



## QUARTERLY REPORT – FEBRUARY 2007

### NEW STAFF AND FIELD CREW



The Maui Forest Bird Recovery Project brought on three new staff members last October and a new team of research technicians for this field season. Joining Kirsty Swinnerton (Project Coordinator) and Huisheng Chen (Senior Research Specialist) is Julie Garvin, Joshua VanderMark and Hanna Mounce. Julie was brought on as a Senior Research Specialist after completing her PhD with the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee Department of Biology. Joshua joined us as a Research and GIS Specialist from the Northern Michigan University where he just completed his MSc with the Department of Biology and Hanna Mounce returned as a Research Associate after working with us last season. This January we also welcomed Mary Chambers, Ruby Hammond, Jim Howard and Jeremy Russell to our team for the Maui Parrotbill breeding season. We are looking forward to a great year and have already had a very productive couple of months in the field!

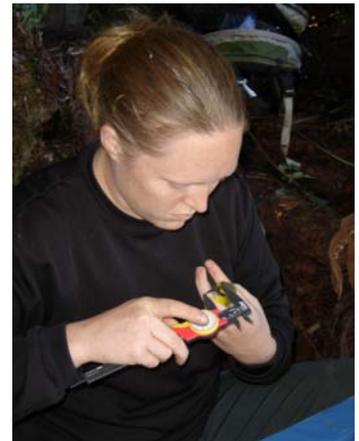
### AN OLD PARROTBILL VISITS FRISBEE MEADOWS

“Capture-mark-release” is an invaluable tool for wildlife biologists across the world. These procedures allow scientists to identify an individual, and record an astounding amount of information. Anything from eating habits to age can be discovered based upon a simple observation of a banded bird in the field. The density of the habitat in native Hawaiian forests paired with the scarcity of the Maui Parrotbill make every resight a goldmine of information.

In August of 1994, the USGS-BRD team headed by John Simon collected information on a male Parrotbill, banded as “white/red (left), white/aluminum (right).” Each individual receives a unique series of plastic colored bands on each leg so that it can be later identified by researchers from afar. This bird was judged to be at least one year old, maybe more.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2007, hiking up the East fence of Hanawi, Jim Howard, a member of our research team, was hoping to find a Parrotbill they had heard from the day before. Taking a short break, he paused to listen to the forest and watch a gulch. Soundlessly (a dead giveaway for Parrotbill), a small, stocky yellow bird cruised in from the east, hopped into an ohia tree and began ripping through branches in search for food. This was the first banded Parrotbill that Jim had seen, and it was directly overhead.

Later that day, the field crew consulted the banding data, to look up “white/red, white/aluminum.” They were excited to find out that this bird was banded in 1994, making it very possibly the great-great-grandfather of some of the other Parrotbills seen flying around Hanawi. It had also traveled across the study site from the West Ridge. This was all great news. It also raises more questions about Parrotbill habits and movements. This bird had not



been seen last year despite almost constant presence in this field site during the 2006 breeding season, and he was close to where he was originally banded. Whether he has lived in Frisbee Meadows for the past decade or just occasionally cruised through is still unknown.

Despite the predation and degradation pressures that this area has suffered, this Parrotbill has survived for at least 14 years - possibly breeding and continuing his species through most of that time. This sighting has established the known longevity record for Parrotbill and suggests that this species can be long lived, even with the many threats facing the vulnerable Parrotbill population left on Maui.

## ***NEW GENES FOR THE CAPTIVE BREEDING PROGRAM***



In an effort to advance the captive breeding program for Maui Parrotbill, our team spent the first part of our season targeting birds for the endangered species captive breeding program. In November 2006 we successfully captured two adult male Maui Parrotbill in the Frisbee Meadows field site in Hanawi Natural Area Reserve. These birds were, one at a time,



transported out of Hanawi to the Maui Bird Conservation Center. The populations of Parrotbill at the two breeding facilities were very female dominated with only one breeding male last year. We are hoping that these two wild males will breed with the captive females currently at the two centers, run by the Zoological Society of San Diego, and provide some increased genetic diversity as well as some behavioral stimulation to the females.

## ***NEW CAPTURES AND NESTS IN HANAWI***

In order to better monitor the Parrotbill populations in Hanawi, one of our early goals of the season was to catch and color band as many individuals as possible. We had a small window in which to



target birds in before the breeding and nesting season got underway. Between two field sites, we were able to band nine individuals. This will lend to greater information on survival, population dynamics, productivity and possibly dispersal. Two of these birds were banded as second year individuals whom were still traveling with their parents from last year. We will hopefully be able to continue monitoring them once they get booted out on their own. With the breeding season underway, our team is currently monitoring three nesting attempts between our field



sites, two of which have reached incubation. One of our banded females in Frisbee Meadows has already started a second nest building attempt after the severe winds in early February ended her first!

***Special thanks to Flatbread Company in Paia for hosting our fundraiser in January!!!***