

HAWAI'I MAMO

Drepanis pacifica

Other: Mamo (<1983), 'O'o-nuku-umu, 'O'o-mamo

monotypic

native resident, endemic, extinct

The Hawai'i Mamo is another example of a species that, sadly, disappeared from existence, at the turn of the 20th century, before much could be recorded by early naturalists. Known only from the island of *Hawai'i I*, it was held in high regard by native Hawaiians, who valued its feathers over those of all other native species (Malo 1838, Brigham 1899, Conant 2005). The mamo's black-and-yellow plumage resembled those of the [Hawai'i 'O'o](#), but the mamo feathers were a richer yellow and they may have been more difficult to catch. Wilson describes the value of one war cloak (or "mamo" in Hawaiian) of Hawai'i Mamo feathers as "impossible to estimate, nor can its beauty...be outshone" (Wilson and Evans 1899; see also Wilson 1890a). Another cape that belonged to Kamehameha I, now housed at BPBM, contains about 450,000 feathers from an estimated 80,000 Hawai'i Mamos, and is referred to as the "million dollar cloak" (Pratt 2002b). This and second-hand reports indicate that the Hawai'i Mamo was probably once widespread and common on Hawai'i (Perkins 1903, Munro 1944), although Henshaw (1902a) believed perhaps that they were "never abundant," wary, and susceptible to over-collection for feathers (see Mearns and Mearns 1992:325 for a counter-argument to this). It may have only inhabited lower elevations, which is why it did not survive long after western afflictions, in particular avian malaria, had permeated the lowland forests (*E* 33:15).

The Hawai'i Mamo was first noted by C. Clerke (*in* King 1779), during Cook's third voyage, who thought it belonged to the "*trochili*, or honey-suckers of Linnaeus." Clerke thought it "a fine glossy black, the rump, vent and thighs a deep yellow" and noted that it was "called by the natives *hoohoo*" (see Wilson 1977; this confusion of names between Hawai'i Mamo and [Hawai'i 'O'o](#), was perpetrated as well by Beaglehole 1967:630, and may have been because native Polynesians called both species by this name; Perkins 1903). The first three specimens were collected during Cook's third voyage near Kealakekua Bay (Stresemann 1950; Banko 1979, 1981b; Medway 1981), perhaps on 26 Jan 1779 when a landing party captured many birds (Ellis 1782:93). Based on two of these specimens, the species was described by Latham (1781-1785) as the "Great Hook-billed Creeper" and named *Certhia drepanis* by Gmelin (1788). The third specimen was examined by Temminck (1820) who reclassified the genus as "*Drepanis*" in reference to the sickle-shaped bill, thereby giving rise to the subfamily name "Drepaninae" for the Hawaiian honeycreepers; this genus has been applied to the mamos by most ensuing taxonomists ([Synonymies](#)), and later to [Tiwi](#). Latham and others originally confused the type locality with the "Friendly Isles" or Tonga (see Wilson and Evans 1899 for details).

Early collectors had to contend with "*kapus*" (taboos) placed on the taking of Hawai'i Mamos by anyone not connected with the royal families (Henshaw 1902a). A paltry total of eleven specimens were thus collected (Banko 1979), including five by Mills above Hilo in ca. 1859-1864 (*cf.* Brigham 1899, Wilson and Evans 1899), two by Ballieu (see [Palila](#)) near Pu'u Lehua in 1876, and one captured alive by the native

assistant to Palmer, Ahulu, above Hilo 16 April 1892. E. Wolstenholme also was present for the capture of this specifically sought individual, fed it sugar water in his tent for five days in the field, and felt about it "as proud as if someone had sent me two bottles of whisky up" (Rothschild 1900). Palmer, who had been kicked by a horse and prevented from taking the trip (and was perhaps in a bad mood about this), promptly killed and skinned it upon the collectors' return to Hilo, 21 April 1892. Perkins (*in* Evenhuis 2007:294) looked for but missed it in 1895 and, three years later, Henshaw (1902a) was the last to observe Hawai'i Mamo, recording 2-5 individuals ("at least a pair, possibly a whole family") near Ka'umana in July 1898. He shot one of the mamos, but "it fell six or eight feet, recovered itself, flew around to the other side of the tree, where it was joined by a second bird, perhaps a parent or a mate, and in a moment was lost to view" (Rothschild 1900). Henshaw (1902a) was correct in fearing, after this observation, if "it will ever again be seen by human eyes". Based on Poisson analyses of persistence probabilities using confirmed and unconfirmed records, Elphick et al. (2009) estimated that the Hawai'i Mamo went extinct in 1911-1915, with upper limits of 1975-1985 (due to the scarcity of historical observations, implying a seldom encountered species). We consider as unsubstantiated various second-hand reports from 1899 to the early 1960s (Henshaw 1902a, Banko 1981b; *E* 12:26, 20:88, 23:57), along with a report of three birds at 2,100 m elevation on Mt. Hualalai in 1890 (Brigham 1892, 1899).

Peale (1848) apparently confused the Hawai'i Mamo and [Kaua'i 'O'o](#), recording the former on Kaua'i. Although cleared up by Cassin (1858), the inclusion of Kaua'i in the mamo's range was repeated by Gray (1859) and Dole (1869, 1879).

[Acronyms and Abbreviations](#)

[Literature cited](#)

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