

RUDDY TURNSTONE

Arenaria interpres

Hawaiian: 'Akekeke

monotypic

non-breeding visitor, regular winterer

The Ruddy Turnstone breeds in arctic regions around the world and has a circumtropical winter distribution, south to S. America, Africa, and Australia (Dement'ev and Gladkov 1951c, Cramp and Simmons 1983, Higgins and Davies 1996, AOU 1998, Nettleship 2000). Along with the [Pacific Golden Plover](#) it is the most common wintering migrant throughout the Pacific Basin (Stickney 1943), including Wake and Johnston atolls (Amerson and Shelton 1976, Rauzon et al. 2008). Pacific Golden-Plovers and Ruddy Turnstones often flock together (e.g., [HRBP](#) 0855), but unlike the plover there are clear peaks of fall and spring transient Ruddy Turnstones through the Hawaiian islands, indicating substantial stopover of birds that winter farther south in the Pacific (see Thompson 1973). Migration occurs in late Jul-Nov and Mar-early May, with peaks in late Aug and late Apr. Winter numbers appear to be about half those of peak migration, and small flocks of overwintering birds occur in wetlands throughout the islands. A bird off Kona 24 Nov 2014 ([HRBP](#) 6455-6458) was thought at first to be a [Black Turnstone](#) but later determined to be a Ruddy Turnstone or, possibly, a hybrid, based on better photographs.

First mention of Ruddy Turnstones in Hawaii was probably that of Ellis (1782:93), who noted that a shore party during Cook's third voyage encountered "several flocks of black and white plover" feeding in taro fields near Kealakekua Bay on 27 Jan 1779. They were considered common by the very early naturalists (Bloxam 1827a, Peale 1848, Cassin 1858, Gray 1859, Dole 1869) and are currently found in a variety of habitats including lawns, beaches, ploughed areas, and upland pastures as high as 2100 m elevation on the slopes of Mauna Kea. Although formerly hunted (Henshaw 1902a), Ruddy Turnstones appear not to have been as favored or as easily procured as golden-plovers; thus, their populations may not have been as adversely affected. They were considered a benefit to agricultural interests by eating cutworms and other pests, which was good reason not to shoot them (Munro 1927). Seventeen turnstones banded on St. George I, Alaska, in the summer of 1965 were recovered in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, including one that reached French Frigate on 27 Aug 1965, just four days after banding (Thompson 1973). An individual color-banded NW of Nome, Alaska, 5 June 2004 was found 26 Sep 2004 near Kona, Hawai'i I ([HRBP](#) 5187), and then at Aimakapa Pond through the winter of 2005-2006.

Ruddy Turnstones have been recorded in every group of the *Northwestern Hawaiian Islands* (cf. Clapp and Woodward 1968; [HRBP](#) 0507-0508, 0855, 5430, 5593). Higher counts, most recorded during the POBSP project (see [Seabird Page](#)), include 150 on *Kure* in Nov 1963; 650 at *Midway* in Oct 1982 (P. Pyle 1984) and a reported 5,000 there in Apr 1912 (Fisher 1949); 670 at *Pearl and Hermes* in Aug 1967; 15 at *Gardner Pinnacles* in May 1923 (Wetmore in Olson 1996); 1-2,000 on *Lisianski* in Mar 1965; 5,000-10,000 on *Laysan* in Dec 1936 and 5000 in Apr 1915, Feb 1963, Sep 1967, and Mar 1979 (50,000 reported in Munro 1944 is an error), and 2746 there 21 Jan 2012; 833 at *French Frigate* in Dec 2000; 50 on *Necker* in Mar 1965; and 200 on *Nihoa* in Mar 1968 (see also Vanderbuilt and De Schauensee 1941, Conant 1983b). High winter counts have included 3000-5000 during the POBSP on Laysan (Ely and Clapp 1973) and 200 on Midway, 26 Jan 1999, while high counts of over-summering individuals have included

300 on Laysan 7-12 Jun 1967, 102 at Midway 18 Jun 1993, and 89 at French Frigate 31 May 1988. The brine fly population in Laysan's central lagoon likely provides an abundant food source for this species, including stop-over transients and wintering birds; between 1,010 and 2,936 were recorded on Christmas Counts there during 1999-2007. A count of 385 at Midway on 7 Jul 1993 likely included an early pulse of southbound migrants.

