

Saving Hawaiian Honeycreepers with Mosquito Birth Control

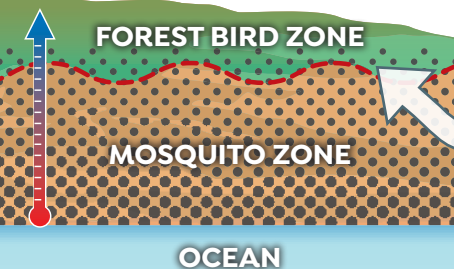


Honeycreepers are a unique group of forest birds found only in Hawai'i. There were once more than 50 honeycreeper species. **Today, only 17 species remain, some species with less than a few hundred individuals.**



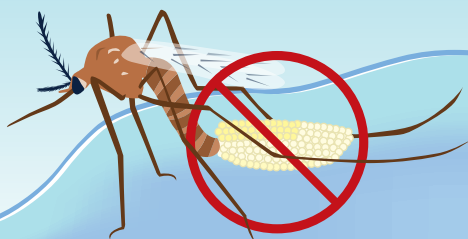
Without swift action, several species of honeycreepers will become extinct in the next ten years.

Avian malaria, a disease transmitted by invasive **Culex mosquitoes**, is driving the extinction of our forest birds. These birds can be killed by a single bite from an infected mosquito.



Hawaiian honeycreepers are limited to upper elevation forests that are too cold for mosquitoes. **As the climate warms, mosquitoes carrying avian malaria are moving further upslope** into this last refuge of Hawaiian forest birds.

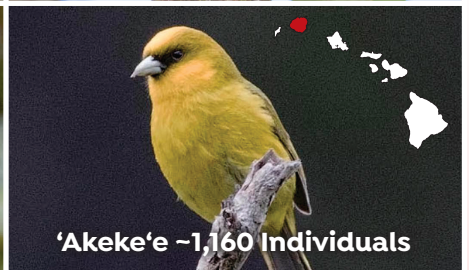
A **“mosquito birth control”** technique can suppress mosquito populations and help save our native forest birds.



How Mosquito Birth Control Works

- The best way to protect native birds is to reduce the chance of being bitten by disease-carrying mosquitoes.
- A safe, effective technique is already being used around the world to stop the spread of mosquito-borne human diseases. This same strategy can help save our forest birds.
- Mosquito birth control uses a naturally-occurring bacteria called *Wolbachia* that lives in the tissues of many insect species. If males and females carry different *Wolbachia* strains their eggs don't hatch.
- Rearing and releasing male mosquitoes that have an incompatible bacteria strain can suppress mosquito populations in the wild and reduce disease transmission.
- Male mosquitoes don't bite. So by releasing only male mosquitoes, people are not harmed.

The Most Endangered Hawaiian Honeycreepers



Photos by Jack Jeffrey



Birds, Not Mosquitoes is a multi-agency partnership fighting to save Hawaii's forest birds from extinction by stopping the spread of avian disease by mosquitoes.
More information: www.dlnr.hawaii.gov/mosquito

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