

GOLDEN EAGLE

Aquila chrysaetos

non-breeding visitor, vagrant

subspecies?

The Golden Eagle has a circumpolar distribution in the N Hemisphere, with northernmost breeding populations withdrawing during winter to coastal areas and as far as n. Mexico and e. China (Dement'ev and Gladkov 1951b, Cramp and Simmons 1980, AOU 1998). The *Southeastern Hawaiian Islands* hosted one famous individual first observed in Waimea Canyon, *Kaua'i*, in Jan or Feb 1967 and first identified in May 1967 (*E* 28:8-9, 21-22). It had white bases to the primaries and rectrices (*E* 28:21), indicating a first-year or second-year bird when initially identified (Pyle 2008). For the ensuing 17 years this bird was observed throughout the island (*E* 29:103-104), including the Napali Coast (*E* 28:44, [HRBP](#) 0107-0108 showing a large raptor but not identifiable to species), Hanapepe Valley (*E* 33:53-54, 40:15), the Kilauea area (*E* 36:51, 37:64, 39:62), and Ha'ena (*E* 38:57), but seeming to favor remote areas in the drier upland portions of c. W Kaua'i, where it was suspected of feeding primarily on goats and [Red Junglefowl](#). There were unconfirmed rumors that it visited Ni'ihau from time to time in the mid 1970's. As early as 1969 it was noted acting aggressively toward tour helicopters that flew the region (*E* 29:103-104), which elevated its already esteemed status among certain environmentalists. Alas, in May 1984, at the age of 18-19 years, the Golden Eagle met its fate by attacking a helicopter from above, being killed instantly by the rotating blades (*AB* 38:967).

Here the occurrence of this bird is treated as a natural event. It is possible that it may have been an escaped or released individual (AOU 1998), although none of the zoos, captive facilities, or active falconers of Hawaii at the time knew of any importation. It is the only extralimital record of this species listed by the AOU (1998). The subspecies of the Golden Eagle on Kaua'i can not be determined, although descriptions suggest the darker-headed N American subspecies *A.c. canadensis* over paler-headed subspecies of Eurasia.

[Acronyms and Abbreviations](#)

[Literature cited](#)

Citation: Pyle, R.L., and P. Pyle. 2009. The Birds of the Hawaiian Islands: Occurrence, History, Distribution, and Status. B.P. Bishop Museum, Honolulu, HI, U.S.A. Version 1 (31 December 2009) <http://hbs.bishopmuseum.org/birds/rlp-monograph/>