



U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Recovery of the Hawaiian hawk or 'Io

Introduction

The Hawaiian hawk (*Buteo solitarius*) was listed as endangered on March 11, 1967, based on its restricted range (found only on the island of Hawai'i), its small population size, and the loss of native forest habitat from agriculture, logging and commercial development.

However, at the time of listing there had been no systematic surveys or ecological studies of the species, and the only information available was from anecdotal accounts that gave differing reports on its abundance and population trend in various parts of the island.

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. 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.

On August 6, 2008, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposed to remove the Hawaiian hawk from its current listing as endangered under the Endangered Species Act because the population is secure and no longer requires federal protection.

Description

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. This graceful bird of prey measures 16 to 18 inches in length, the female being larger. Two color phases exist: a dark phase (dark brown head, breast, and underwings), and a light color phase (dark head, light breast and light underwings). Feet and legs are yellowish in adults and greenish in immatures.



Hawaiian hawks mate for life and defend their territories year-round. Eggs are laid from March to June and the eggs hatch from May to July. The young birds fledge from July to September. A typical clutch consists of one egg.

Distribution

Currently, the hawk is known to breed only on the island of Hawai'i, but there have been at least eight observations of the species on the islands of Kaua'i, O'ahu, and Maui since 1978, and fossils are known from the islands of Moloka'i and Kaua'i. The current range of the hawk is estimated to encompass 2,372 square miles, comprising 58.7 percent of the island of Hawai'i.

Population Estimates

The first detailed study of the ecology and life history of the hawk provided a population estimate of 1,400-2,500 birds. Subsequent studies have confirmed that the species is broadly distributed throughout the island of Hawai'i, and has been stable in number for at least 20 years.

The most recent islandwide survey completed in 2007 utilized updated methodologies to calculate the population and density estimates for the 1998-1999 survey data and compared it with the 2007 results. They found that the Hawaiian hawk population numbered 3,239 individuals in 1998 and 3,085 in 2007. Thus, there was no significant difference in population densities found in 1998 and 2007, and there was no evidence that the hawk's islandwide distribution had changed.

What happens if the species is removed from the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife?

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 will 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.

Post Delisting Monitoring Plan

As required by the Endangered Species Act, once delisted, the Hawaiian hawk will be monitored for a minimum of five years following delisting. A 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 islandwide surveys every five years for a period of 20 years, from 2012 to 2032. Post-delisting monitoring ensures that all species delisted due to recovery remain secure from risk of extinction after the protections are removed.

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. Copies of the proposed rule and draft post-delisting monitoring plan may be downloaded

from the Service’s website at <http://www.fws.gov/pacificislands>, or obtained by calling the Fish and Wildlife Service office in Honolulu at 808 792-9400.

Cultural Significance

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.

How do I submit comments?

The Service has already received a number of comments on the proposed rule and is continuing to seek biological data and comments from the public. We are especially interested in comments 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.

Comments and materials concerning this proposed delisting should be sent to “Federal eRulemaking Portal at <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.

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.