

HAWAI'I 'AMAKIHI

Chlorodrepanis virens

Other names: Amakihi (<1983),
Common Amakihi (1983-1997)

C.v. virens (Hawai'i)
C.v. wilsoni (Moloka'i, Lana'i, Maui)

native resident, endemic

Species recognized by the AOU (1998) as in the genus "*Hemignathus*" have suffered tortured taxonomic histories, reflecting diverse opinions on the relationships of all of the slender-billed, primarily green and yellow, Hawaiian honeycreepers (*cf.* Stejneger 1887a; Wilson and Evans 1899; Rothschild 1900; Bryan and Greenway 1944; Amadon 1950; Greenway 1968; Berger 1972, 1981; Olson and James 1988, 1994, 1995; Pratt 1989a, 2001, 2005, 2009; AOU 1995; Lepson 1997; Conant et al. 1998; Fleisher et al. 1998; Lepson and Johnston 2000; James and Olson 2003; *E* 46:83-84, 49:13-14; [Synonymies](#)). Three groups were combined within *Hemignathus* that likely would be separated once genetic analyses have been completed (AOU 1998) and, indeed, the AOU (2008) split out one of the groups (['Anianiau](#)) into *Magumma* in 2008. Following this line of thought we have chosen to elevate Pratt's (2005; see also 2009) subgenera to genera: *Chlorodrepanis* ('amakihis), *Akialoa* (akialoas), *Magumma* (['Anianiau](#)), and *Hemignathus* (nukupu'us). This results in the resurrection of two long-standing names, which became homonyms with the merging of genera under *Hemignathus* (Olson and James 1988; *cf.* [Kaua'i 'Amakihi](#) and [Akiapola'au](#)). Thus, the 'amakihis are afforded their own genus, *Chlorodrepanis*, a name commonly applied by early ornithologists in Hawaii (see [Synonymies](#)).

Likewise, within the 'amakihis, there has been diverse opinion as to the number of species and subspecies (see [Synonymies](#)), as well as the common names to use. It was even thought in the early 1800s that the 'amakihis were female ['Apapanes](#) (*cf.* Wilson and Evans 1899, [Synonymies](#)). The AOU (1995, 1998), based on studies by Johnson et al. (1989) and Tarr and Fleisher (1993, 1995; see also Shehata et al. 2001), treated the 'amakihis as three species, with the Hawai'i 'Amakihi divided into subspecies, *H.v. virens* of Hawai'i I and *H.v. wilsoni* (Rothschild 1893d) of Moloka'i, Lana'i, and Maui. Were the Hawai'i and [Kaua'i](#) amakihi to be lumped they would be known as the "Common 'Amakihi" (AOU 1998 but see *E* 59:45), to distinguish it from the [Greater 'Amakihi](#). Additional names for the Moloka'i ("*kalaana*") and Lana'i ("*chloridoides*") 'amakihis, applied by Wilson (Wilson and Evans 1899; [Synonymies](#)), have proven to be synonyms of his own namesake, *wilsoni* of Maui (Rothschild 1893d, 1900).

Beginning with Cook's third voyage (King 1779, Cook and King 1784, Stresemann 1950, Beaglehole 1967:630, Medway 1981), the Hawai'i 'Amakihi has been noted as common to abundant on *Hawai'i I*. Cook's naturalists apparently noted them down to sea level at Kealakekua Bay, and the Challenger Expedition found them in Hilo in 1875 (Sclater 1878, 1881), but by the late 1800s they were reported only at elevations of 300 m and above (Rothschild 1900) or 425 m and above (Perkins 1903), being absent at sea level due to a plague of human-related factors (Lindsey et al. 1998). Although perhaps withdrawing slightly further to higher elevations during the 1900s and/or disappearing from certain areas (*cf.* Dunmire 1962), the Hawai'i 'Amakihi continues to be found commonly in all native habitats throughout the island, to the limits of vegetation up

