Haleakalā

Haleakalā National Park
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

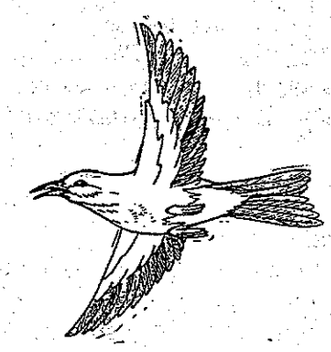
Birds of Haleakalā National Park

Did you know that many visitors to Hawai'i will not see a single Hawaiian bird?

The native birds of Hawai'i are some of the rarest and most beautiful in the world. Crossing a minimum of 2500 miles of ocean to get to Hawai'i, the few bird species that survived the journey evolved into many new species of birds found nowhere else in the world. However, at least 50% of the native birds of Hawai'i have been driven to extinction, and of those left, many are listed as endangered or threatened. Since people arrived in Hawai'i, most of the native forest has been removed or over-run by non-native plant species. Non-native bird species, introduced by people, have adversely impacted native bird populations through disease and competition for food and habitat. The introduction of non-native predators such as rats, cats, and mongooses has also taken a high toll.

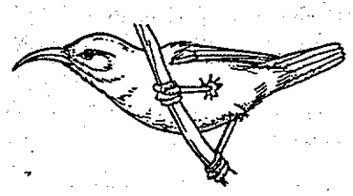
Here at Haleakalā some native birds still survive where they can be observed in one of the few remaining areas of their natural environment. The more common native Honeycreepers, which are listed below, can sometimes be viewed by taking a short nature walk on the Hosmer Grove trail through a mix of native and non-native vegetation.

Red Honeycreepers



'Apapane

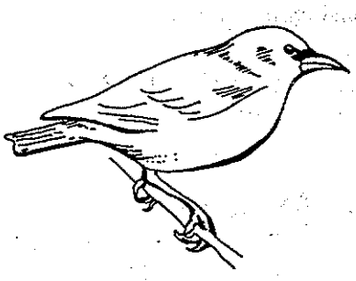
STATUS/RANGE: Abundant in the native 'ohi'a forest on Haleakalā.
DESCRIPTION: The chest and back of 'apapane are crimson. White "underpants" below the tail are visible during flight and distinguish this bird from the 'I'iwi. The wings, tail, and slightly curved bill are black.
DIET: Nectar and insects
AN INTERESTING FACT: These small birds are easy to spot because their wings make a distinctive whirring sound during flight.



'I'iwi

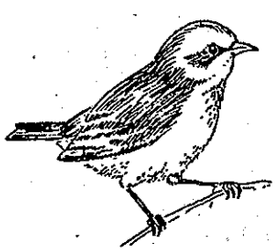
STATUS/RANGE: Common in native forests above 4000 ft. on Haleakalā.
DESCRIPTION: The 'I'iwi has black wings with a white patch on the inner feathers. This small, bright vermillion red bird has a unique long, curved, salmon or yellow colored bill enabling it to easily suck flower nectar.
DIET: Nectar of 'ohi'a trees, tubular flowers, and insects
AN INTERESTING FACT: 'I'iwi feathers were used extensively in Hawaiian feather-work resulting in depletion of the bird's population.

Yellow - Green Honeycreepers



'Amakihi

STATUS/RANGE: Common in native forests above 4000 ft. on Haleakalā.
DESCRIPTION: The males are yellow-green with darker backs. The females are not as colorful. The 'amakihi has a slightly curved bill and a distinctive dark band over the eye.
DIET: Nectar, insects, and fruit
AN INTERESTING FACT: Because of its dark "eye-mask", people sometimes call 'amakihi the "Zorro bird".

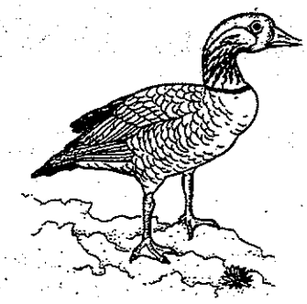


'Ālauahio Maui Creeper

STATUS/RANGE: Common. Found only on Haleakalā above 4500 ft.
DESCRIPTION: The males are yellow-green above, lemon yellow below, with a yellow forehead and face. The females are more drab. This bird is sometimes described as a small, green, flying butterball.
DIET: Insects gleaned from vegetation
AN INTERESTING FACT: This small, curious, understory bird likes to creep around the lower branches of trees and shrubs looking for food.

