



**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**

## News Release

*Pacific Islands External Affairs Office*

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### **Public Asked to Comment on Monitoring Plan and Proposal to Remove Hawaiian Hawk from Endangered Species List**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today announced the reopening of the public comment period for the proposal to remove the Hawaiian hawk or 'io from the federal list of endangered and threatened wildlife. A draft post-delisting monitoring plan was also released for review.

If a species is delisted due to recovery, the Endangered Species Act requires monitoring of the status of the species for no fewer than five years. Following the delisting, the purpose of the post-delisting monitoring plan is to verify that a species delisted due to recovery remains secure from risk of extinction after it has been removed from the protections of the Act.

“The Service realizes the importance of the 'io in Hawaiian culture, especially as an 'aumakua,” said Patrick Leonard, field supervisor for the Fish and Wildlife Service’s Pacific Islands Fish and Wildlife Office. “The reopening of the comment period once again will allow the public ample opportunity to provide their input on the proposed delisting and ensure that we make a just and fair decision.”

The draft post-delisting monitoring plan was developed by the Service in coordination with the State of Hawai'i, U.S. Geological Survey Biological Resources Discipline, and the National Park Service. The Service proposes to conduct monitoring via island-wide surveys every five years for a period of 20 years, from 2012 to 2032.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service can initiate procedures to re-list the 'io, including, if appropriate, emergency listing if data from this monitoring effort or from some other sources indicate that the bird is experiencing significant declines in abundance or distribution, that its survival or territory occupancy are declining significantly, or that it requires protective status under the Act for some other reason.

Due to implementation of recovery actions and other conservation efforts, the 'io is now found throughout the island of Hawai'i and has had a stable population for at least 20 years. It is nesting and foraging successfully in both native and altered habitats and has large areas of protected habitat. 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 Hawaiian hawk from the federal list of endangered and threatened wildlife and remove all protections provided under the Endangered Species Act. The hawk 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.

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 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.

The public comment period will be open for an additional 60 days. The Service welcomes all comments regarding the proposed rule and the draft post delisting monitoring plan, 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 size of this species, including the locations of any additional populations; current or planned activities in the areas occupied by the species and possible impacts of these activities, as well as data on population trends.

The Service will consider comments and materials from all interested parties received by April 13, 2009. Comments regarding the proposed delisting submitted during previous public comment periods, as well as those provided during two public meetings on the Island of Hawai'i in January, will be given full consideration and need not be resubmitted. Comments and materials concerning this proposed delisting should be sent to: Federal eRulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>. Comments and materials may also be mailed or hand-delivered to: Public Comments Processing, Attn: RIN 1018-AU96; Division of Policy and Directives Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 222; Arlington, VA 22203.

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](http://www.fws.gov).