



HAWAIIAN FOREST BIRD CONSERVATION KEYSTONE INITIATIVE



The unique and iconic forest birds of Hawai'i are facing an immediate extinction crisis. Found nowhere else on Earth, at least 12 species are threatened with imminent extinction in the next few years from habitat loss, invasive species, climate change and disease, such as avian malaria spread by mosquitoes.

Hawaiian forest birds are an integral ecological and cultural component of the Hawaiian Islands. These birds reflect the health of forests and represent cultural connections between the Native Hawaiian Community and the islands. The loss of these species compromises the integrity of unique ecosystems as well as the natural and cultural heritage of Hawai'i.

To address this crisis, as part of the [Department of the Interior's Restoration and Resilience Framework](#) funded by the President's Investing in America agenda, the Department's bureaus and offices are working together, along with the state of Hawai'i, Native Hawaiian Community, and numerous public and private partners, to lead a comprehensive initiative to prevent the extinction of additional Hawaiian forest birds.

In December 2022, the Department released a multiagency [Strategy for Preventing the Extinction of Hawaiian Forest Birds](#). The Strategy provides a shared vision for a comprehensive approach to prevent the extinction of Hawaiian forest birds due in part to avian malaria by applying a science-based approach, various conservation techniques, and Native Hawaiian biocultural knowledge and practices. It includes the planning and implementation of landscape-level mosquito control using Incompatible Insect Technique (IIT - a naturally occurring bacteria *Wolbachia*), translocation of birds to higher elevation islands, the establishment of captive populations of at-risk birds, development of next-generation tools that increase the scope or efficacy of these actions and conducting the suite of these activities in a culturally appropriate and integrated approach.

Recognizing the urgency of this situation, the Department has committed new funding from the President's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act to support the implementation of the Strategy. Without this funding, experts assessed that two species could go extinct within the next year.

Successful implementation of the multiagency strategy can serve as a model approach and provide transferable science applications that can be applied to decision-making for mitigating and reversing the combined impacts of invasive species and climate change at landscape scales to preserve both biodiversity and biocultural connections.

THE HAWAIIAN FOREST BIRD CONSERVATION KEYSTONE INITIATIVE INVESTS IN:



Planning and Implementation of Mosquito Control

Initial funding for the initiative has gone towards establishing a public-private partnership between the National Park Service and The Nature Conservancy to develop, test and use IIT to reduce the mosquito vector of avian malaria. All state permits, state and federal compliance, and EPA registration to deploy IIT was completed, with first deployments occurring in May 2023; and projects were initiated on multiple islands to support the effective deployment of IIT.



Creation of Increased Captive Care Capacity in Hawai'i

Funding has allowed for a contract for the construction of an additional 80 units of aviary space in Hawai'i for forest bird captive care.



Planning for Species Translocation

Initial planning was conducted to translocate the endangered 'Akohekohe to higher mosquito-free habitats on Hawai'i Island.



Developing New Tools

Laboratory capacity and equipment has been expanded to support IIT efficacy monitoring and development of next-generation mosquito control tools.



Integration of Native Hawaiian Knowledge and Values

Native Hawaiian biocultural knowledge has been incorporated and development is underway to implement protocols with appropriate traditional cultural protocols and practices.

