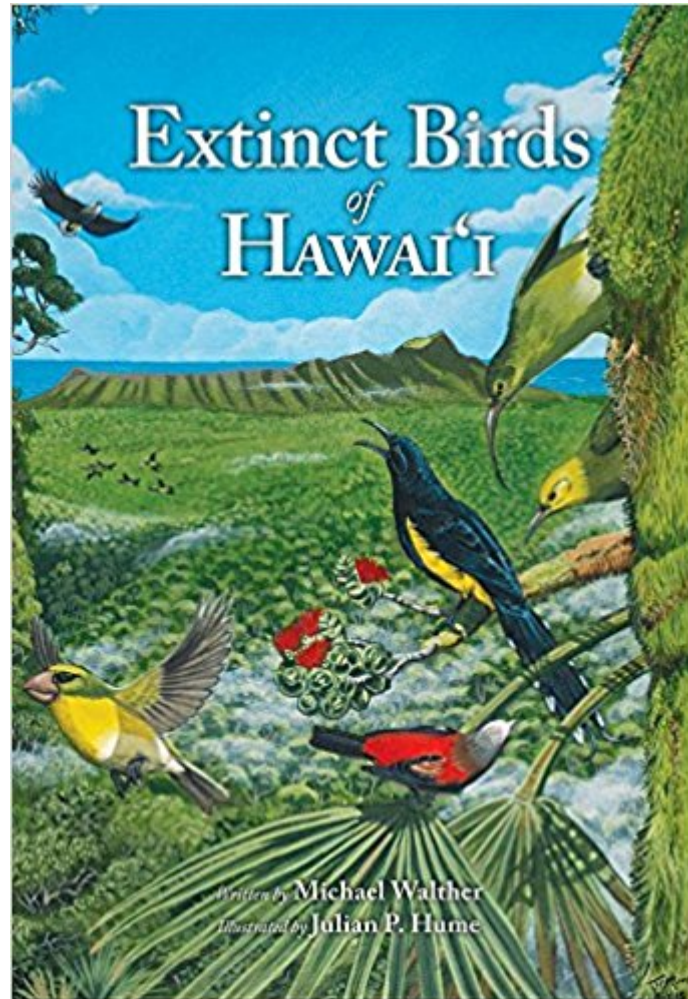




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# Extinct Birds Of Hawaii



## Synopsis

Extinct Birds of Hawai'i captures the vanishing world of unique bird species that has slipped away in the Islands mostly due to human frivolity and unconcern. Richly illustrated, including paintings by Julian P. Hume (many painted specifically for this volume), it enables us to enjoy vicariously avian life unique to Hawai'i that exists no longer. Extinct Birds of Hawai'i also sends a powerful message: Although Hawai'i is well-known for its unique scenic beauty and its fascinating native flora, fauna, bird and marine life, it is also called the extinction capital of the world. The Islands' seventy-seven bird species and sub-species extinctions account for approximately fifteen percent of global bird extinctions during the last seven-hundred years. On some islands over eighty percent of the original land bird species are now extinct. With the many agents of extinction still operating in the Islands' forests, Hawai'i's remaining native land birds are at a high risk of being lost forever. Many birdwatchers, nature lovers, and eco-tourists are unaware of the tremendous loss of species that has occurred in this remote archipelago. Extinct Birds of Hawai'i shows the bird life that has been lost and calls attention to the urgent need for preservation action.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Selected as one of the best bird books of 2016: Ian Paulsen BIRDBOOKER REPORT Hawai'i is the bird extinction capital of the world. A sobering new book by Michael Walther summarizes the natural history, field notes and observations, and provides new paintings of these lost species - 77 overall.

