

COMMON WAXBILL

Estrilda astrild

Other: St. Helena Waxbill

E.a. minor?

naturalized (non-native) resident, recently established

The Common Waxbill is similar in appearance to the [Black-rumped Waxbill](#), which has also been referred to as "Common Waxbill" and "Red-eared Waxbill", setting up initial confusion about the status of these two species in Hawaii (Ord 1982, Falkenmayer 1988). The Common Waxbill is a native of Africa S of the Sahara (Cramp and Perrins 1994a, AOU 1998), and it has been introduced to many islands in the Indian and Atlantic Oceans (Long 1981, Lever 1987, AOU 1998), and to Tahiti (successfully), Fiji (unsuccessfully), and O'ahu (successfully) in the Pacific (Pratt et al. 1987).

On *O'ahu*, Berger (1979, 1981) first noted a flock of 20-25 waxbills in a cane field near Ewa Beach 7 Nov 1973, which he considered to be "Red-eared" (= [Black-rumped](#)) Waxbills at the time, but that were almost certainly Common Waxbills as later determined by Ord (1982). On 17 Dec 1977 five "Red-eared Waxbills" were also noted at Waipi'o Peninsula during the [Christmas Bird Count](#) (*E* 38:90, 91). Through the 1980-2000s, populations in this area increased dramatically, to a high count of 500 on 6 Jul 2005 (see also [Graph](#)). Meanwhile, an individual of what was later determined to be a Common Waxbill (but considered a "Red-eared" Waxbill at the time) was first reported inland from Kuilima Pt near the N tip of the island on 15 Jun 1976 (*E* 37:9). During the mid-1980s the Common Waxbill spread quickly throughout O'ahu to become one of its most abundant landbirds by the 2000s. From the two original source populations, Common Waxbills had spread to Pearl City and Aiea by Dec 1983, Punalu'u by Aug 1984, Diamond Head by Dec 1985, and throughout most of the island by Jul 1986-1988 when Falkenmayer (1988) was in the field (see map included with 'Elepaio 48[12]); it was added to the official Hawaii checklist by Pyle (1988). Besides Waipi'o and Kuilima, flocks of 200 or more have been recorded in the late 1990s and 2000s at Wailua, Kaneohe, Kailua, and Kapiolani Park in Honolulu, and the explosion in numbers is reflected by observations in [Christmas Count](#) data from both the Honolulu ([Graph](#); high count 1321 in 1997) and the Waipi'o ([Graph](#); high count 1726 in 2006). Subspecies of the established population on O'ahu has not been fully diagnosed but specimen examination (PP) indicates that they may be closest to the widespread *E.a. minor* of s. Somalia, e. Kenya, e. Tanzania, Zanzibar, and Mafia I (Clements 2007). Twelve other subspecies have been recognized.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s Common Waxbills began to show up on other Southeastern Islands. Given rapid increases on O'ahu during this period of expansion we consider these as originating from naturally dispersing individuals, although some of the individuals on Maui may have been released (see [Chestnut Munia](#)). On *Kaua'i* 6-8 were first observed in Lawai 5 Feb 1998 and they were reported as common and widespread in lowland areas of at least E Kaua'i through the 2000s; on *Moloka'i* one was observed at Ohiapilo Pond W of Kaunakakai 12 Mar 1997 but none have since been reported; on *Maui* 7 were observed at Kealia Pond 8 Aug 1997, 8 were near Olowalu 3 Jan 1998, and 4-6 were observed there 12 Dec 1998, and they were reported as persistent but uncommon through the 2000s; and on *Hawai'i I* 12 were first observed in Kona 18 Nov

2002 and the species was subsequently seen nearly daily through the 2000s, a small flock was seen at Pu'uanahulu 30 May 2006, and 30+ were observed at Aimakapa Park 1 Jan 2008. It seems likely that this species will become established on one or more of these islands in the future.

[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/>