

HWAMEI

Garrulax canorus

Other: Melodious Laughingthrush (<1983), Chinese Thrush, Spectacled Thrush, etc. (see Berger 1981 and AOU 1998)

G.c. canorus

naturalized (non-native) resident, long established

Hwameis are native to c. and se. China (AOU 1998) and were introduced unsuccessfully to s. California in 1941 and successfully to the *Southeastern Hawaiian Islands* sometime before 1900 (AOU 1957, 1998; Long 1981, Lever 1987). Although escapees from "the great fire in the Oriental quarter of Honolulu in 1900" have widely been credited for the source of initial populations on *O'ahu* (Westgate 1931, Caum 1933), A. Newton (in Evenhuis 2007:338), referring to a letter of 17 Sep 1896 from Perkins, writes "I am at a loss to make out your bird introduced from China - but to draw a bow at a venture I would suggest *Garrulax sinensis* [an old name for Hwamei] or something of that sort...". Perkins had been collecting primarily on Moloka'i, Kaua'i, and Hawai'i I in Jun-Sep 1896, but likely got out on O'ahu for a few days during this period in passage. The escaped birds in 1900 reportedly "took to the hills behind" Honolulu and had become thoroughly established on O'ahu by the early 1930s (Caum 1933). They quickly became widespread on the island, although they appear to have declined somewhat after initial expansion (Munro 1944, Shallenberger 1977c; *PoP* 54[11]:14; [Graph](#)), perhaps related to competition from an expanding [White-rumped Shama](#) population (Shallenberger and Vaughn 1978). Specimens from O'ahu and elsewhere in Hawaii are of the nominate subspecies of s. China, *G.c. canorus* (PP specimen examination), and they appear to nest primarily in Mar-Jul (Berger 1972, 1981; *E* 33:91-92).

Unlike some other introduced species Hwameis do not seem capable of natural dispersal; Munro (1944) reported that they cannot spread from one island to another because they tire and fall into the water. However, they were subsequently introduced to several other southeastern islands by the HBAF and [Hui Manu](#). Known introductions include an unknown number brought to *Kaua'i* from O'ahu in 1918 (Caum 1933), 102 to *Mau'i* on 13 May 1926, and 20 to *Hawai'i I* on 30 Sep 1926 (HBAF Report for 1926:55-56, Swedberg 1967a), and additional releases to Hawai'i I in 1923, 1929 (45 birds), and probably the 1930s (Swedberg 1967a, Brennan 1974:169, Lever 1987; *PoP* 49[1]:17, 49:[12]:29; *E* 36:40). Documentation of expansion rates on these three islands is sparse but they appeared to become quickly established following introduction, throughout lush exotic and native forests from sea-level up to 2900 m (but more common < 1500 m) elevation (Caum 1933, Bryan 1937b, Munro 1944, Richardson and Bowles 1964, Berger 1981, Scott et al. 1986). Similar abundances were found in the [HFBS](#) study areas on Kaua'i in 1968-1973, 1981, and 2000 and 1981 (USFWS 1983c, Scott et al. 1986, Forster et al. 2004) and data from the Lihue [Christmas Bird Count](#) indicate no trends, but data from the Kapa'a count indicate a significant decline (after initial expansion) from the 1970s through the 2000s ([Graph](#)). On Maui and Hawai'i, Hwameis may have still been expanding during the [HFBS](#) in 1977-1980 (Scott et al. 1986), or perhaps were showing cyclic population expansions at higher elevations (from more-abundant lower-elevation

populations). There was no trend in numbers recorded on the Volcano [Christmas Bird Count](#) from 1972 to 1977.

Despite numerous references to the presence of Hwameis on Moloka'i (e.g., Peterson 1961; HAS 1975; Long 1981; Lever 1987; Pratt et al. 1987; AOU 1983, 1998), the only evidence from this island since liberation of 12 birds there 22 July 1926 (HBAF Report for 1926:55-56) was that of Richardson (1949), who reported hearing and seeing 1-2 individuals on Olokui Plateau in Feb 1948. Without documentation we consider this record as unsubstantiated, and there have been no substantiated reports from Ni'ihau or Kaho'olawe. On *Lana'i* there were substantiated reports of Hwameis singing in the late 2000s but it is unknown if they were breeding.

[Acronyms and Abbreviations](#)

[Literature cited](#)

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