

COMMON WAXBILL

Estrilda astrild

Other: St. Helena Waxbill

E.a. minor?

naturalized (non-native) resident, recently established

The Common Waxbill is similar in appearance to the [Black-rumped Waxbill](#), which has also been referred to as "Common Waxbill" and "Red-eared Waxbill", setting up initial confusion about the status of these two species in Hawaii (Ord 1982, Falkenmayer 1988). The Common Waxbill is a native of Africa S of the Sahara (Cramp and Perrins 1994a, AOU 1998), and it has been introduced to many islands in the Indian and Atlantic Oceans (Long 1981, Lever 1987, AOU 1998), and to Tahiti (successfully), Fiji (unsuccessfully), and O'ahu (successfully) in the Pacific (Pratt et al. 1987).

On *O'ahu*, Berger (1979, 1981) first noted a flock of 20-25 waxbills in a cane field near Ewa Beach 7 Nov 1973, which he considered to be "Red-eared" (= [Black-rumped](#)) Waxbills at the time, but that were almost certainly Common Waxbills as later determined by Ord (1982). On 17 Dec 1977 five "Red-eared Waxbills" were also noted at Waipi'o Peninsula during the [Christmas Bird Count](#) (E 38:90, 91). Subsequently, populations of Common Waxbills in wc. O'ahu continued to increase through the 1980-mid 2010s (see [Graph](#)), including a single-location high count 500 near Waipi'o 6 Jul 2005 and 4000 along the Poamoho Trail above Wahiawa 28 Jul 2012. Meanwhile, an individual of what was later determined to be a Common Waxbill (but considered a "Red-eared" Waxbill at the time) was first reported inland from Kuilima Pt near the N tip of the island on 15 Jun 1976 (E 37:9). During the mid-1980s the Common Waxbill spread quickly throughout O'ahu to become one of its most abundant landbirds by the 2000-mid 2010s. From the original source populations, Common Waxbills had spread to Pearl City and Aiea by Dec 1983, Punalu'u by Aug 1984, Diamond Head by Dec 1985, and throughout most of the island lowlands by Jul 1986-1988 (Falkenmayer 1988; see map included with 'Elepaio 48[12]), being added to the official Hawaii checklist by Pyle (1988). Besides Waipi'o and Kuilima, flocks of 200 or more were recorded in the late 1990s-mid 2010s at Ewa Beach, Waipahu, Wailua, Kaneohe, Kailua, Diamond Head, and Kapiolani Park, with a single-location high count of 921 on the Mokapu Peninsula 20 Dec 2014; the increase in numbers in SE O'ahu is reflected by [Christmas Count](#) data from Honolulu ([Graph](#)). Subspecies of the established population on O'ahu has not been fully diagnosed but specimen examination (PP) indicates that they may be closest to the widespread *E.a. minor* of s. Somalia, e. Kenya, e. Tanzania, Zanzibar, and Mafia I (Clements et al. 2016); 14 other subspecies have been recognized.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, Common Waxbills began to show up on other Southeastern Islands. Given rapid increases on O'ahu during this period of expansion, we consider these as likely originating from naturally dispersing individuals, although some of the individuals on Maui may have been released (see [Chestnut Munia](#)). On *Kaua'i*, 6-8 Common Waxbills were first observed in Lawai 5 Feb 1998 and small numbers have been reported in E Kaua'i between Kalaheo and Kilauea Pt through 2016, but not increasing or in numbers to yet consider the population established there. On *Moloka'i* individuals were observed at or near Ohiapilo Pond W of Kaunakakai 12 Mar 1997 and 21 Dec 2011 but none have otherwise been reported. On *Maui*, 7 were observed at Kealia

Pond 8 Aug 1997, 8 were near Olowalu 3 Jan 1998, 4-6 were observed there 12 Dec 1998, and they were reported as persistent but uncommon in the Kealia Pond and Kihei areas through the mid-2010s, often among [Orange-cheeked Waxbills](#) (e.g., [HRBP 6768](#)). During 2010-2016 additional Common Waxbills were reported in Kahalui (Jun 2013), Haiku (Aug 2013 and Jan 2016), Ka'anapali (Oct 2013 and Aug 2015), and Makawao (well described, 10 Dec 2016), if correctly identified, perhaps indicating the spreading of this species on Maui toward population establishment, as on O'ahu and Hawai'i I. On ***Hawai'i I*** 12 Common Waxbills were first confirmed to species in Kona 18 Nov 2002 and they have steadily increased in this area through the mid-2010s, with a high count of 90 there 15 Feb 2016. They also spread rapidly from this area, reaching Pu'uuanahulu Country Club near Pu'u Wa'a Wa'a by May 2006, Captain Cook and Kealakakua Bay by Dec 2011 (with a single-location high count of 115 at Captain Cook 31 Jan 2016), Honaunau NHP by Mar 2012, Waimea by Apr 2012, Hilo by Feb 2013, South Point by Mar 2014, and Hawaii Volcanoes NP by Jun 2014, with increasing counts (up to 50 or more) at these and other widespread locations through 2016. Given this range expansion and population trajectory we consider Common Waxbill established on Hawai'i I.

[Acronyms and Abbreviations](#)

[Literature cited](#)

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