

# Ulūlu

Developed by the PMNM Native Hawaiian Cultural Working Group

## Description

An endemic bird species of Nihoa, the ulūlu has a grayish brown color scheme with a light throat and belly and a dark head, back and tail. A prominent physical characteristic of the ulūlu is a crest of frayed textured feathers that the males display on their foreheads when singing. These small, inconspicuous songbirds are normally found sheltered in groundcover among the ‘ilima (*Sida fallax*)<sup>1</sup> and pōpolo (*Solanum nelsonii*). In 1923, the ulūlu received its common name, the Nihoa Millerbird, because its favorite food is the Miller moth (*Hyposmocoma nihoa*), which is also endemic to the island of Nihoa<sup>2</sup>.



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## Meaning

- » 1. Reduplication of ulu 1; growing things. Pōnalo ihola ka uluulu, the growing plants swarmed with flies<sup>7</sup>...

## Description of Species

- » **Scientific Name:** *Acrocephalus familiaris kingi*
- » **Location:** Nihoa Island (roughly 156 acres)
- » **Habitat:** Terrestrial, Groundcover
- » **Population:** the 2012 estimated population of the ulūlu was 401 ± 163 birds<sup>8</sup>.
- » **Related Species:** Laysan Millerbird (extinct); Komako (Marquesas)
- » **Size:** adults roughly 5 inches in length (12.7 centimeters)
- » **Sound/Call:** “kio”
- » **Food Sources:** a variety of insects, including the Miller Moth (*Hyposmocoma nihoa*; currently no catalogued Hawaiian name)
- » **Use:** The ulūlu is an endangered species, and there is no current known material use for the ulūlu in Hawaiian culture.
- » **Other Names:** Nihoa Millerbird

<sup>1</sup> *Endangered Species in the Pacific Islands*. (2010, September 20). U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Pacific Islands Fish and Wildlife Office. Retrieved from <http://www.fws.gov/pacificislands/fauna/nihoamillierbird.html>. “Endangered Species in the Pacific Islands: Nihoa Millerbird.”

<sup>2</sup> *Birds of North American account:* Morin, M. P., S. Conant, and P. Conant. 1997. Laysan and Nihoa Millerbird (*Acrocephalus familiaris*). In *The birds of North America*, no 302 (A. Poole and F. Gill, eds.). Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

<sup>3</sup> George Wallace – American Bird Conservancy/USFWS

<sup>4</sup> Robby Kohley – American Bird Conservancy/USFWS

<sup>5</sup> Eric Vanderwerf – Pacific Rim Conservation/USFWS

<sup>6</sup> Mark MacDonald – University of New Brunswick/USFWS

<sup>7</sup> Pukui, Mary K., & Elbert, Samuel. (1986). *Hawaiian Dictionary*. University of Hawaii Press: Honolulu.

<sup>8</sup> Marshall, A.P., K.W. Brinck, W. Aldeguer, and D. H. Tsukayama. 2012. Nihoa Island biological monitoring and management, 14-25 August 2012. Unpublished report to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.