

RED AVADAVAT

Amandava amandava

Other: Red Munia (<1983), Strawberry Finch, Red Waxbill

A.a. punicea?

naturalized (non-native) resident, long established

This species, commonly referred to as "Strawberry Finch" by aviculturists, is native to Pakistan, India, and Nepal E to se. Asia and Indonesia (Ali and Ripley 1999, Cramp and Perrins 1994a, AOU 1998). It has been successfully introduced to several locations around the world (Long 1981, Lever 1987), including Fiji and the *Southeastern Hawaiian Islands* in the Pacific Basin (Pratt et al. 1987). In Hawaii it is has been established on O'ahu since the early 1900s and also became established on Kaua'i, Hawai'i I, and probably Ni'ihau during the latter part of the 20th century.

On *O'ahu*, Red Avadavats apparently were introduced sometime between 1900 and 1910 (Caum 1933, Swedberg 1967a), during a lull in ornithological activity in Hawaii. They were popular cage birds at the time and the original colonizers were likely escapees. Through the 1950s observations were confined to overgrown grassy fields in the Pearl Harbor area (Caum 1933, HAS 1959-1975, Peterson 1961; *E* 18:6, 21:16; [HRBP](#) 0022) and this remained their stronghold through the mid 1990s, most observations being of small flocks of up to 100 individuals, and peaking with a count of 316 on the Waipi'o [Christmas Bird Count](#) in Dec 1987 ([Graph](#)). During the 1960-1970s occasional reports came in from elsewhere; e.g., of small flocks above Makakilo in Mar-Apr 1960 (*E* 20:80, 89), four at an unknown location within the Honolulu [Christmas Count](#) Circle 26 Dec 1966, 2 near Ewa Beach in Nov 1973 (Berger 1979, 1981), one in Moanalua 23 Aug 1976, up to 15 in Kailua in Dec 1977 (*E* 38:86, 39:20), and 5 on the w. slopes of Diamond Head 22 Sep 1978. On 8 Dec 1979 five were observed for the first time at the Ki'i Unit of JCNWR, and this gradually replaced the Pearl Harbor area (where grass fields were slowly being converted; *E* 37:42) as the primary stronghold of the species, with counts of over 200 observed there by 1987, and up to 100 regularly observed through the 2000s. During the 1980-2000s the species was observed in various places throughout O'ahu, numbers fluctuating apparently in response to grass-seeding events. Notable reports have come from Wailua (up to 100 in 1989-1992), Aina Haina (3 in Dec 1989), Kaena Point (40 in Jun 1989), and Sandy Beach (10 in Oct 2005). Numbers on the Honolulu [Christmas Count](#) are typical of the erratic nature of this species, with up to 40 recorded (primarily around Kailua) in 1999-2004 but few thereafter ([Graph](#)); however, they continued to be seen in widespread locations around O'ahu during the 2000s and are considered well established. Unlike most other introduced landbirds in Hawaii, their breeding season appears to peak in Nov-Feb.

Red Avadavats were first observed on Kaua'i, Maui, and Hawai'i during the mid 1980s, when populations were expanding rapidly on O'ahu and at locations where trans-channel crossings might be expected to arrive, suggesting that they dispersed to these islands on their own. On *Kaua'i* a male was first recorded in Lihue 28 Apr 1984, followed by three in Waimea 14 Mar 1985 and a small flock in Wailua 19 Mar 1988. Small numbers including juveniles have since been recorded between these areas and W to Barking Sands, with flocks of 20-30 observed along the s. coast in 2004-2009, suggesting an expanding breeding population on Kaua'i. One to two birds observed on

Lehua Islet NE of *Ni'ihau* in Aug 2009 suggests colonization of the main island but confirmation of this is needed. On *Maui*, reports from \leq 1936 (Munro 1944) and 1951 (E 12:32) are unsubstantiated, perhaps being related to [Hui Manu](#) releases, rumored to have occurred in 1930-1968 (Lever 1987), but small numbers observed on the w. slope of Mt Haleakala in 1987-1993 were well described. These include 5 in Olinda 19 Nov 1987 (E 48:31), 5 above Olinda (at 1950 m elevation) 14 Dec 1987, several between Makawao and Paia 19 Dec 1989, and 17 in Olinda in Jul 1993. Lack of observations after 1993 suggests they did not become established on Maui. On *Hawai'i I* three avadavats were first encountered at Opolu Point near the north tip of the island 12 Sep 1983 and small numbers continued to be recorded there through Jul 1986. In Sep 1986 large flocks were found on the Saddle Road W of Pohakuloa SP and in Jul 1987 they first turned up in the Pu'uuanahulu-Pu'u-Wa'a-Wa'a area. They have continued to be seen in this latter area through the 2000s, with peak counts of 50-100 recorded in the fall of 1998. Other records of Red Avadavats on Hawai'i include Waimea (5 in Apr 1993), Lapahoehoe (50 on 18 Sep 1998), Pepe'ekeo N of Hilo (present 2001-2009, with flocks of up to 100 noted), the Kona Sewage Treatment Plant (2 in Apr 2002), Holualoa (reported Dec 2004), and Hilo (first reported Nov 2006).

Three subspecies of Red Avadavat have been recognized (Clements 2007) and it is undetermined which subspecies has become established in Hawaii. Ali and Ripley (1999) indicate that the nominate subspecies of the Indian Subcontinent was introduced to several locations including Manila and Singapore. But it seems equally likely that one of the other two subspecies, *flavidiventris* of sw. China (including Yunan) and Myanmar or *punicea* of se. China to Java and Bali, could account for the origin of Hawaiian birds given where other Asian subspecies have originated. Specimens from O'ahu seem to match descriptions of *punicea* best (PP examination), but a more thorough diagnosis is needed.

[Acronyms and Abbreviations](#)

[Literature cited](#)

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