Picture: Rothschild Collection

## Forest Birds

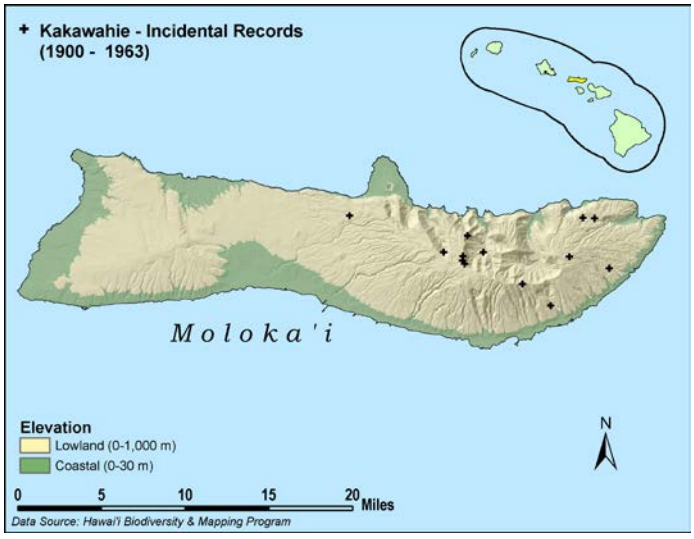
# Kākāwahie or Molokaʻi creeper

*Paroreomyza flammea*

**SPECIES STATUS**:
Federally Listed as Endangered
State Listed as Endangered
State Recognized as Endemic
NatureServe Heritage Rank GH—Possibly Extinct
IUCN Red List Ranking—Extinct
Revised Recovery Plan for Hawaiian Forest Birds—USFWS 2006

**SPECIES INFORMATION:** The kākāwahie, or Molokaʻi creeper, is a small, sexually dichromatic, insectivorous Hawaiian honeycreeper (Family: Fringillidae) endemic to the forests of eastern Molokaʻi. Males are scarlet red; females are a dull rusty color. The species' Hawaiian name translates as "woodchopping" and apparently describes the species chipping call. Kākāwahie forage in groups, gleaning invertebrates from leaves, bark, and epiphytes in wet ʻōhiʻa (*Metrosideros polymorpha*) forests. Little is known about the species' breeding biology, but it is assumed to be similar to that of the Maui creeper (*P. montana*). First described in 1889, the last bird was observed less than 100 years later.

**DISTRIBUTION:** Unknown. Probably extinct. Last observed on the west rim of Pelekunu Valley. Kākāwahie were common in native forests of eastern Molokaʻi at the end of the 19th century. Original range likely included all forested regions of Molokaʻi.




**ABUNDANCE:** Unknown. The last kākāwahie was observed in 1963 and the species is probably extinct.

**LOCATION AND CONDITION OF KEY HABITAT:** Unknown. Was known to occur in wet ʻōhiʻa (*Metrosideros polymorpha*) forests from low to high elevations, and other heavily wooded native areas of eastern Molokaʻi. The areas where the species was last observed are managed by the State as Natural Area Reserves or by The Nature Conservancy.

**THREATS:** Unknown. However, kākāwahie likely were susceptible to the same factors that threaten other native Hawaiian forest birds, including habitat loss and degradation, predation by introduced mammals, and disease. For kākāwahie, the following likely was of particular concern:

- Disease. This species rapid decline and the fact that no habitat above 1,250 meters (4,100 feet) occurs on Moloka'i suggests disease may have played an important role in the species' decline.

**CONSERVATION ACTIONS:** If the species persists, it likely benefits from actions to conserve other endangered forest birds of eastern Moloka'i including the establishment of the protected areas, regular surveys of forest bird populations, habitat monitoring, and studies of disease and disease vectors. Should this species be rediscovered, the Rare Bird Recovery Protocol outlined in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) *Revised Recovery Plan for Hawaiian Forest Birds* would be implemented, and management in anticipation of that possibility should include continued protection and management of wildlife sanctuaries and refuges.

**MONITORING:** Continue forest bird surveys and habitat monitoring on all islands.

**RESEARCH PRIORITIES:** Research priorities for most Hawaiian forest birds include improving methods for controlling rats (*Rattus* spp.) and feral cats (*Felis silvestris*) in native forests, determining the ecological requirements of *Culex* mosquitoes at mid- and high-elevation forests, and developing methods to control mosquito populations. Given that this species is likely extinct, there are no research priorities specific to kākāwahie.

**References:**

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