Red-cheeked Cordonbleu *Uraeginthus bengalus*

hypothetical, naturalized (non-native) population not established

Other: Red-cheeked Waxbill, Common Cordonbleu   subspecies?

Red-cheeked Cordonbleus are native to Africa, from Senegal and Somalia S to Angola and Tanzania (Cramp and Perrins 1994a, AOU 1998). They were unsuccessfully introduced to Tahiti, the Cape Verde Is, and the Southeastern Hawaiian Islands (Long 1981, Lever 1987), where a small population on Hawai'i I was at times considered established. Red-cheeked Cordonbleus were also observed during 1965-1978 on O'ahu but confusion existed between it and other species of cordonbleu (see below).

On Hawai'i I six pairs of Red-cheeked Cordonbleus were apparently released at Pu'u Wa'a Wa'a ranch in May 1966 (Swedberg 1967a) and by Jul 1973-1978 they were noted in this area and at Pu'uanahulu (*E* 34:3). Scott et al. (1986) estimated 30-50 birds in the HFBS survey area in 1978. During the 1980-early 2000s observations were confined to these two areas, with occasional high counts of 20 or more and indications of fluctuating populations but no obvious trends in numbers. One or two individuals observed in the Kona area beginning in 1987 (E 47:95) may have been of released cage birds. During the 2000s observations declined, with the last substantiated sighting being from Feb 2006 near the entrance to Pu'u Wa'a Wa'a ranch. Although considered established by Pyle (1979, 1983, 1988, 1992), the AOU (1998), and Pyle and Pyle (2009), following the species apparent extirpation, we now no longer consider that this fast-breeding Estrilid finch was ever established enough to be placed on the Hawaii list. At the end of 2016 the HBRC was also re-considering questions of establishment of this species and Black-rumped Waxbill.

On O'ahu, the three similar species of Cordonbleu (Clements 2007) were identified among Estrilid finches and other introduced cage birds on the w. slopes of Diamond Head in the mid-1960s (see Non-Established List), leading to some confusion about when Red-cheeked Cordonbleu was first detected and how its population developed (Berger 1981; *cf.* HAS 1967-1975 and *E* 27:29, 36:92, 36:129, 36:144-146). Cordonbleus of unknown species were first reported along the Na Laau Trail 15-16 Oct 1965 (2 pair; *E* 26:54), followed by observations of 3 on 2 Jan 1966 (*E* 26:78), and a few males and many more females and young birds, including some carrying nesting material, on 13-15 March 1966 (*E* 26:112). Descriptions of a male observed in early Sep 1966 on the e. side of Diamond Head (E 27:32) indicate that it was a Red-cheeked Cordonbleu, but subsequent observations of low numbers (2-17) on the Honolulu Christmas Bird Count (Graph) and otherwise in 1967-1978 were identified variously as all three species (see Non-Established List) or not identified to species. By 1976 many observations were of confirmed Red-cheeked Cordonbleus, and a population of 30-50 individuals was estimated in 1976 (*E* 38:5). Thereafter the population extinguished quickly, apparently with cessation of feeding by those in the Diamond Head neighborhood, with the last report being of a single bird on 12 Mar 1978 (E 38:132); a specimen collected in Feb 1993 (BPBM 159022; HRBP 5952-5954, second from top) may have been a separate escape. Males observed at Haunama Bay in 1988 and Moanalua in 1993 were also likely local escapes, as was one seen in Kihei, Maui, in 1993.

It has not been determined which of the five recognized subspecies of Red-cheeked Cordonbleus (Clements 2007) the Hawai'i I releases pertained, but specimens from Hawai'i I (HRBP 5951 and 5952-5954, top specimen) appear to be darker than

others collected on O'ahu ([HRBP](#) 5952-5954, bottom three specimens), which in turn show wide variation in plumage and perhaps represent a mixture of subspecies.

[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/