



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

News Release

Pacific Islands External Affairs Office

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For Release: July 8, 2009
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PIEA-09-10
RO-09-74

Two Hawaiian Damselfly Species Proposed for Federal Protection

Public comments accepted until September 8th

A proposed rule to list two species of Hawaiian damselflies as endangered was released today by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The flying earwig Hawaiian damselfly and the Pacific Hawaiian damselfly are unique, endemic insects found nowhere else in the world. The notice published in the *Federal Register* today seeks any information that may be available regarding the status of these two species.

Damselflies and dragonflies are known collectively as *pinao* by Native Hawaiians. Damselflies have slender bodies and hold their wings above the body while at rest, while dragonflies are stout-bodied and hold their wings perpendicular to their body.

The public comment period will be open for 60 days to allow all interested parties time to consider the information provided in the proposed rule and to submit comments. The Service welcomes all comments regarding the proposed rule but is especially interested in those pertaining to biological, commercial trade or other relevant data concerning any threats to this species; additional information concerning the range, distribution and population sizes of these two species, including the locations of any additional populations; and current or planned activities in the areas occupied by the species and possible impacts of these activities on these species.

“Historically, damselflies were among the most common and conspicuous native Hawaiian insects, but they have suffered greatly from habitat modification and destruction,” said Gina Shultz, acting field supervisor of the Fish and Wildlife Service’s Pacific Islands Fish and Wildlife Office. “We hope the added protection these colorful insects receive from endangered species status will help bring them back from the brink of extinction, but we realize the fate of Hawaiian damselflies depends on protecting, restoring and maintaining the natural health of Hawaii’s streams and water systems.”

The flying earwig Hawaiian damselfly has been a candidate for protection under the Endangered Species Act since 1996, and the Pacific Hawaiian damselfly has been a candidate since 1994. Federal listing of these two species will automatically invoke state listing under Hawai‘i’s endangered species law.

Historically found on the islands of Hawai‘i and Maui, the flying earwig Hawaiian damselfly has not been seen on the island of Hawai‘i for over 80 years. Currently, the species is known only from one location on Maui.

The primary threats to the flying earwig Hawaiian damselfly are habitat loss and degradation due to agriculture and urban development, feral pigs and nonnative plants and natural catastrophes such as hurricanes and landslides; predation by nonnative species such as insects and bullfrogs; and their small population numbers.

The Pacific Hawaiian damselfly was historically found on all of the main Hawaiian Islands except Kaho‘olawe and Ni‘ihau. This species is found at lower elevations, below 2,000 feet, and breeds predominantly in standing water such as marshes, ponds and pools along stream channels. The species has disappeared from at least 18 known localities throughout the islands and is completely gone from the islands of Kaua‘i, O‘ahu and Lana‘i. Currently, the Pacific Hawaiian damselfly is found only in 22 locations on the islands of Moloka‘i and Maui,

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and from a single population on the island of Hawai‘i.

The primary threats to the Pacific Hawaiian damselfly are habitat loss and modification by agriculture and urban development, stream alterations, nonnative plants and natural catastrophes such as hurricanes, drought and landslides; and predation by nonnative species such as fish, insects, and bullfrogs.

The Service has determined that proposing proposed critical habitat for both damselfly species is prudent; however, the agency is unable to identify the physical and biological features essential to the conservation of these species and is therefore unable to determine areas that contain these features. As a result, the Service is not proposing critical habitat for these species at this time. Under the ESA, the Service has one year after a species is placed on the threatened and endangered species list to propose critical habitat. Lands that support these two damselfly species are owned by various private parties, the State of Hawai‘i and the Federal government.

The flying earwig Hawaiian damselfly is a comparatively large and elongated species. The males are blue and black in color and exhibit distinctive, greatly enlarged, pincer-like appendages that are used to clasp the female during mating. Females are predominantly brownish in color. The adults measure from 1.8 to 1.9 inches in length and have a wingspan of 1.9 to 2.1 inches. The wings of both sexes are clear except for the tips which are narrowly darkened along the front margins.

Little is known of the biology of the flying earwig Hawaiian damselfly, but it is believed that the species has semi-terrestrial or terrestrial naiads (immature larval stages). The naiads have evolved short, thick, hairy gills and are unable to swim. Adults are often associated with thick mats of uluhe ferns on moist banks.

The Pacific Hawaiian damselfly is a relatively small, darkly-colored species, with adults measuring from 1.3 to 1.4 inches in length and having a wingspan of 1.3 to 1.6 inches. Both sexes are largely black in color. Males exhibit brick red striping and patterns while females exhibit light green striping and patterns. This species is most easily distinguished from other Hawaiian damselflies by the extremely long lower abdominal appendage of the male, which greatly exceed the length of the upper appendage. Females lay eggs in submerged aquatic vegetation or in mats of moss or algae on submerged rocks, and hatching occurs in about ten days.

The Service will consider comments from all interested parties received by September 8, 2009. Comments can be sent by one of the following methods:

- *Federal eRulemaking Portal* at <http://www.regulations.gov> . Follow the instructions for submitting comments.
- Via U.S. mail or hand delivery to Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS-R1-ES-2009-0036; Division of Policy and Directives Management; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 222, Arlington, VA 22203.

Copies of the proposed rule may be downloaded from the Service’s website at <http://www.fws.gov/pacificislands/>. For further information contact: Gina Shultz, Acting Field Supervisor, Pacific Islands Fish and Wildlife Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 300 Ala Moana Boulevard, Room 3-122, Box 50088, Honolulu, Hawai‘i 96850; telephone 808 792 9400 or fax 808 792 9581.

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.