



PAPAHĀNAUMOKUĀKEA Marine National Monument

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Bird species endemic to the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands receives Hawaiian name

(Honolulu) – The Nihoa Millerbird, an endangered terrestrial bird species living exclusively within Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument (PMNM), has been given a Hawaiian name. Developed by PMNM’s Native Hawaiian Cultural Working Group, the name reflects Hawaiian cultural perspectives of this bird as well as its characteristics and behaviors.

“Developing new Hawaiian names for species in Papahānaumokuākea that have either lost or never had a Hawaiian name is an important step towards honoring Hawaiian traditions and maintaining a living culture here in our islands,” says Kekuewa Kikiloi, Assistant Professor at the Kamakākūokalani Center for Hawaiian Studies at the University of Hawai‘i - Mānoa and chairman of the PMNM Native Hawaiian Cultural Working Group.

Hawaiian names were given to the Nihoa Millerbird (ulūlu), as well as the new population of Nihoa Millerbirds established on Laysan Island (ulūlu niau).

“These new names help to connect these life forms to the genealogy of Hawai‘i. As best as possible, we try to ensure that these names are consistent with the Hawaiian world view and traditional ecological knowledge of our homeland,” says Kikiloi.

The name ulūlu - meaning “growing things” - was given to the endemic and endangered Nihoa Millerbird with the hope that its population will continue to grow in the coming years.

In 2011 and 2012, a small number of ulūlu were translocated to Laysan Island by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, American Bird Conservancy and other partners to improve the long-term survival prospects for the species and to fill a gap in Laysan’s ecosystem that was once filled by the now-extinct Laysan Millerbird. During transport, the 650 miles of ocean that separated the two islands were uncharacteristically calm, thus inspiring the name ulūlu niau – niau meaning “moving smoothly, swiftly, silently, and peacefully; flowing or sailing thus.”

“These beautiful birds are part of ancient Hawai‘i, and have been here for several hundred thousands of years, but their future is threatened,” said American Bird Conservancy Science Coordinator for Hawai‘i Chris Farmer, who was also one of the leads for the Millerbird translocation. “These names connect them back to the main islands and the Hawaiian language, raising awareness of their remote homes in the Northwestern Islands and tying them into the unique tapestry of Hawaiian biodiversity we are all striving to conserve.”

For more information, visit www.papahanaumokuakea.gov/news/millerbird_hawaiian_names.html

Papahānaumokuākea is cooperatively managed to ensure ecological integrity and achieve strong, long-term protection and perpetuation of Northwestern Hawaiian Island ecosystems, Native Hawaiian culture, and heritage resources for current and future generations. Three co-trustees - the Department of Commerce, Department of the Interior, and State of Hawai‘i - joined by the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, protect this special place. Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument was inscribed as the first mixed (natural and cultural) UNESCO World Heritage Site in the United States in July 2010. For more information, please visit www.papahanaumokuakea.gov.

The Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument Native Hawaiian Cultural Working Group is a volunteer advisory group comprised of Hawaiian cultural specialists who lend their expertise to support the Monument’s mission of protecting natural and cultural resources.

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