



## U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# News Release

Pacific Islands External Affairs Office

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## Critical Habitat Designated for 12 Species of Hawaiian Picture-wing Flies

A final rule designating critical habitat for 12 federally protected species of Hawaiian picture-wing flies was released today by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The designated critical habitat includes 8,788 acres in 32 units located on the islands of O‘ahu, Hawai‘i, Maui, Moloka‘i and Kaua‘i.

Those species for which critical habitat is designated are: *Drosophila aglaia*, *Drosophila hemipeza*, *Drosophila montgomeryi*, *Drosophila obatai*, *Drosophila substenoptera*, and *Drosophila tarphyrichia* (on O‘ahu); *Drosophila heteroneura*, *Drosophila ochrobasis*, and *Drosophila mulli* (on Hawai‘i); *Drosophila musaphilia* (on Kaua‘i); *Drosophila neoclavisetae* (on Maui) and *Drosophila differens* (on Moloka‘i).

“After several years of work, we feel that the final critical habitat designation for the Hawaiian picture-wing flies represents the best use of the scientific information available,” said Patrick Leonard, field supervisor for the Fish and Wildlife Office in the Pacific Islands. “Final designation could not have been reached without the valuable input provided during the numerous public comment periods.”

The final rule excludes 450 acres of land owned by Maui Land and Pineapple Company proposed as critical habitat for *Drosophila neoclavisetae* under section 4(b)(2) of the Endangered Species Act.

The 450 acres that are excluded from critical habitat designation are located within Maui Land and Pineapple’s Pu‘u Kukui Watershed Preserve. The land was excluded because Maui Land and Pineapple has proactively managed the area for more than 15 years, in conjunction with the State of Hawai‘i’s Natural Area Partnership Program, to preserve its native biodiversity. The existence of a long-term management plan, a history of self-funding, cooperation with the Service, and continual implementation of practices that benefit the conservation of the species led to the Service’s determination.

Approximately 50 percent of the designated critical habitat is on federal lands and includes 3,604 acres in the Kona Forest Unit of Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge and 752 acres in Hawai‘i Volcanoes National Park. State lands comprise 27 percent, or 2,331 acres of the proposed critical habitat, while 1 percent or 128 acres are on City and County of Honolulu land. Twenty-two percent, or 1,974 acres are on private land.

On May 9, 2006, 11 of the Hawaiian picture-wing fly species were federally listed as endangered and one species (*Drosophila mulli*) was listed as threatened. On November 28, 2007, the Service published a proposal to designate critical habitat for the 12 species of picture-wing flies on a total of 9,238 acres of land in the State of Hawai‘i.

Three public comment periods and two public hearings followed the proposal. Twelve comments received by the Service supported the designation of critical habitat for the Hawaiian picture-wing flies and four opposed the designation. Two comments were received from individuals expressing general

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views on the Endangered Species Act but were unrelated to the proposed designation of critical habitat. The Service received two comments objecting to the exemption of military lands under section 4(a)(3) of the Act and one comment requesting that a portion of one critical habitat unit be excluded based on ongoing private conservation activities. All comments were reviewed for substantive issues and new information regarding the proposed critical habitat designation for the 12 Hawaiian picture-wing fly species. All comments received have been fully considered in the final rule.

Critical habitat is a term in the Endangered Species Act (ESA) that refers to geographic areas containing features essential for the conservation of a threatened or endangered species and may require special management considerations or protection.

The designation of critical habitat does not affect land ownership or establish a refuge, wilderness, reserve, preserve, or other special conservation area. It does not allow government or public access to private lands. However, federal agencies that undertake, fund or permit activities that may affect critical habitat are required to consult with the Service to ensure such actions do not adversely modify or destroy designated critical habitat.

Habitat is also protected through cooperative measures under the ESA, including habitat conservation plans, safe harbor agreements, candidate conservation agreements and state programs. In addition, voluntary partnership programs such as the Service's Private Stewardship Grants and the Partners for Fish and Wildlife program also restore habitat. Habitat for listed species is provided on many of the Service's National Wildlife Refuges, and state wildlife management areas.

There are approximately 106 identified species of Hawaiian picture-wing flies. Each species is specially adapted to a particular island and a specific habitat type, ranging from desert-like environments to rain forests and swamplands.

Hawaiian picture-wings have been called the "birds of paradise" of the insect world because of their spectacular displays during courtship and defense of their territories. The picture-wings are known for their elaborate markings on otherwise clear wings, and belong to the intensively studied *Drosophilidae* family. Future conservation efforts will focus on monitoring existing populations and controlling threats to enhance populations of picture-wing flies and other listed species.

The major threats to the 12 species of picture-wing flies are habitat degradation by feral animals (primarily pigs), loss of host plants, and impacts of nonnative insect predators and parasites, including ants and wasps. Furthermore, these species of picture-wing flies are now reduced to just a few populations within localized patches of their host plants, some of which are also listed under the ESA.

The final rule was published in the Federal Register on December 4. Copies of the final rule may be downloaded from the Service's website at [www.fws.gov/pacificislands](http://www.fws.gov/pacificislands) or by calling the Fish and Wildlife Service's Honolulu office 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](http://www.fws.gov).