

GREATER 'AMAKIHI

Viridonia sagittirostris

Other: Green Solitaire, *Nukupololei*

monotypic

native resident, endemic, extinct

The Greater 'Amakihi was only observed by four ornithologists, all of whom found it in a restricted area above Hilo, *Hawai'i I*, at elevations of 370-1200 m in 1892-1901. It appears to have been a lowland species that met its fate early due to clearing for sugar cane fields, avian disease, and other human-related changes to its environment (Amadon 1950, Lindsey et al. 1998). Palmer first stumbled upon this species on 23 Apr 1892 while enjoying the inflorescent vegetation along the Wailuku River. He collected a bird which "was quite new to me and I hope it may be so to science" (Rothschild 1900), and indeed it was (Rothschild 1892a). Palmer wound up collecting four specimens in Apr-May 1892, followed by Perkins (1903, *in* Evenhuis 2007:294, 297-298) who took 7 in Dec 1895-Jan 1896, A.M. Wolcott who secured 3 in Apr 1901, and Henshaw (1902a), who collected 21 from Jan 1901 to Jun 1902 (Banko 1979, 1984b). Perkins noted up to 12 in a day during 1896, at which time he coined the Hawaiian name given above, but by 1901, despite securing his extensive series, Henshaw considered it one of the rarest of the landbirds on the island. It presumably went extinct sometime between 1901 and 1951, when Richards and Baldwin (1953) searched for it in vain. Based on Poisson analyses of persistence probabilities using confirmed and unconfirmed records, Elphick et al. (2009) estimated that the Greater Amakihi went extinct in 1903, with an upper limit of 1911.

Rothschild placed the Greater 'Amakihi into a monotypic genus, *Viridonia*, as it was considered an oriole-like bird to Palmer, possibly a Melaphagid honeyeater (Rothschild 1892), and not related closely to the other 'amakihis. But Amadon (1950) lumped it with many other Drepanine honeycreepers under *Loxops*, and the AOU (1983) subsequently placed it with the other 'amakihis under *Hemignathus* (see [Synonymies](#)). More recent analysis (Pratt 2001, 2005), however, suggests that *Viridonia* is distinct enough to be recognized. It is possibly related to the extinct genus *Aidemia*, known in the subfossil record from O'ahu, Moloka'i, and Maui (James and Olson 1991, James 2004).

[Acronyms and Abbreviations](#)

[Literature cited](#)

Citation: Pyle, R.L., and P. Pyle. 2009. The Birds of the Hawaiian Islands: Occurrence, History, Distribution, and Status. B.P. Bishop Museum, Honolulu, HI, U.S.A. Version 1 (31 December 2009) <http://hbs.bishopmuseum.org/birds/rlp-monograph/>