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) and pōpōlo (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.

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.
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

Meaning

1. Reduplication of ulu 1; growing things. Pōnalo ihola ka ululu, the growing plants swarmed with flies’...

Description of Species

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2 Endangered Species in the Pacific Islands: Nihoa Millerbird.
4 George Wallace – American Bird Conservancy/USFWS
5 Robby Kohley – American Bird Conservancy/USFWS
6 Eric Vanderwerf – Pacific Rim Conservation/USFWS
7 Mark MacDonald – University of New Brunswick/USFWS