



Marine Fishes

Hawaiian flagtail Āholehole *Kuhlia xenura*

SPECIES STATUS:
IUCN Red List – Not considered
Endemic

SPECIES INFORMATION: Āholehole in Hawai'i used to be considered a single species in the species *Kuhlia sandvicensis* but have recently been determined to be two species. One of those species is endemic and thus qualifies under the CWCS criteria. This is *K. xenura*, sometimes now called the big eyed mullet. They reach about nine inches in length. They may be found in schools. They are planktivores, primarily nocturnally. They facultatively use streams as well. When in streams they feed on fishes, invertebrates, and insects.

DISTRIBUTION: They are found throughout the State.

ABUNDANCE: They are looked for in surveys of coral reef fishes in the Main and Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, both by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Division of Aquatic Resources. Commercial landings for both *Kuhlia* spp. in the Main Hawaiian Islands have averaged about 1,350 kilograms (3,000 pounds) a year in recent years, except there was a decrease to less than 900 kilograms (2,000 pounds) in 2003, the most recent year of data.

LOCATION AND CONDITION OF KEY HABITAT: Young *K. xenura* can be found in shallow water along the coast and in tide pools and estuaries, where this species is denser than *K. sandvicensis*, which prefers higher salinity. Adults are found along the outer edge of the reefs. They can often be found in areas of high surge. At night they spread out to feed on plankton.

THREATS:

- They are fished commercially and recreationally;
- Historically they were important in Native Hawaiian religious ceremonies.

CONSERVATION ACTIONS: The goals of conservation actions are to not only protect current populations, but to also establish further populations to reduce the risk of extinction. Regulations set minimum catch size at five inches. In addition to common statewide and island conservation actions, specific actions include:

- Maintain healthy populations with appropriate fishing regulations and education.

MONITORING:

- Continue surveys of population and distribution in known and likely habitats.

RESEARCH PRIORITIES:

- Improve understanding of factors affecting the species population size.

References:

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