One of these, the Kaua'i 'Ō'Ō, was last heard in 1987. "Extinct Birds of Hawai'i" also includes Walther's personal searches for some of these birds, highlights the ongoing conservation problems that face Hawai'i's remaining native birds, and discusses the urgent actions that the American Bird Conservancy and other conservation organizations are taking to save them. George E. Wallace, PhD Vice President, Oceans & Islands Division American Bird Conservancy Got my copy today. I must say, I am very satisfied, many extinct birds (e.g. the Hawaiian harrier, the Hawaiian eagle, the stilt owls, and many rails) are illustrated for the very first time. In the last chapter Michael Walther (a well-known bird photographer and tour leader from Oahu) gives a perspective on the endangered bird species of Hawaii. Melanie Kassel, Germany New book commemorates isles' extinct birds In Hawaii forests the air is enlivened by the songs of birds, a treat that's easy to take for granted until it's gone. Such is the case on Guam, where, due to the predations of the brown tree snake, native birds have gone extinct and left the forests silent. The good news: While alien species take a grave toll on native Hawaiian birds, we don't have brown tree snakes -- yet. The bad news: We've been serving up a potent bird-extinction cocktail with multiple ingredients. Our islands, where 77 bird species and subspecies have become extinct, are "the setting of an ongoing bird catastrophe," Michael Walther writes in "Extinct Birds of Hawai'i," a book whose beautiful contemporary illustrations by Julian P. Hume, along with historical art by Frederick W. Frohawk and Johannes G. Keulemans, make the loss all the more poignant. The book is well organized, with birds pictured by type -- cranes, crows, finches, honeycreepers, rails -- along with each one's description, measurements, geographic range, time of first and last observation, and notes by naturalists. It produces something of the nostalgia of leafing through dinosaur books as a child, except that most of these extinctions took place over the past few centuries, not millions of years. Hawaii's endemic birds had few predators until humans arrived. The book quotes naturalist H.W. Henshaw's 1902 observation of the oo, whose yellow wing feathers were coveted for helmets, capes and lei: "When feeding ... and with their young, the calls of the o-o [sic] are almost incessant ... which has led to the easy destruction of the species. The poor bird has yet to learn that its appreciation of the joyousness of existence and its love for its mate and young can be expressed only at the cost of its very life." In addition to colorful honeycreepers like the oo, the islands once had singing thrushes; these plain brown birds weren't hunted for their feathers, but perished from diseases transmitted by introduced mosquitoes and poultry as towns such as Lanai City grew, observed George C. Munro in 1944. "When singing the head is always thrown well back, the throat full and free. ... Once heard its character will live in the memory for years," wrote William A. Bryan of the Molokai thrush in 1908. By 1944, Munro noted, it was gone. Walther lists the factors

decimating Hawaii's native birds: "Predation by introduced rats, mongoose and feral house cats; competition with non-native bird species; destruction of forests by introduced cattle, sheep, goats and pigs; collection of bird feathers for making feather capes ... mosquitoes spreading avian malaria ... shooting of rare species by museum collectors between 1890-1910; and non-native vegetation displacing native vegetation." A concluding chapter focuses on our remaining birds, with photos by Walther, who worked with Hawaii native bird survey teams in the 1990s and now operates O'ahu Nature Tours. Twenty-four Hawaii bird species are on the federal endangered species list, and some "have less than 150 individuals remaining," he notes. Perhaps the World Conservation Congress, to be held in Honolulu in September, will help us save what we've got so our children's children might see and hear these winged barometers of our forests' health. Review by Mindy Pennybacker Honolulu Star-Advertiser July 10, 2016 A well illustrated guide to these species. A must have for those with an interest in Hawaiian birds or bird extinctions.

--birdbookerreport.blogspot.com The saddest story is not that we've lost so many, but that we're still losing them. MONDAY, JULY 18, 2016 Native bird loss: a tragedy told in colors. The scale of the loss of Hawai'i's native birds is beyond imagining. It's just icing on the cake that Hawaiian native birds are some of the most colorful, imaginatively plumed and outrageously beaked birds to be found. Or rather, to have lost. A new book by Michael Walther, with paintings by Julian Hume, tells the story. It is "Extinct Birds of Hawai'i" by Mutual Publishing. Walther calls the loss of species "an ongoing bird catastrophe unequalled in world history during the last 700 years." There may be more, but 77 species and subspecies are known to have gone extinct. There are just 26 species of native land bird left. Hume had to take some liberties with the coloration of birds that went extinct earliest, since many are only known from old bones found in caves and sinkholes. Many others, which have become extinct in the past couple of centuries, have been drawn from life by early birders or can be studied as museum skins, their colors still vivid. There are photographs of the ones lost during the last century. I was particularly struck by the photo of one of the last three Laysan apapane, singing while perched on a coral outcropping. Before Captain Cook sailed up to Waimea on the Big Island, the Islands had already lost owls and petrels and geese, ducks and ibis and finches, an eagle, a harrier and a host of flightless cranes, plus some others, like the Kaua'i palmcreeper and the King Kong grosbeak. Most of the big birds were long gone before Europeans arrived. Then began the decimation of the jewel-hued forest birds. Nowhere else on the globe has lost so many birds. New Zealand is second, with 50 to Hawai'i's 77. The Mascarene Islands have lost 37, Tahiti 16, Madagascar 15, and so forth. Islands accentuate the loss, partly because islands promote diversity, partly because

