Public Comment Period Reopened on Proposal to Remove Hawaiian Hawk from Endangered Species List

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) announced today the reopening of the public comment period on the proposal to remove the Hawaiian hawk – known as the ‘io in Hawaiian - from the endangered species list because the population is secure and no longer requires federal protection.

The Service is seeking public comment on this proposal, which was originally published in the Federal Register on August 6, 2008. Comments previously submitted on the proposed rule do not need to be resubmitted, as they will be fully considered in the determination on this action.

“Information gathered during previous comment periods has caused us to reexamine our original proposal. We encourage all interested parties to provide information pertinent to the proposed delisting of the Hawaiian hawk,” said Loyal Mehrhoff, Field Supervisor for the Fish and Wildlife Service’s Pacific Islands Fish and Wildlife Office. “Previously submitted information and new data will help the Service make the best decision towards the recovery of the species.”

Due to implementation of recovery actions and other conservation efforts, the species is now found throughout the island of Hawai‘i and has had a stable population for at least 20 years. The current range of the hawk is estimated to encompass 2,372 square miles, comprising 58.7 percent of the island of Hawai‘i. Researchers estimate the Hawaiian hawk population to be about 3,000 birds.

The proposed rule, if made final, would remove the Hawaiian hawk from the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and remove all protections provided under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The hawk will remain protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, a federal law that prohibits killing, selling or otherwise harming migratory birds, their nests or eggs.

The Hawaiian hawk 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 Hawai‘i. When originally listed as endangered in 1967, the hawk was presumed to occupy only undisturbed, native habitat and its population was thought to be in the low hundreds. It is now known to occur in a variety of habitat types — at both high and low elevations — that include native forest, nonnative forests, pastures and agricultural lands.
The public comment period on the proposed rule will be open for 60 days. The deadline for submitting comments is April 14, 2014. The Service welcomes all comments regarding the proposed rule but is especially interested in those pertaining to the species’ biology, range, and population trends, including utilization of koa plantations and exurban areas, and positive and negative effects of current and foreseeable land management practices.


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