



Bringing back the birds

Testimony Submitted to the Senate Committee on Water and Land,
Senate Committee on Higher Education, and Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment
Hearing: Friday, March 10, 2017 1:15 pm, Room 224

American Bird Conservancy supports SCR 31 and SR 6, which urge the State Department of Land and Natural Resources to conduct an extensive statewide inventory of Pueo habitat.

The Pueo is an important member of Hawai'i's biological community and a culturally critical species. However, very little is known about this species' population abundance, distribution, or movements statewide. Although there are pockets that seem to have many owls, such as the fields of Mauna Kea, the owls seem to be rare throughout most of the state, and are listed by the State as Endangered on O'ahu. There are active research and management programs for most of our forest birds, water birds, and seabirds, but the Pueo has fallen through the cracks. The best recent estimate, from the State's 2015 Wildlife Action Plan, could only guess at the population trends and thought they were declining. This resolution is a critical first step to beginning to properly protect and manage the Pueo – a bird found nowhere else besides the Hawaiian Islands.

We would also respectfully recommend that more than a habitat inventory is needed, and the study should be expanded. The presence or absence of Pueo in suitable habitat should be monitored through a reasonable time-period. A population estimate for all the main Hawaiian Islands is urgently needed, so banding, telemetry, or other appropriate methods should be included in the study. As part of this, the connections among the different islands' sub-populations need to be monitored to determine the Pueo populations' stability and health. There are many suggestions that the sub-populations are connected, e.g. Pueo moving between Maui and Kaho'olawe, and whether there is one global metapopulation or each islands' Pueo are isolated and independent is a crucial component of understanding the overall biology of this species.

American Bird Conservancy (ABC) is a 501(c)(3) national non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of wild native birds and their habitats throughout the Americas. Founded in 1994, ABC is the only U.S. based group dedicated solely to overcoming the greatest threats facing native birds in the Western Hemisphere. Because of Hawai'i's overwhelming needs, ABC created a division in 2009 focused on protecting, managing, and restoring critical habitat for some of Hawai'i's most endangered birds. We have successfully engaged with the Department of Land and Natural Resources' Division of Forestry and Wildlife on multiple projects throughout the state. We are confident that DLNR and the other passionate conservation partners throughout the state could plan and implement the necessary Pueo research with your appropriate encouragement and support.

Mahalo for the opportunity to comment on this important matter. Please notify us if we can provide additional information and clarification of the points raised above. Aloha –

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