small land areas are more vulnerable to habitat destruction and invasive species. The Hawaiian avifauna, birdlife, was impressive. The giant Hawaiian goose was more than four times the size of the Hawaiian state bird, the nene. A thundering example of birdhood. The favored food of the Molokai stilt was the Maui Nui finch. We know that from deposits of the fecal pellets of the owl. Both are extinct now. There was a nukupu`u with a simply stunning bill—more than half the length of the rest of the bird. It was named the Giant Scimitar-billed nukupu`u. “Species which took millions of years to evolve have been decimated in a geological blink of an eye,” Walther wrote. The saddest story is not that we’ve lost so many, but that we’re still losing them. Jan TenBruggencate Raising Islands Hawaii has the unfortunate distinction of being the bird extinction capital of the world. In fact, Michael Walther, President of Oahu Nature Tours, just published a beautiful book titled Extinct Birds of Hawaii, which catalogues all the birds. The book outlines the different extinctions—pre-European contact and post—and includes descriptions of the birds, notations from the journals of collectors and observers from the late 1700s to 1900s—often, the last people to see these birds alive. “I wanted to let more people know about the catastrophic loss of bird species in the Hawaiian Islands during the last 1,000 years and to help the few species that remain by hopefully increasing support and funding for them,” says Walther. “I started research for the book in December of 2014 and it was completed one year later, December 2015. The quotes are from old books about Hawaii’s birds written between 1782-1960. The majority of the quotes are from books that were published between 1892-1903. During this time, several English bird collectors were actively seeking rare Hawaiian birds for museum specimens and in many cases their descriptions of the birds in life are all that we really know about these extinct species behavior and songs. In the book, each bird is accompanied by a glossy color illustration by researcher Julian P. Hume. I worked closely with Storrs Olson and Helen James at the Smithsonian Institution on reconstructing the birds in the most accurate, scientific way,” says Hume. “I start by drawing the fossil remains and anatomically putting them together to get the correct shape. Once the color was agreed with Storrs and Helen, I then put them in a background scene and reproduced them in a natural way and often doing behavioral things such as nesting, feeding and having territorial disputes. This was to show that the birds were once alive and doing natural things. Some of them were so bizarre that it was difficult to imagine how they may have looked in life. In particular are the Moa nalos, the giant flightless ducks with tooth-like projections on their jaws. I used my imagination based on the numerous visits to Hawaiian forests to recreate them in a natural setting.” Walther’s book talks a lot about extinction, but the final chapter is saved for the extant birds—those few survivors—and what we

can do about them. He mentions the work of Maui Forest Bird Recovery Project and other similar groups in Hawaii working to save the remaining birds we have left. Jen Russo Maui Time Most of Hawaii's endemic birds are endangered, some critically, as are many other animals and plants there. Before human settlement, the islands' life forms had become almost freakishly abundant and diverse – "endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful," as Darwin described evolution's workings. Then humans arrived, and kept arriving, and their actions, both intentional and accidental, have reduced the biota to a fraction of its original extent. People bring complications, and their presence creates a tangle of ecological, political, economic, cultural, and philosophical challenges to the survival of endangered species. Much has been lost, and much more will probably be lost in the coming years. Extinction as a phenomenon has been stubbornly ignored for most of the last 150 years. The British scientist Alfred Newton noted in an 1892 letter to R.C.L. Perkins, the legendary Hawaii-based bird and insect collector, "I know from experience that the belief in the continued existence of an extinct species dies very hard – people can't understand why things cease to exist and therefore think that they go on." To a degree, his words remain true today: People still have a difficult time accepting that birds can go extinct. More insidiously, we have had a difficult time understanding why it would matter in our own lives. Part of the equation is our lack of understanding of the species at risk: what they are, what their roles have been in nature's tangled skein, and what is lost when they are gone. Michael Walther and the illustrator Julian Hume's concise but compulsively readable account, a welcome addition to the literature on Hawaiian birds, goes a long way to rectifying this lack of understanding. Its premise is simple: to list every known extinct bird from Hawaii, from species known only as fossils to those only relatively recently extinct. The book is modeled somewhat on Walther and Hume's 2012 *Extinct Birds*, a text-heavy (and physically heavy!) summation of every known extinct bird. The Hawaiian work itemizes a total of 77 species and subspecies, and is leavened by wonderful color illustrations by Hume and by many images drawn from classic works on Hawaiian birds: Scott B. Wilson and Arthur H. Evans's *Aves Hawaiienses*, issued in eight parts between 1890 and 1899 and illustrated by Frederick Frohawk; and Walter Rothschild's *Avifauna of Laysan*, issued in three parts between 1893 and 1900, illustrated by Frohawk and John G. Keulemans. The latter covers not just the birds of tiny Laysan Island, far up the northwestern chain of Hawaiian islands, but the avifauna of the main seven islands as well. Each entry in Walther and Hume's new book contains a detailed physical description of the bird, a statement of its historic or prehistoric range if known, and – very usefully – a tally of the specimens in museum collections.

