

BLACK MAMO

Drepanis funerea

Other: Perkins Mamo, *Hoa*, 'O'o nuku umu

monotypic

native resident, endemic, extinct

The Black Mamo, endemic to *Moloka'i*, was the only bird species discovered by Robert. L.C. Perkins, generally regarded as the preeminent early naturalist in Hawaii (cf. Evinhuis 2007). Perkins, in the field from 1893 to 1901, followed up Wilson, who discovered 14 new species for the British Museum of Natural History in 1887-1888, and Palmer and his assistants, who discovered 18 new species and subspecies for Lord Rothschild in 1891-1893. Perkins (1895, in Evinhuis 2007:150-151) first saw and collected two Black Mammos on 18 June 1893. After "wading all day in knee-deep mud" he heard "a very different sound, a cry as clear as a bell", which he took to be of the [Bishop 'O'o](#), discovered earlier that year by Palmer. After forcing through the thick vegetation and collecting the pair in rapid sequence, he "saw at once that I had no 'O'o, but a *Hemignathus*-like creature with shortened mandible, and the excessively strong smell which is characteristic of the Drepanididae". Newton (1893) described the species the same year of discovery, using Perkins suggested name "*funerea*" due to its "somber plumage and the sad fate that too probably awaits the species". Wilson later declared the Black Mamo a "remarkable and in many respects very interesting new species of *Drepanis*" and congratulated Perkins "on the ornithological reward of his arduous labors" (Wilson and Evans 1899). Despite humble arguments to the contrary by Newton (1893), Rothschild (1900) afforded this "wonderful" species its own genus, "*Drepanorhamphus*", but most subsequent authors considered this and the [Hawai'i Mamo](#) as congeners under *Drepanis* ([Synonymies](#)).

Perkins (in Evinhuis 2007) shot a total 12 Black Mammos, primarily at high elevations above Makakupa'ia 18 June-13 September 1893, but many could not be found in the dense Moloka'i vegetation, and only five of Perkins' 1893 specimens have subsequently been located in collections (Banko 1979, 1981b). At least ten more specimens of Black Mamo were collected by others, including six by the local taxidermist T. Meyer in 1894 (W.A. Bryan 1908), one of which was brought to the Bremen museum by Shauninsland (1906; see *E* 57:77,79); one more by Perkins in 1896; and three by W.A. Bryan (1908) at the heads of the Moanui and Waialua valleys, the last of which was taken on 7 June 1907 (Banko 1981b). Bryan (1908) spent six days trying to reach this unexplored and nearly impenetrable area, nearly drowning when he slipped while climbing a waterfall wearing only a stiff-brimmed rain hat. Perkins (*E* 5:24), Munro (1944, *E* 5:24, 24:29-30), Richardson (1949), Pratt (1973), Scott et al. (1986), and others spent a great deal of time searching unsuccessfully for Black Mammos in subsequent years, but there have been no further substantiated reports since the last specimen was taken (see *E* 23:56 and 23:64 for unsubstantiated sightings). All specimens were collected in boggy cloud forests among the higher elevations (1200-1525 m) of e. Moloka'i, an area that has since become heavily denuded by the introduced Axis Deer (*Cervus axis*). It was never considered common, although Perkins (1903) recorded up to seven in a day.

James and Olson (1991) have found fossil remains of Black Mamo on Maui, indicating that it may have inhabited all of Maui-Nui in former times. See *E* 21:26 for an unsubstantiated report from Maui.

[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/>