

## AFRICAN SILVERBILL

*Euodice cantans*

Other: Warbling Silverbill (<2002)

*E.c. cantans*

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

The African Silverbill was long known in Hawaii as the "Warbling Silverbill (*Lonchura malabarica*)" until Indian and African taxa were officially split (see Goodwin 1982, Restall 1996 for details), the African species becoming *L. cantans* at the time. Nomenclatural confusion (see Falkenmayer 1988 for details) resulted in the AOU (1998) mistakenly attributing Hawaiian populations to White-throated (Indian) Silverbill (*L. malabarica*) but this was sorted out by the AOU (2000), and AOU (2014) then recognized the genus *Eudoce* as distinct from *Lonchura* for the silverbills. The African Silverbill is native to Africa S of the Sahara Desert (Goodwin 1982, Restall 1996) and was successfully introduced to the *Southeastern Hawaiian Islands* in the 1970s, whereas introduced populations of White-throated Silverbill occur on Puerto Rico and elsewhere in the Caribbean (Long 1981, Lever 1987, AOU 2000). A specimen collected in Hawaii prior to 1878 may have been of a White-throated Silverbill (see [Non-Established List](#))

African Silverbills were first introduced to Hawai'i I, probably in the mid 1960s, and were observed almost sequentially northward through all Southeastern Islands indicating natural dispersal; individuals observed up to 30 km off the Kona coast 28 Oct 2009 and 1 Nov 2011 ([HRBP](#) 5947, 6773), two that landed on a [HICEAS](#) survey vessel 180 km SW of Kaula Rock off Ni'ihau 31 Oct 2010 ([HRBP](#) 6769-6770), and one in Nihoa I waters (see below) is testimony to their ability to cross open-water channels. On *Hawai'i I*, the first report was of a specimen found near a water tank in the Pu'uanahulu Game Management Area 2 May 1972 (Berger 1975d, 1981; *E* 36:27), indicating that they were likely released in the mid-1960s at the nearby Pu'u Wa'a Wa'a Ranch, where few observations were made during the late 1960s-early 1970s (see [Yellow-fronted Canary](#) and [Lavender Waxbill](#)). On 10 Mar 1973 a flock was seen at the same water tank as the specimen was found, they were found commonly breeding from Puako to N of Kawaihae in Mar-Apr 1974 (Berger 1975d), and they were observed and found "abundantly" around Pohakuloa SP in fall 1974 (*E* 35:55, 38:100). In Feb 1978 several hundred were seen near Waikoloa and "hundreds if not thousands" were found near Hawi (*E* 39:20). In May-Jul 1978 Scott et al. (1986) found them in dry habitats on the slopes of Mt Hualalai and up to 3100 m elevation on Mauna Kea, estimating a population of 4,000 individuals within [HFBS](#) study areas. In Nov 1979 they were found at Keahou S of Kona (*E* 41:78), by Dec 1979 they had reached Bird Park in Volcano NP (*E* 41:78), and by Mar 1980 they were observed at South Point (*E* 41:78). Through the mid-2010s they remained common through these areas on the leeward side of Hawai'i; high counts during 2010-2016 were of 160 at Pohakuloa SP along Saddle Road 14 Oct 2014 and 1000 at Pu'uanahulu Country Club 10 Jan 2015, although single-day counts otherwise were primary < 60 during these years. Berger (1975d) diagnosed birds on Hawai'i I as nominate *E.c. cantans* of w. and c. Africa and specimen examination by PP corroborates this.

On *Maui*, a Warbling Silverbill was tentatively identified at Kanaha Pond in Sep 1978 and a flock of 40 was found near Ulupalakua 23 Dec 1978 (*E* 39:89-90). A year later they had "increased enormously" and had been recorded from Kihei and Kula to Hana (*E* 40:139-140). During the 1980s-mid 2010s they were observed commonly in dry

habitats throughout W and S Maui, on Molokini Islet (15 on 2 Apr 1983), and at Hosmer Grove at an elevation over 2100 m. Single-location high counts during 2010-2016 were of 50 near Lahaina 23 Feb 2014 and at Makena SB 2 Jun 2014. The next island on which Warbling Silverbills were observed was *Lana'i*, where 4 found at Halepalaoa Landing 24 Aug 1979 were believed to have arrived from Maui during the past year (Hirai 1980). Observations of small to moderate numbers on Lana'i continued during sporadic coverage through the mid-2010s. On *Kaho'olawe* eight observed 8-10 Aug 1980, including four flying out over the ocean toward Molokini and Maui, were undoubtedly part of the same natural expansion northwestward through the Hawaiian Islands (Conant 1983a). They have since been recorded during most or all visits to this island (e.g., Gon et al. 1992, Morin et al. 1998), including a nest observed by Morin et al. in 1996 or 1997 and a high count of 125 recorded on the [Christmas Bird Count](#) there 14 Dec 2015. The first observation from *Moloka'i* was of a second-hand report from an unknown locality in Jun-Jul 1980, and the first verified report came from Kepuhi Bay on the w. end of the island 2 Oct 1981 (*AB* 36:223). Through the mid-2010s they were considered common throughout w. Moloka'i (high count of 125 near Mo'omomi Dunes 11 Jun 2014) and were observed to at least 6 km E of Kaunakakai.

Conant (1984) recorded the first African Silverbills on *O'ahu* near Sandy Beach SP 4 and 13 Feb 1984, after having received rumor of them in the area several months prior. The next observations were not until 1986, when they turned up in Nanakuli (Jul), Koko Head (Sep), and Diamond Head (Nov). Through the mid-2010s they were observed in comparatively small numbers along the s. coastline of O'ahu, from the Mokapu Peninsula around to Kaena Point, with a high count of 30 noted at Nanakuli 10 Aug 2001 and 40 each at Kaena Point 13 Nov 2008 and at Makapu'u Pt 7 Sep 2014. Through 2014 they were recorded only 9 times on the Honolulu Christmas Count with a high count of 33 recorded in Dec 2011. In 2007-2016 they also were observed in small numbers around Pearl Harbor and W to Ewa Beach, with a high count of 25 at Aloun Farms on the Ewa Plain 27 Oct 2013. The first reports from *Kaua'i* were of a small flock in the vicinity of Poipu 8 Jan 1984 (*E* 45:117) followed by flocks of 10-20 in the Mana Plain W of Kekaha later that year and 16 recorded on the Lihu'e Christmas Count 15 Dec 1984 (*E* 45:102). Through the mid-2010s they have been observed increasingly along the S side of the island, from Barking Sands Beach to Lihue (Denny 1999) and (beginning in 2011) the N coast around Princeville and at Kilauea Pt and Hanalei NWRs. Single-location high counts were of 130 at Barking Sands 26 Jan 2016 and 63 at Waiele'ele Wetlands 22 Feb 2016. African Silverbills have also reached *Ni'ihau*, where up to 25 were recorded on Lehua Islet by Aug 2009, including four observed flying back to the main island, and a high count of 180 observed there 6 Aug 2012. Given these numbers and their expansion through the Southeastern Islands we consider them established on Ni'ihau.

The only record for the *Northwestern Hawaiian Islands* involves one that landed aboard a ship 110 km SE of Nihoa I 31 Jul 2011 ([HRBP](#) 6771-6772), in accordance with continued expansion of populations on Kaua'i during the late 2000-early 2010s.

#### [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/rfp-monograph/>