This last bit of information conceals some very labor-intensive efforts undertaken over the years by a number of people; it is not a trivial task to identify the surviving examples of birds housed in study collections around the world. Tracking down specimens means scouring collections databases, calling and e-mailing collections managers around the world, and taking other measures to ensure an accurate count. The front matter here is also extremely useful, including a brilliantly organized summary by island of land bird extinctions in Hawaii. Each entry also includes such historical information as when the first and last specimens were recorded by westerners, and finally, a Reports and Observations section. This last element takes up the bulk of each entry, and often makes for engrossing reading. It focuses on the habits and life histories of the birds where known, quoting at length from such well-known sources as Wilson and Evans, as well as accounts by ornithologists like William Bryan, George Munro, and R.C.L. Perkins. One important bird worker in Hawaii who shows up too infrequently here: Henry Henshaw, a discerning observer of extinction on the islands and uncommonly interested in the habits of the living bird. As Henshaw remarked to a friend in 1899, "The Island birds interest me increasingly. They interest me both as specimens and in relation to their habits." Henshaw's extremely useful and detailed *Birds of the Hawaiian Islands* first appeared in *Thrum's Hawaiian Almanac and Annual* in 1901, and was published as an independent monograph the following year. This was information on the Hawaiian avifauna brought up to date for the early twentieth century, including considerable material not in Wilson's *Aves Hawaiienses*, which had mentioned other well-known Hawaiian collectors such as Munro, Palmer and R.C.L. Perkins with fulsome praise but said not a word about Henshaw's contributions. Henshaw's *Birds* was everything Wilson's beautiful book was not: unillustrated, modestly printed, and filled with contemporary discussions of the challenges facing Hawaiian birds. The front matter was full of new contributions, including a section on threats to the islands' avifauna, among them environmental changes, habitat destruction, and the disease we now know as avian pox. As he finished proofing his book, Henshaw noted, "It is not a thing to be very proud of, but it contains for all that a good deal on Hawaiian birds which now for the first time is within the reach of the Hawaiian public for whom it is particularly intended. I would have preferred to have had more time to write it in." Henshaw especially wished that he had included numerous notes on the question of the evolution of Hawaiian forms, but "as it was," he concluded to a friend, "the publisher was badly scared by the length of the paper in its present state." He told Rothschild that he had written the book for island readers rather than for a

scientific public: “I wanted to get the paper where it would reach the people of the Islands, in the hope of stimulating their interest” at present very faint in Hawaiian birds. Walther cites Scott B. Wilson much more often, and many of the measurements here appear to be sourced from Wilson and Evans’s *Aves Hawaiienses*; many contemporary reviewers and commenters, however, considered Wilson less than reliable. Also frequently cited is Walter Rothschild, likewise hardly a paragon of accuracy. In his original, 1892 description of the Laysan “Apapane, for example, a bird that would go extinct in a three-day sandstorm 31 years later, Rothschild misspelled the name of George D. Freeth, the middling guano magnate he intended to honor and went on in his *Avifauna of Laysan* to use four different forms of the scientific name he had coined (fraithii, fraithi, freethi, and freethii). Julian Hume’s workmanlike illustrations are a strength of the present book. In many cases, they show the birds, some of which have never been painted before, hunting endemic Hawaiian insects among endemic Hawaiian plants. The plumages of those species known only from the subfossil record are necessarily speculative, but they are all reasonable. Hume is no Frohawk, Keulemans, or Lear, but his work is very capable, and he’s got the added benefit of a Ph.D. in paleontology. The index is much better than no index at all, but it misses a couple of opportunities to be more useful. Common and scientific names are listed in two separate indices rather than being integrated. Though the index of scientific names groups the species belonging to a genus, the common name index does not: thus, for example, to look up any members of the Mohoidae, it’s necessary to know the full common name, and if you want to locate, say, the text for the Kaua’i “Ōi, you can’t just turn in the index to “Ōi to find all of the members of the family. Another issue perhaps too complex to tackle here is posed by the vast synonymies for many of these birds. Some have been known by many different scientific and common names, and placed in a variety of families; some birds now occupy an entirely different genus from the one they were assigned to while they were still extant. For those seeking more extensive detail, *Extinct Birds of Hawai’i* is best used in conjunction with the authors’ 2012 work, which appears to include all of the birds in this book but with more information. That earlier book also groups together species known from both historic and prehistoric eras, so that the Narrow-Billed Kioea is noted immediately after the other members of the Mohoidae—the only family of songbirds in the last two centuries to have suffered complete extinction. In this new volume, birds known from the fossil record and those known historically are treated in two separate sections, which makes for a less coherent overview. Extinction is forever, as they say, and whether a bird disappeared



