

LESSER 'AKIALOA

Akialoa obscura

Other: 'Akialoa (<1983), Hawaiian 'Akialoa (1983-1997)

monotypic

native resident, endemic, extinct

The 'akialoos represent four taxa that have variously been considered one, two, three, or four species (reviewed by Olson and James 1995, Lepson and Johnston 2000, Pratt 2005; see [Synonymies](#)). The AOU (1997, 1998), based on Olson and James (1982b) considered the 'akialoa from Hawai'i (*obscura*) as Lesser 'Akialoa, a species distinct from the three forms found on Kaua'i, O'ahu, and Lana'i, which were considered subspecies of [Greater 'Akialoa](#). Once more genetic and osteological evidence has been analyzed, however, these could become recognized as four separate species (*cf.* Olson and James 1995, Pratt and Pratt 2001, James and Olson 2003, Pratt 2005) in the genus *Akialoa* (see [Hawai'i 'Amakihi](#), Olson and James 1995). The 'akialoos apparently once dominated the forests of the *Southeastern Hawaiian Islands* but quickly succumbed to anthropogenic pressures that accelerated during the 1800s and early 1900s. Including subfossil evidence, at least seven taxa of 'akialoos have been identified, with one to two taxa on each of the forested islands (Olson and James 1982b, James and Olson 1991, James 2004).

First post-contact mention of Lesser 'Akialoa was made by C. Clerke (*in* King 1779) during Cook's third voyage, as a bird that was "entirely green, with a tinge of yellow, and is called *akaiearooa*". Beaglehole (1967) mistook this passage as in reference to [Hawai'i 'Amakihi](#) (see Wilson 1977). King felt that this, the [Hawai'i 'O'o](#), and the [I'iwi](#) were in the same family of "honey-suckers". The first specimens were collected at the time (Cook and King 1784), while naturalists were on a several-day excursion inland from Kealahou Bay, *Hawai'i I*, in Jan-Feb 1779, and described by Latham (1781-1785) as the "Hook-billed green Creeper" (Gmelin 1789, Stresemann 1950, Medway 1981, Banko 1984c; [Synonymies](#)); Gray (1857) believed these early specimens to represent female I'iwis (Dole 1879). Reference by Cook to a "Green Dove" in the forests may also have been based on 'akialoos (Beaglehole 1967:630).

With the exception of Wilson (1890a; Wilson and Evans 1899), 19th-century naturalists considered the Lesser 'Akialoa to be a common and widespread species in mid to upper-elevation (360-1800 m) forests throughout Hawai'i I (Peale 1848; Rothschild 1900; Henshaw 1902a; Perkins 1903, *in* Evenhuis 2007:276; Munro 1944). By 1901, however, Henshaw (1902a) seemed to be noting declines in certain areas. Banko (1979) and Lepson and Johnston (2000) give information on some 115-120 specimens collected during this period. The last two specimens, obtained by C.E. Blacow and L.E. Miller at Umikoa (315 elevation) along the n. Hamakua coast in Sep 1903, represent the last confirmed record of the Lesser 'Akialoa; there is an unsubstantiated report of a vocalization from the e. slope of Mauna Kea in 1940 (*E* 23:57; *cf.* Baldwin 1941). Based on Poisson analyses of persistence probabilities using confirmed and unconfirmed records, Elphick et al. (2009) estimated that the Lesser 'Akialoa went extinct in 1907, with an upper limit of 1915.

[Acronyms and Abbreviations](#)

[Literature cited](#)