In the *Southeastern Hawaiian Islands* (cf. [HRBP](#) 0859, 1048, 5187, 5210, 5326, 5842), higher single-location counts include "several thousands" on *Ni'ihau* 12-16 Aug 1947 (Fisher 1951); 131 at Lihue, *Kaua'i* 5 Jan 1998; 886 at Kualoa, *O'ahu* 29 Apr 1993, 700 at Waipi'o, 31 Aug 1980, and 397 at Nu'upia Ponds, KMCAS, 17 Dec 2011; 56 at Ohioipilo Pond, *Moloka'i* 9 Aug 2004 and 34 at Kalaupapa Peninsula 18 Dec 2014; 500 at Kealia NWR, *Maui* 10 Apr 1992; 50 near Paliamano, *Lana'i* 5 Nov 1977; a "small flock" on *Kaho'olawe* (Gon et al. 1992); and over 200 near Hilo, *Hawai'i I* 17 Mar 1981; high single-location winter counts include 131 at Lihue, *Kaua'i* 5 Jan 1998, 100 at Kahalui, *Maui* 12 Dec 1995, and 278 at Nu'upia Pond, *O'ahu* 21 Dec 1980; and high counts of over-summering birds include 140 at the Ki'i Unit of JCNWR 10 Jun 1971 (*E* 32:12) and 72 at the Honouliuli Unit of PHNWR, *O'ahu*, 7 Jun 2001; 30 at Kanaha Pond, *Maui*, 8 Jun 1976; and 35 at Kona, *Hawai'i*, 4 Jun 1998. A count of 187 at Waimanalo, *O'ahu* 5 Jul 1991 may have included early fall migrants. Munro (*E* 1[2]:3) also observed "large numbers" on *Ni'ihau*, indicating that higher numbers may be found here than elsewhere in the Southeastern Islands, at least when seasonal wetlands are present.

Trends were not notable on [Christmas Bird Counts](#), except around Honolulu, where numbers appeared to decline from the 1940s to the early 1970s and increased from the 1970s through the mid-2010s ([Graph](#)). [DOFAW Waterbird Surveys](#) during 1980-2007 also indicate a consistent increase in numbers throughout the Southeastern Islands, from 250-500 in the 1980s, to 300-710 in the 1990s, to 500-925 in the 2000s, with an overall high tally of about 925 in both Jan 2002 and Aug 2006. Higher migration-period and winter [DOFAW](#) counts for each island include: *Kaua'i* (95 in Aug 1993 and 65 in Jan 2004), *O'ahu* (550 in Aug 1996 and 525 in Jan 2004), *Moloka'i* (82 in Aug 1994 and 46 in Jan 1997), *Lana'i* (53 in Aug 1993 and 99 in Jan 1995), *Maui* (117 in Aug 1998 and 92 in Jan 2007), and *Hawai'i I* (180 in Aug 2006 and 82 in Jan 2007).

Two weakly distinguished subspecies of Ruddy Turnstone have been recognized (Nettleship 2002), although differences may be related more to molting patterns than to phenotypic variation (Pyle 2008), and we here consider the species monotypic. Most literature (e.g., AOU 1957, Higgins and Davies 1996) and many specimen labels have assumed "*A.i. interpres*" of Europe and w. Alaska to occur in the Hawaiian Islands but "*morinella*" of n.Alaska-Canada is also likely, and no critical diagnoses of specimens from Hawaii have been attempted. The trinomial *oahuensis*, applied by Bloxham (1827a) based on a single specimen he reportedly collected in Honolulu during the 1825 voyage of the *Blonde*, possibly could be resurrected (Portenko 1972, Gibson and Kessel 1997) if the specimen could be located and identified to one of the supposed subspecies (cf. Olson 1996a).

[Acronyms and Abbreviations](#)

[Literature cited](#)

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