prehistorically or historically seems less significant than what group it was part of. At the same time, though, one of the great services this book provides is its amplification of the story of the wholesale extinction of birds in Hawai'i before European contact. The original Hawaiians were not ecologically spotless, and they were culpable, either through accident or intention, for the largest number of extinctions of Hawaiian birds. Countless words have been written about the role of humans in extinction over the past several hundred years. Pre-industrialized societies have received considerably less attention in the discussion, but they too played a huge role in the demise of plants and animals. Extinction is a grave threat in today's Hawai'i, but at least for birds, it was much worse in the centuries between the original colonization by humans around 1000 CE and the arrival of Captain Cook in 1778. In Alison G. Boyer's phrase, a "catastrophic wave of extinction" accompanied humans' arrival in the islands. Judging by the fossil record, at least half of all bird species went extinct during those first roughly 800 years, while far fewer—more like 20%—have been lost since the arrival of Europeans. In fact, the rate of extinction for bird species in Hawai'i before European settlement was more than twice as high as it has been since. The effects on the current avifauna of Hawai'i are indelible. Famously put another way by William Faulkner, "The past is never dead. It's not even past." We've probably lost something like 70% of the bird species in the Hawaiian archipelago since the Polynesians hauled their double-hulled canoes up onto land a thousand years ago, and the bulk of these extinctions preceded Europeans and their consuming ways. People who are interested in birds and their survival want to help. What to do? Walk lightly on the planet. Give money to organizations that preserve open land and manage protected land, or whose explicit mission is to study and protect Hawaiian birds. Continue to formally prohibit the arrival of bio-entities that are known to dampen diversity, especially plants; animal importations are now relatively well controlled, but plants less so. Also understand, though, that the introduced species already present actually contribute to biodiversity. Ask whether those species are producing benefits or harm to biodiversity, human health, ecological services, and economic values. And get to know the birds themselves. Tell your students, your friends, your family about them. More of Hawai'i's endemic birds will surely be gone soon.

Daniel Lewis is Research Professor of History at Claremont Graduate University and Chief Curator of Manuscripts and Dibner Senior Curator of the History of Science and Technology at the Huntington Library. He is the author of numerous articles, books, and poems, and has been on broadcast programs on National Public Radio and the Public Broadcasting Service. Recommended citation: Lewis, D. 2017. *A Thousand Years of Extinctions on the Islands of Hawai'i* [a

review of Extinct Birds of Hawai'i, by Michael Walther]. Birding 49: 86-89.

Empty

For anyone interested in Hawaii's birds, this book is a must read. Thanks to the author for researching and writing this book. It is shocking and stunning what we have lost. Way too many of Hawaii's native birds have gone extinct or are on the precipice of extinction. I encourage birders interested in birding Hawaii to read this book and share the sad story of Hawaii's native birds and ongoing extinctions with their friends. This book is very timely as things are getting worse and not better for Hawaii's birds, and maybe more knowledge will help people and the government to save the native birds that remain. The illustrations are amazing - Hawaii was a bird "Jurassic park". When I look at the illustrations, they are emotionally powerful showing a world we will never see and enjoy - and much of it disappeared relatively recently. But that in itself is a reason to buy this book.

I was somewhat disappointed in this book- I had hoped for more information concerning last sightings, flora integral to the survival of the species, etc. but many entries were very short. Perhaps it is an accurate depiction of how little we knew of these birds before they were gone. I was sad to see that so many species are gone forever from Hawaii and it has confirmed that more needs to be done to protect what is left.

pictures and information were well done

Thorough, well illustrated, easy to read. Sad topic.

Beautifully done book for lovers of birds or Hawaii .

Great illustrations, text not as informative as I would like. The topic itself is very interesting. Some birds are listed as smaller or larger than another species and the other species size is not given. There is a lot of blank space on several pages. More of the fossils could have been illustrated to fill those empty spaces. Some of these species are known only from a few bones and that may limit what can be written about them. This is why seeing photos of the bones would help. Perhaps a second edition will include more. The quality of the cover, paper and dust jacket is top of the line. Buy this for the illustrations.

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