



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

News Release

Pacific Islands External Affairs Office

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Public Meetings Scheduled on the Proposal to Remove the Hawaiian Hawk from Endangered Species List

Two public meetings will be conducted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the island of Hawai'i in late January to discuss the proposal to remove the Hawaiian hawk or 'io from the federal list of endangered and threatened wildlife.

Anyone interested in learning more about the proposed delisting of the 'io is invited to attend the public meetings. The first will be held on January 28 at the Pu'ueo Community Center, 145 Wainaku Street, in Hilo from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. The second meeting will be held on January 29 at Yano Hall, 82-6156 Māmalahoa Highway in Captain Cook from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

In addition to the proposal, the Service has developed a draft post-delisting monitoring plan in coordination with the State of Hawai'i, U.S. Geological Survey Biological Resources Discipline, and the National Park Service.

The Endangered Species Act requires biological monitoring of the status of a species for a minimum of five years following delisting. The purpose of the monitoring plan is to verify that a delisted species remains secure from risk of extinction after it has been removed from the protections provided by the Endangered Species Act. The Service proposes to conduct monitoring of the 'io via islandwide surveys every five years for a period of 20 years, from 2012 to 2032.

Due to implementation of recovery actions and other conservation efforts, the 'io is now found throughout the island of Hawai'i and has maintained a stable population for at least 20 years. It is nesting and foraging successfully in both native and altered habitats and has benefitted from large areas of protected forest. The Hawaiian hawk is not currently threatened by overutilization, disease, predation, contaminants, lack of adequate regulatory mechanisms, or other factors, and therefore no longer meets the definition of a threatened or endangered species throughout its range. Researchers estimate the total population of Hawaiian hawk to be about 3,000 birds.

The proposed rule, if made final, would remove the 'io from the federal list of endangered and threatened wildlife thereby removing all protections provided under the ESA. The 'io would remain protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, a federal law that prohibits "taking" – killing, selling or otherwise harming migratory birds, their nests or eggs.

In traditional Hawaiian culture, the 'io is believed to be an 'aumakua – a family or personal god in the shape of an animal. Mortals did not harm or eat 'aumakua, and in return, the 'aumakua would warn and reprimand mortals in their dreams, visions, and calls. Also, 'io are considered a symbol of Hawaiian royalty because of their lofty flight.

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The 'io is a small, broad-winged species of hawk endemic to the Hawaiian Islands and is the only member of the hawk family that nests and resides in the islands. The 'io was listed as endangered in 1967 based on its restricted range on the island of Hawai'i, its small population size, and the loss of native forest habitat from agriculture, logging, and commercial development.

A copy of the proposed rule and draft post-delisting monitoring plan may be downloaded from the Service's website at <http://www.fws.gov/pacificislands/>. Copies are also available by calling the Fish and Wildlife Service office in Honolulu at 808 792-9400.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov.