night Heron

'Auku'u

Adult Black-crowned Night Herons have a black back and cap on their heads with grey wings and whiteish bellies. Juveniles are brown overall with white streaks or spots. They are common in waterways and wetlands where they forage for insects, fish, frogs, and other young waterbirds.

Unlike the Black-crowned Night Herons on mainland North America, the individuals in Hawaii primarily hunt during the day instead of night. They breed between December and August, constructing large nests made of twigs in vegetation low to the ground.

Laysan Albatross

Mōli

The Laysan Albatross is a large seabird that returns to land only to breed. It travels great distances across the ocean and breeds mainly in the Hawaiian Islands. Like many other seabirds, the Laysan Albatross returns to the same location it was born in order to breed and it lays only one egg. Eggs are laid between November and December, and chicks fledge in July. It is mostly white with black wings and tail. The oldest known Laysan Albatross is named Wisdom and she is at least 69 years old. Wisdom breeds on Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands.





dark morph (left), pale morph (right)

Wedge-tailed Shearwater

‘Ua‘u kani

The Wedge-tailed Shearwater is a nocturnal seabird that digs underground burrows or nests in rock crevices. Its call sounds like a series of wails and moans. This shearwater is commonly seen breeding in colonies along coastlines. Starting in March, they return to the same location they were born to breed. They lay only one egg per season, and the chicks fledge in November-December. These shearwaters fly out to sea during the day to fish and return to their burrows at night. Wedge-tailed Shearwaters have two color morphs: pale and dark. Some individuals have a lighter grey belly (pale morph) and some have a darker grey belly (dark morph).