

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### BACKGROUND

Hawaii's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS) is a historic initiative that comprehensively reviews the status of the full range of the State's native terrestrial and aquatic species, over 10,000 of which are found nowhere else on earth. Hawaii's CWCS presents strategies for long-term conservation of these species and their habitats. The development of the CWCS built upon Hawaii's strong history of conservation and involved working with resource managers, biologists, and concerned individuals statewide. As a result, the CWCS has a broad level of support, increasing the likelihood that the conservation strategies identified will be implemented by multiple partners as well as the Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources.

### STRATEGY APPROACH AND DEVELOPMENT

The reason for developing a CWCS is to continue participation in the State Wildlife Grant (SWG) program administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Every state in the nation and all the U.S. territories are preparing a CWCS by October 1, 2005 that contains the following eight required elements:

- 1) Information on the distribution and abundance of species of wildlife identified as "species of greatest conservation need," including low and declining populations, as the State fish and wildlife agency deems appropriate, that are indicative of the diversity and health of the State's wildlife;
- 2) Descriptions of the locations and relative condition of key habitats and community types essential to the conservation of species identified in (1);
- 3) Descriptions of problems which may adversely affect species identified in (1) or their habitats, and priority research and survey efforts needed to identify factors which may assist in restoration and improved conservation of these species and habitats;
- 4) Descriptions of conservation actions proposed to conserve the identified species and habitats and priorities for implementing such actions;
- 5) Proposed plans for monitoring species identified in (1) and their habitats, for monitoring the effectiveness of the conservation actions proposed in (4), and for adapting these conservation actions to respond appropriately to new information or changing conditions;
- 6) Descriptions of procedures to review the plan at an interval not to exceed ten years;
- 7) Plans for coordinating the development, implementation, review, and revision of the plan with Federal, State, and local agencies and Indian tribes that manage significant land and water areas within the State or administer programs that significantly affect the conservation of identified species and habitats;
- 8) Provisions to ensure public participation in the development, revision, and implementation of projects and programs.

The Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources has taken the lead in preparing the CWCS and has gone beyond simply meeting mandated requirements by making the CWCS a useful document to guide conservation efforts across the State. The Strategy

uses the best available science, and it integrates information from the many existing management, conservation, and recovery plans. The CWCS builds on and synthesizes information gathered from existing conservation partnerships and cooperative efforts, such that the development of this Strategy is based on collaboration with other local, State, and Federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, private landowners, and interested citizens. A combination of traditional outreach, such as public meetings and technical workshops, with ‘modern’ outreach, such as the development of a website and use of email, was used to invite and expand participation in the development of the CWCS. Chapter 2 of this document outlines the methods and approaches used to develop Hawaii’s CWCS.

Recognizing the effectiveness of taking conservation actions at a habitat-level in addition to a species-specific level, the CWCS emphasizes threats to species and their habitats and conservation needs at three levels: statewide, island-wide, and taxa-specific. Chapters 3 and 4 present an overview of Hawaii’s unique species and their habitats, identify the major threats to the long-term conservation of these species and habitats, and present seven conservation objectives to address these threats. Under each objective, strategies of highest priority are labeled; however, because conservation needs in Hawai‘i far exceed the resources available, implementation of any of the identified strategies will benefit native wildlife and habitats. Chapters 5 and 6 present more specific information for the marine environment (Chapter 5) and the individual islands and the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (Chapter 6). Fact sheets on individual taxa or on groupings of taxa were developed to present information relating to elements one through five, and are compiled in Chapter 7. Finally, recognizing that monitoring is critical to the overall success of the CWCS, Chapter 8 discusses existing and needed monitoring programs for species and habitats as well as implementation and monitoring of Hawaii’s CWCS, including the 10-year revision.

### **HAWAII’S COMPREHENSIVE WILDLIFE CONSERVATION STRATEGY**

Hawaii’s Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) include all native terrestrial animals, all endemic aquatic animals, additional indigenous aquatic animals identified as in need of conservation attention, a range of native plants identified as in need of conservation attention, and all identified endemic algae. The SGCN includes: terrestrial mammal (1), birds (77), terrestrial invertebrates (~5,000), freshwater fishes (5), freshwater invertebrates (12), anchialine pond-associated fauna (20), marine mammals (26), marine reptiles (6), marine fishes (154), marine invertebrates (197), flora (over 600).

The major threats facing Hawaii’s native wildlife are common to most species groups and habitats and include:

- Loss and degradation of habitat resulting from human development, alteration of hydrology, wildfire, invasive species, recreational overuse, natural disaster, and climate change;
- Introduced invasive species (e.g., habitat-modifiers, including weeds, ungulates, algae and corals, predators, competitors, disease carriers, and disease);
- Limited information and insufficient information management;

- Uneven compliance with existing conservation laws, rules and regulations;
- Overharvesting and excessive extractive use;
- Management constraints; and
- Inadequate funding to implement needed conservation actions.

To address these threats, the CWCS identifies multiple strategies to implement the following seven priority conservation objectives for the State:

- 1) *Maintain, protect, manage, and restore native species and habitats in sufficient quantity and quality to allow native species to thrive;*
- 2) *Combat invasive species through a three-tiered approach combining prevention and interdiction, early detection and rapid response, and ongoing control or eradication;*
- 3) *Develop and implement programs to obtain, manage, and disseminate information needed to guide conservation management and recovery programs;*
- 4) *Strengthen existing and create new partnerships and cooperative efforts;*
- 5) *Expand and strengthen outreach and education to improve understanding of our native wildlife resources among the people of Hawai‘i;*
- 6) *Support policy changes aimed at improving and protecting native species and habitats; and*
- 7) *Enhance funding opportunities to implement needed conservation actions.*

Successful implementation of the CWCS will require an ongoing effort of local, State, and Federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, private landowners, and individual citizens working together. Though the magnitude and scope of the work needed to protect and recover Hawaii’s unique native species are challenging, implementation of the identified strategies is critical if future generations are to see and experience the unique native wildlife of Hawai‘i.