

Proclamation

WHEREAS for millions of years before human contact, Hawai'i's forests were the domain of our native nā manu nahele (forest birds), comprising at least 84 species, including honeycreepers, honeyeaters, flycatchers, thrushes, warblers, hawks, owls, and crows; and

WHEREAS our indigenous forest birds are distinctly Hawaiian, existing solely in the Hawaiian Islands and nowhere else in the world. They play crucial ecological roles as pollinators, seed dispersers, and insect controllers in Hawaiian forests, sometimes so closely co-evolved with plant species that native plants cannot reproduce without them; and

WHEREAS our forest birds are integral to Native Hawaiian culture, serving as 'aumakua (family deities) and messengers between akua (gods) and kānaka (people). Nā manu nahele are celebrated in mele (songs) mo'olelo (stories), 'ōlelo no'eau (proverbs), ka'ao (legends), and through the creation of feather adornments, including lei hulu; and

WHEREAS our nā manu nahele are at risk. The threats include habitat loss; habitat degradation by invasive plants, feral ungulates, insects, and diseases; predation by invasive rats, cats, and mongoose; and deadly diseases spread by mosquitoes, particularly avian malaria; and

WHEREAS success in places like the Hakalau Forest has demonstrated the effectiveness of the resource restoration/protection philosophy "management matters" (doing something is better than doing nothing), where, due to the restoration and reforestation efforts of many partners, including thousands of volunteers; the native forest birds populations are either stable or increasing; and

WHEREAS partners continue to work together to protect and enhance Hawai'i Island's forest birds and their habitats, and provide educational opportunities, these include Friends of Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge, Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge, Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park, Hawai'i Wildlife Center, Keauhou Bird Conservation Center, The Nature Conservancy, 'Imiloa Astronomy Center, Royal Order of Kamehameha I, Mauna Kea Watershed Alliance, Three Mountain Alliance, Kohala Watershed Partnership, DLNR's Division of Forestry and Wildlife, and many others.

NOW THEREFORE I, MITCHELL D. ROTH, Mayor of the County of Hawai'i, do hereby proclaim 2024 as:

KA MAKAHIKI O NĀ MANU NAHELE: THE YEAR OF THE FOREST BIRDS

in the County of Hawai'i and encourage citizens to join me in celebrating our native nā manu nahele and recognizing the importance of these birds as a critical component of the natural and cultural resources of Hawai'i.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused The Seal of the County of Hawai'i to be affixed. Done this 11th day of March 2024, in Hilo, Hawai'i.

MITCHELL D. ROTH
MAYOR