

# HWJV Prioritized Bird Species List for Wetlands 2012 Final

**Purpose:** The purpose of a prioritized ranking for endangered Hawaiian species that utilize wetlands is to facilitate screening desirable wetland sites for earlier habitat conservation action by HWJV partners. This ranking is intended to be used for taking site management actions that are practical to achieve at this point in time: given resource management knowledge, wetland site potentials, and current partnership capacity. This list does not represent the risk of extinction or vulnerability for these species. It mainly considers count numbers, stability, distribution, and wetland use in determining prioritization.

## Part 1: Endangered Endemic Waterbirds of Hawaii

- #1 Hawaiian Duck: Koloa maoli (<2000 (Engilis *et al.* 2002))
- #2 Hawaiian Common Moorhen: `Alae`ula (~300 (USFWS 2012))
- #3 Hawaiian Coot: `Alae ke`oke`o (1500-2800 (USFWS 2012))
- #4 Hawaiian Stilt: Ae`o (1100 – 2100 (USFWS 2012))
- #5 Laysan Duck (currently unknown (M. Reynolds, 2012 pers. comm.)  
(~611 on Laysan, ~200 on Midway (USFWS 2009))
- #6 Hawaiian Goose: Nēnē (~2000 (NRAG 2010))

### Rationale for this prioritized order:

#1 - Koloa were placed first on this list because they are declining due to hybridization with feral mallards. Pure Koloa are thought to remain essentially on the island of Kauai, but even there, hybrid numbers are increasing. While current waterbird surveys indicate higher numbers of Koloa than Hawaiian Common Moorhen, for example, the Koloa count numbers are confounded by the inability of most counters to visually distinguish between pure Koloa and Koloa appearing hybrids. Addressing this hybridization problem, while also assuring adequate habitat, is a key issue for the Joint Venture. Also, bi-annual waterbird survey methods currently utilized do not capture Koloa distribution. Mountain streams of Hawai`i, Maui, and Kaua`i have not been surveyed for Koloa, so actual numbers and statewide distribution is not clear.

#2 – Hawaiian Common Moorhen are listed second as their numbers, though low, appear to be stable from survey data. However, their count numbers are lower than for Hawaiian Coots and Hawaiian Stilts. Count numbers may be low for this species due to poor survey methodology, but that may not be the only factor. This species also has a reduced distribution and is only currently found on the islands of O`ahu and Kaua`i, having been extirpated from Maui, Moloka`i, and Hawai`i Island. It should be noted that this is an excellent species for re-introduction to freshwater wetland sites.

#3 – Hawaiian Coot are listed third as species numbers appear stable and they have the highest

reported count numbers of all the waterbird species. They also have a wide distribution and are currently found on Kaua`i, Ni`ihau, O`ahu, Moloka`i, Lāna`i, Maui, and Hawai`i Island.

#4– Hawaiian Stilts are listed fourth as they appear stable and have high numbers. In addition, we actually have a Population Viability Analysis for this species indicating it is close to the current recovery target number (although this number is admittedly old and needs to be updated). Hawaiian Stilts are also widely distributed and can be found on Kaua`i, Ni`ihau, O`ahu, Moloka`i, Lāna`i, Maui, and Hawai`i Island.

#5 – Laysan Duck are listed fifth. Laysan Duscks were once widely distributed on the main Hawaiian Islands (based on subfossil evidence), but until recently Laysan Ducks, occurred only on Laysan Island in the NW Hawaiian chain. In 2004 and 2006 Laysan Ducks were translocated to Midway Island where they increased in number until 2008. In 2008, over half the population on Midway was lost to botulism and in 2011 the March 11th tsunami and severe winter storms significantly impacted their numbers on both Laysan and Midway, such that exact population status is unknown at this time. Laysan Duck counts on Laysan have always fluctuated and the population undergoes periodic declines, some quite severe. In addition, the carrying capacity on Laysan Island is believed to be low, between 500-600 birds. Recovery of this species, given climate change and sea level rise inundation, will require translocation back to wetlands within the main Hawaiian Islands at some time in the not too distant future. There are many issues to resolve prior to translocation, the main one being how to move a naïve species living on a predator free island back to islands with multiple predators, as well as, potentially, how to prevent hybridization with other ducks. Predator proofing wetland sites such as Kealia could afford a site for experimental relocation. Kaho`olawe once it is made predator free in the near future, and with wetlands enhancement, would become a feasible translocation area. HWJV work to benefit this species is expected to occur down the line.

#6 – Nēnē are listed sixth as they are not an obligate wetland species. None-the-less, wetlands play an important role for this endangered goose and its recovery will need to include wetlands. Nēnē numbers are currently stable and they are fairly widely distributed on Kauai, Molokai, Maui, and Hawaii Island.

## **Part 2: Important Wetland Associated Migratory Species**

- Bristle-thighed Curlew (kioea)
- Pacific Golden-Plover (kolea)
- Wandering Tattler (`ulili)
- Ruddy Turnstone (`akekeke)
- Sanderling (hunakai)
- Northern Shoveler (koloa moha)
- Northern Pintail (koloa mapu)
- Lesser Scaup
- American Wigeon

**Rationale for including these particular migratory species:** (Note: species listed are not obligate wetland species with the exception of migratory waterfowl.)

- Identified in the 2001 *U.S. Pacific Island Shorebird Conservation Plan* are:
  - Bristle-thighed Curlew and Pacific Golden-Plover (along with the Hawaiian Stilt) as species of primary importance.
  - Wandering Tattler is listed as important.
  - Ruddy Turnstone is of secondary importance.
- Identified in the 2005 *Hawaii State Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy* as species of greatest conservation need are:
  - Bristle-thighed Curlew, Pacific Golden-Plover, Wandering Tattler, Ruddy Turnstone, Sanderling, Northern Pintail, Northern Shoveler, Lesser Scaup, and American Wigeon.