

It's go time for Hawaiian bird conservation, and luckily there's a playbook

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'Iwi. Credit: Lucas Behnke

A new study in *The Condor: Ornithological Applications* presents some of the best guidance to date on the priorities and actions that can be taken to help Hawaii's endemic birds. Hawaii's ecosystems, including its native

bird populations, are struggling. Of the 21 species of forest birds left on the islands, almost two thirds (12 species) of are endangered or threatened. The current conservation status of the wildlife and vegetation on the island is almost entirely attributable to humans. The actions needed to stabilize or reverse these trends need stronger support and coordination, however funding and resources are limited. This new paper lays out a plan to better guide and empower conservation efforts for Hawaiian birds.

Eben Paxton of USGS Pacific Island Ecosystems Research Center and colleagues synthesized the key points that came out of a collaboration of more than 60 stakeholders in Hawaiian bird [conservation](#). The focus is on actionable research and management approaches that can be employed today. Habitat loss, invasive plants, non-native predators, and introduced diseases were identified as the largest threats to Hawaiian birds. Climate change is projected to exacerbate all threats. Given limited resources, the stakeholders decided on eight main priorities as well as several actions specific to the island of Kauai. In addition to helping Hawaii and its birds directly, the goal of this collaborative report is to make Hawaii a model for other areas of the world, especially [islands](#), that are in need of strong conservation efforts.

Lead author, Eben Paxton comments, "Our challenge in Hawaii is how do we conserve [forest birds](#) from multiple threats with just a fraction of the resources needed to fully address all the threats. Our solution was to bring researchers and managers together to share ideas, and as a community, identify priority research and management needs necessary to save these unique species. We believe these priorities will help focus resources where most needed and bring together different organizations to work together for the maximum benefit of the birds."

"New Technology is being proposed to help stem the tide of extinctions in Hawaiian native birds. Eben Paxton and his co-authors recognize that

all the native birds in Hawaii are Conservation Reliant Species and propose utilizing new technologies to assist with the preservation of this unique island avifauna," adds Charles van Riper III, a ST Research Ecologist and Professor Emeritus, USGS and SNRE, University of Arizona. "This very complete paper also recommends enhancing Citizen Science and captive breeding in the Islands, along with continued monitoring and translocations to unoccupied habitat. The immediate target for this plan are the birds on Kauai—the authors feel that the native avifauna on this island is rapidly approaching extinction, and time will tell how successful this proposed plan is in implementing conservation actions in time to save these unique [birds](#)."

More information: Eben H. Paxton et al. Research and management priorities for Hawaiian forest birds, *The Condor* (2018). [DOI: 10.1650/CONDOR-18-25.1](#)

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