

HAWAIIAN HAWK

The Hawaiian hawk is notable because it is the only raptor endemic to the Hawaiian Islands, and it is one of the very few birds native to Hawaii that did not suffer a catastrophic population decline or extinction as a result of human colonization, starting with the Polynesians some 1,600 years ago. Human colonization resulted in the extinction of around 75% of Hawaii's bird species. In fact, it appears the hawk has thrived as a result of human colonization.

The Hawaiian hawk is also notable because the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) has been proposing to upgrade its status under the ESA since 1993 but has taken no action despite the act's requirement that such proposals be finalized within one year. In 1993, the FWS proposed to downlist the hawk from endangered to the less-imperiled status of threatened but did nothing until 2008 when the agency withdrew the proposal. At that time, the agency also issued a proposal to delist, or remove, the hawk from under the ESA as a result of a petition submitted by an opponent of the act.

There are nine issues relating to the Hawaiian hawk's conservation that will be examined in the species's profile.

- 1) Population data indicate the hawk's population has in all likelihood been stable and healthy, at the same population level, before and after being listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).
- 2) The threats used by the FWS to justify the hawk's listing and retention under the ESA turn out no to be threats or much less significant than portrayed by the agency.
- 3) The Hawaiian hawk is in all likelihood a case of data error, meaning it never should have been listed because its population is too large and healthy to merit the ESA's protection.
- 4) The process by which the FWS listed the hawk reveals the essentially non-existent data on which listing occurred.
- 5) The FWS used an inconsistent standard to cite literature in support of listing the hawk in an apparent effort to justify placing the hawk under the ESA.
- 6) The ESA did essentially nothing to conserve the hawk.

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- 7) The hawk does not fit the narrative of human-induced bird extinction of Hawaiian birds commonly used by the FWS and others to justify listing species.
- 8) The hawk is one of a handful of species that in 1998 then-Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt cited as proof of the ESA's success and promised would be delisted in the near future.
- 9) The FWS has unnecessarily delayed the hawk's delisting.