

## ORANGE-CHEEKED WAXBILL

*Estrilda melpoda*

**naturalized (non-native) resident, recently established**

*E.m. melpoda?*

Orange-cheeked Waxbills are native to W Africa, from Senegal and Gambia to Chad and Zambia (AOU 1998). Introduced populations have become established in Bermuda, Puerto Rico, and the N. Marianas Is (Long 1981, Lever 1987, AOU 1998, Wiles 2005), as well as the *Southeastern Hawaiian Islands*, where populations persisted on O'ahu during the 1960-2010s and on Maui during the 1990-2010s; we consider the Maui population to have become established although competition with [Common Waxbills](#) could cause its populations to diminish in the future. Orange-cheeked Waxbills are not as challenging to separate as [Black-rumped](#) and [Common](#) waxbills (Ord 1982, Falkenmayer 1988), but it is similar enough to the two species that not all reports of Orange-cheeked Waxbills can be assumed correctly identified.

On O'ahu, Orange-cheeked Waxbills along with several other released cage birds were noted for the first time on 15 Oct 1965, when 8 (4 pairs) were noted along the Na La'au trail on the w. slopes of Diamond Head (*E* 26:54). Numbers increased in this area, with 30 recorded on the 2 Jan 1966 Honolulu [Christmas Bird Count](#) (*E* 26:78), and 23-32 observed on each count between 1967 and 1970 (see [Graph](#)). Thereafter counts in the Diamond Head area gradually dwindled, the last verified reports occurring in 1988-1989. First reports of Orange-cheeked Waxbills in windward O'ahu occurred 23 Dec 1986, when three were observed in Kaneohe. Numbers along the windward coast, from Punalu'u to Mokapu Peninsula, remained small but stable (15-25 regularly observed) through the mid 2000s, after which they declined (see [Graph](#)), with the last records being of 5-6 individuals at the Kaneohe WTP 23 Oct 2013-3 Jan 2014 ([HRBP](#) 6767). Elsewhere on O'ahu, reports of Orange-cheeked Waxbills from various locations in 1983-2014 could be correct but were not described, and may have pertained to transcription errors or confusion with [Common Waxbills](#). Although Pyle (1992), AOU (1998), and Pyle and Pyle (2009) listed Orange-cheeked Waxbill for O'ahu, given their dwindling numbers and the possibility of additional cage releases, we no longer consider them as having been established on this island (see also [Black-rumped Waxbill](#) on Hawai'i I).

The first report of Orange-cheeked Waxbills from *Maui* was of five birds observed near Pu'unene 15 Aug 1989. The lack of records from Moloka'i suggests that these birds originated from a separate release on Maui rather than dispersing on their own from O'ahu. Numbers in c. Maui gradually increased during the 1990-2000s, with high counts of 50 or more recorded near Kealia Pond NWR in 2005-2010 and counts of 20 or more there through 2016 (*cf.* [HRBP](#) 5948-5950, 6768). The geographic area for sightings on Maui during this period ranged from Kihei to Lahaina and the Waihe'e wetlands NW of Kahalui, with reports near Hana 20 Sep 2014 and at Kapalua 19 Jan 2015 requiring verification (see [Common Waxbill](#)). Reports from other islands, likely pertaining to local escapes if correct, include Kapa'a, Kaua'i in Oct 1975 (*E* 36:153), along the NE coast of Kaua'i 7 Feb 2011, and Hilo, Hawai'i I in Jan 1984.

The subspecies of the Hawaii populations have not been determined for certain but photographs (e.g., [HRBP](#) 5948-5950) suggest the widespread nominate subspecies (at

least on Maui) as opposed to the more restricted *E.m. tschadensis* from the N portions of the species range.

### [Acronyms and Abbreviations](#)

### [Literature cited](#)

Citation: Pyle, R.L., and P. Pyle. 2017. The Birds of the Hawaiian Islands: Occurrence, History, Distribution, and Status. B.P. Bishop Museum, Honolulu, HI, U.S.A. Version 2 (1 January 2017)  
<http://hbs.bishopmuseum.org/birds/rlp-monograph/>