

KONA GROSBEAK

Chloridops kona

Other: Grosbeak Finch (<1988), Kona Finch

monotypic

native resident, endemic, extinct

The Kona Grosbeak is one of at least three species of *Chlorodops* that likely inhabited most or all Southeastern Hawaiian Islands at the time of Polynesian contact (Olson 199b, Pratt 2005); subfossil evidence of 1-2 other species each has been found on Kaua'i, O'ahu, and Maui (Olson and James 1982b, James 1987, James and Olson 1991, Burney et al. 2001, James 2004). Various taxonomist (e.g., Amadon 1950, Greenway 1968) have lumped *Chlorodops* and other finch-billed Drepanines with *Loxoides* or *Psittirostra* ([Synonymies](#)) but the maintenance of several genera to separate these groups of birds is convenient, unless subfossil evidence of intermediates are found (Olson 1999b) and recent taxonomies have recognized *Chloridops* (AOU 1998, James 2004, Pratt 2005). The disproportionately large bill of *Chlorodops*, which it used to crack, with a clicking sound, the hard seeds of the naio tree (*Myoporum sandwicense*), has attracted attention and serves to set this group of species apart (a congener in the subfossil record of O'ahu, *C. regiskongi*, had the largest bill of any Drepanine; James and Olson 1991). A printer's misdirective in Perkins (1893) referred to *Chloridops* as "Palila" (*cf. E* 2:31), an error repeated by Wilson and Evans (1899) and Henshaw (1902a). Perhaps as a result the species was not given an English name until Amadon (1950) applied "Grosbeak Finch", subsequently emended to Kona Grosbeak (see Berger 1981, Pratt 2005).

Scott Wilson (1888) observed two Kona Grosbeaks and collected the type specimen on 21 Jun 1887 while staying in the vicinity of Pu'u Lehua Ranch (1,470 m elevation) on the slopes of Hualalai above Captain Cook (Wilson and Evans 1899; Banko 1979, 1986). He observed no others during a four-week stay and he considered them "extremely rare" (Munro 1944). But Palmer and Munro found them fairly commonly in this area in 1891-1892, collecting at least 31 specimens, including 12 on 12 Oct 1891 out of small groups (5-10 birds) observed among "kipukas" (oases of vegetation) within a large lava flow S of the ranch (*E* 2:31). Palmer also collected one and observed others along the slopes of Mauna Loa, as far S as Ka'ohe Ranch (1600 m elevation) where he also collected a [Greater Koa-Finch](#). Perkins (1893, 1903) collected another 21 specimens near Pu'u Lehua and along the nw. slopes of Mauna Loa in Jun-Sep 1892, with three collected by him in Sep of that year being the last observations of Kona Grosbeak on record (rumors that Perkins observed them in 1894 seem unfounded). Richards and Baldwin (1953) and others (*cf. Scott et al.* 1986) searched for them without success. All records appear to be from elevations of 1400-1700 m (Olson 1999b). Grant (1995) eulogized the Kona Grosbeak and speculated upon reasons for its demise.

[Acronyms and Abbreviations](#)

[Literature cited](#)

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