

News Bulletin

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Endangered nēnē on Oahu for the first time since the 1700s

For the first time since the 1700s, a pair of the endangered Hawaiian geese are calling Oahu home. The pair have nested and successfully hatched three goslings at the James Campbell National Wildlife Refuge near Kahuku, Oahu. It is possible more birds will arrive on Oahu in the future, particularly in places that provide safe and protected habitat like national wildlife refuges. The nēnē were first observed on Oahu around January 9, 2014.

The female nēnē originally laid four eggs in February and three hatched on March 13. Incubation time for the nēnē is approximately 30 days with an average clutch size (e.g. number of eggs laid) of three or four eggs.

The Hawaiian goose or nēnē was driven to near extinction in the early 1950s. Approximately 30 birds were left in the world – all on Hawaii Island. However, Hawaii's state bird is on the comeback with statewide totals estimated between 2,450 and 2,550 birds on the islands of Hawaii, Maui, Molokai, Kauai and, now, Oahu. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has also received recent reports that nēnē are moving to new areas on Hawaii and Maui, where they have not been seen previously.

“Nēnē on Oahu is exciting progress for, and an expected part of, the recovery process for this endangered bird,” said Barry Stieglitz, Refuge Supervisor for the Hawaiian and Pacific Islands National Wildlife Refuge Complex. “Historically, nēnē occurred on all or most of the major Hawaiian Islands before and during Polynesian colonization. We hope that one day, nēnē populations will once again occur on all the major Hawaiian Islands.”

Having nēnē moving into new areas comes with responsibilities.

“The public should avoid contact with nēnē, because they easily habituate to humans. Please do not feed nēnē because human food is not only bad for them, it also attracts them to dangerous locations where they may be hit by vehicles or killed by predators. While driving, please slow down if you see nēnē on or near a roadway,” said Dr. Annie Marshall, Fish and Wildlife Biologist with the Pacific Islands Fish and Wildlife Office.

Though James Campbell NWR is closed to the public, residents and visitors are encouraged to do their part in protecting the nēnē. Should you view a nēnē on Oahu or in a previously unseen area on the other Hawaiian Islands, please report sightings to the Service at 808-792-9400.

Nēnē population increases and recovery are due to cooperative management by federal and state agencies, including the Service, Hawaii Division of Forestry and Wildlife, National Park Service and San Diego Zoological Park. Nēnē recovery actions include captive breeding, releases of captive-bred birds, habitat management and restoration, and predator control. Additional partners include Sir Peter Scott and the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust in England, Shipman Estates, Ducks Unlimited, and the Peregrine Fund.

Digital images of the nēnē can be downloaded at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwspacific/>.

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