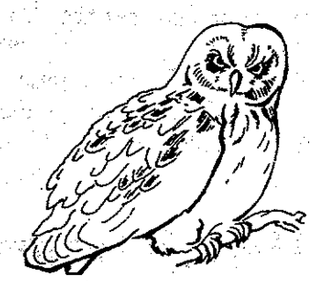
Ground-Nesting Birds

Nēnē Hawaiian Goose



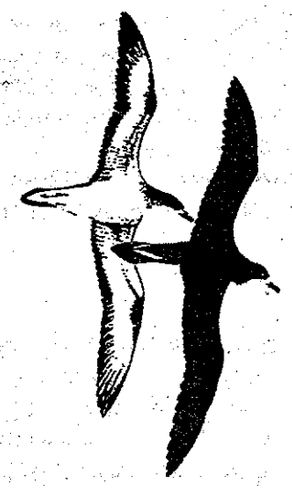
STATUS/RANGE: Endangered. Found on Haleakalā between 6000 and 8000 ft.
DESCRIPTION: The nēnē resembles a small Canada Goose. It has a buff-colored neck with dark furrows, a black head and nape and a gray-brown body. Nēnē bills and feet are black and the feet are only partially webbed.
DIET: Berries, leaves, flowers, and seeds from native plants
AN INTERESTING FACT: By the 1950's the nēnē were gone from Haleakalā. In 1962 local Boy Scouts carried the juvenile nēnē into the "crater" in backpacks in the hopes of rebuilding the population. Despite the program and continued efforts there are fewer than 200 nēnē in the Park today because of the harsh environment and predation by introduced mammals such as mongoose and rats.
WHERE CAN I SEE A NĒNĒ? You can occasionally spot nēnē at Park Headquarters. They can sometimes be seen at various roadside overlooks or on an 8 mile (12.8 km) roundtrip hike to Hōlua cabin. Nēnē are very friendly, please do not be drawn in by their lack of fear and DO NOT feed the nēnē.

Pueo Hawaiian Short-eared Owl



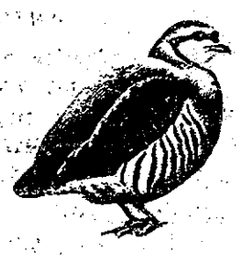
STATUS/RANGE: Endangered. Found in the open shrubland areas of Haleakalā.
DESCRIPTION: The body of the pueo is brown and buffy white, streaked with darker brown. It has yellow eyes and a black bill. Its legs and feet are feathered.
DIET: Small rodents and insects
AN INTERESTING FACT: Pueo are most active at dawn and dusk and are often seen at Haleakalā on cloudy days soaring overhead. They are generally silent, but occasionally call with a muffled bark.

'Ua'u Dark-rumped Petrel



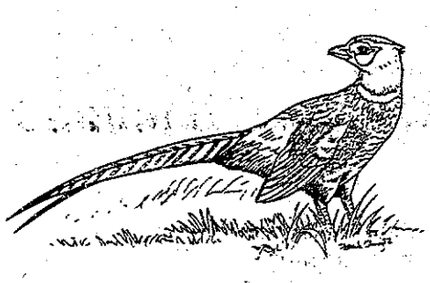
STATUS/RANGE: Endangered. Now restricted to nesting in rocky cliffs on Haleakalā above 8000 ft.
DESCRIPTION: This medium size bird has a dark gray head, back, and wings. The underside of the bird is white. Its bill is black and its feet are pink and black.
DIET: Squid, crustaceans, and fish
AN INTERESTING FACT: The 'Ua'u spends a large part of its life at sea and is hardly seen when not in the nesting colony. Consequently, these birds were assumed extinct until they were re-discovered at Haleakalā in the late 1970's. Their presence in the nesting colony is obvious from their haunting cries audible only at night. Listen for them while camping in the wilderness area of Haleakalā.

Common Non-Native Birds



Chukar

STATUS/RANGE: Common in pasture and shrubland above 1000 ft. Often seen walking along the Park road.
DESCRIPTION: This medium sized bird is grey-brown above and lighter beneath. Its flanks are striped. It has black bands from eye to breast and a red beak and legs.
DIET: Grass, seeds, and berries
AN INTERESTING FACT: Chukars were introduced from Asia and Eastern Europe in 1923.



Ring-Necked Pheasant

STATUS/RANGE: Common in pastures and open shrubland on Haleakalā.
DESCRIPTION: The males have a green head, red wattles, white neck ring, and their bodies are mostly brown with patches of speckles and other coloration. The females are brown with a pale breast and shorter tail.
DIET: Seeds and berries
AN INTERESTING FACT: Pheasants were introduced to Hawai'i from Asia in 1865. They react noisily, by squawking loudly, when disturbed.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY P. CHING AND D. PRATT