to 3300 m elevation (*E* 1[4]:1, Banko 1984a). Scott et al. (1986) estimated a population of 870,000 within their [HFBS](#) study areas in 1977-1979, 40% of which occurred in the Kona area, 20% in the Hamakua area, 18% in the Ka'u area, and 22% in other areas including the Kohala Mts. Highest densities were recorded in upper-elevation dry forests of Mauna Kea. [Christmas Bird Count](#) data indicate a fluctuating and slightly (but non-significantly) declining population in the Volcano vicinity ([Graph](#)); variation in counts might reflect response to phenologies of flowering plants (Dunsmire 1961, van Riper 1984). Beginning in the late 1970s 'amakihis were noted down to sea level along the se. coast, culminating in a healthy breeding population by 2003, and suggesting that a resistance to avian diseases has developed (Cann et al 1996, Klein et al. 2004, Woodworth et al. 2005, Speigel et al. 2006, Foster et al. 2007, Gorresen et al. 2009; *HE* 14[2]:1,10-11). Populations have declined, however, in mid-elevation regions E of Kilauea (Camp et al. *in* Gorresen et al. 2009), and at Hakalau NWR (Camp et al. 2009). Banko (1979) lists the whereabouts of 502 specimens from Hawai'i I.

On *Moloka'i* the Hawai'i 'Amakihi was considered common by ornithologists in the late 1800s, who collected at least 13 specimens (Banko 1979, 1984a), but there is little indication where on the island they occurred at the time. Bryan (1908) noted them commonly throughout the forested sections of the island and down to sea level along the remote n. coast, but by 1935 Munro (1944:96) recorded none during a survey of the island. They have since been found to persist in small numbers in the highest elevations of Moloka'i, including Pu'u Kolekole, along Papaala Pali ridge, and on Olokui Plateau (Richardson 1949, Scott et al. 1977; *E* 14:76, 23:56, 24:17, 24:46, 33:68, 33:99). Scott et al. (1986) estimated a population of 1800 birds on Moloka'i during the [HFBS](#) in 1979-1980, including good densities at lower elevations in Pelekunu and Wailau valleys. Surveys in the 1980-2000s indicated little evidence of population change on Moloka'i (Lindsey et al. 1998, Camp et al. *in* Gorresen et al. 2009).

Wilson (1890a; Wilson and Evans 1899) was the first to collect 'amakihis on *Lana'i*, obtaining four specimens in 1888 in Waiapa'a Gulch (Banko 1979). In 1894 Perkins (1903) found them to be "abundant" in upper-elevation forests throughout Lana'i and collected six additional specimens. Munro (1944, 2007, *in* Gregory 1928) noted them commonly from 1911 through 1927 but observed a noticeable decline beginning in the late 1920s and continuing through the late 1930s. Munro speculated that avian disease must have been the primary culprit as the forests remained essentially unchanged during this period. The only other report of 'amakihis from Lana'i were of 2 observed between Hauola and Maunalei gulches in late Feb 1976 (Hirai 1978b). Scott et al. (1986; see also Kepler and Scott 1980) recorded none on Lana'i during the [HFBS](#) in 1979 and they are presumed extirpated there.

On *Maui*, Perkins (1903) and others collected a total of 34 specimens in the late 1800s (Banko 1979) and noted them generally to be common, although elevational details are scarce. McGregor (1902) remarked that they were not found below about 270 m in the W Maui Mts. Observers continued to record them regularly during the 1900s (e.g., Munro 1944 and *in* Gregory 1928), although Scott and Sincock (1977) noted that they were outnumbered by [Apapane](#) 21:1 near Olinda 30 Apr-1 May 1975. During the [HFBS](#) in 1980, Scott et al. (1986) estimated populations of 44,000 and 2800 in the E and W Maui Mts, respectively. Simon et al. (2002) found slightly (but non-significantly) higher densities than were found by Scott et al. in the Upper Hanawi watershed during

1995-1997, and densities continued to increase in both E and W Maui through the 2000s (Camp et al. *in* Gorresen et al. 2009). 'Amakihi was one of several species showing elevational movements on Maui, lower densities being recorded at higher elevations during Jul-Sep, when birds presumably had dispersed down-slope according to bloom phenologies (Simon et al. 2002). However, 'amakihis do not occur at lower elevations, as on Hawai'i I and Moloka'i, and they are virtually absent from the S slopes of Haleakala, where ungulates have decimated the native, dry-forest vegetation (Scott et al. 1986).

[Acronyms and Abbreviations](#)

[Literature cited](#)

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