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GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

SYLVIA LUKE
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STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII'
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
KA 'OIHANA KUMUWAIWAI 'ĀINA

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Testimony of
DAWN N. S. CHANG
Chairperson

Before the Senate Committee on
WATER AND LAND

Friday, March 24, 2023
1:00 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 229

In consideration of
**SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 140/SENATE RESOLUTION 215
REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES TO
INVESTIGATE THE CAUSES OF AND UPDATE KEY INFORMATION ON, INCLUDING
FACTS AND STATISTICS, THE DECLINE OF THE CRITICALLY ENDANGERED PALILA
(LOXIOIDIES BAILLEUI) BIRD ON MAUNA KEA.**

Senate Concurrent Resolution 140/Senate Resolution 215 request the Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) to investigate causes of palila (*Loxioides bailleui*) decline, update facts and statistics on palila, and provide a report to the Legislature. **The Department supports these measures.**

The following is a summary of current and planned efforts the Department to monitor and manage palila. Annual palila population surveys are conducted by the Department and the Pacific Cooperative Studies Unit (PCSU), University of Hawai'i, and other partners. A recent report published by the Department, PCSU, and US Geological Survey showed that palila continue to decline on Mauna Kea, with population estimate of 1,432, 1,312, and 678 in 2019, 2020, and 2021, respectively (Genz et al. 2022, <https://dspace.lib.hawaii.edu/handle/10790/6858>). The 2021 population estimate of 678 palila is the lowest estimate since annual surveys began in 1998. The Department began conducting quarterly palila population surveys in 2022 to more closely monitor the palila population and funding is being sought to analyze the resulting data collected in 2022 and 2023.

The Department has applied for funding from the United States (U.S.) Department of Defense to conduct a demographic study on palila to better understand causes of population decline and plan recovery actions for palila. If funded, this project will commence in Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 and include monitoring of palila nests to determine whether invasive predators such as cats are implicated in the decline. Further funding to research sources of palila population decline is being sought from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

DAWN N.S. CHANG
CHAIRPERSON
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KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

Three to four aerial shoots are conducted annually by Department to remove the remaining sheep within Palila Critical Habitat. Approximately 25 “Judas” sheep with radio-transmitters are used to locate and target the remaining sheep herds. In 2022, 267 sheep were removed via four aerial shoots. There are around 4000 acres of Department of Hawaiian Home Lands within the Palila Critical Habitat fence that the Department is unable to access to complete animal control.

There remains approximately 7.7 miles of Palila Critical Habitat fence to be replaced. Capitol Improvement Funds (CIP) awarded in 2020 and 2021 at \$500,000 apiece are currently being used to complete the remaining 5 miles of fence replacement along the Parker Ranch border, which is under contract. A CIP request for \$200,000 awarded in the FY 2023 supplemental budget which will be used to purchase materials to complete the 2.7 mile fence replacement on the Kukaiaua Ranch border. The existing new and old fence continues to be maintained to address ongoing vandalism, damage from washouts and gates being left open allowing sheep and goat ingress.

The Mauna Kea Forest Restoration Project continues to carry out reforestation in key areas within Palila Critical Habitat, as well as predator control and invasive plant management to benefit palila. Since 2007, the project has planted approximately 230,000 trees to restore improve habitat conditions for palila. Plots are surveyed to monitor the forest recovery.

The Palila Hui is currently finalizing an action plan that outlines recovery actions for palila for the period 2023-2027.

Mitigating the risk of wildlife is another critical management action for palila. Fuel breaks and fire breaks continue to be maintained. The Department is in the planning process to expand these fuel breaks to minimize the risk of a major fire in the region. We are seeking funding from U.S. Department of Defense to increase this effort and to maintain water sources for firefighting.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of these measures.

SR-215

Submitted on: 3/21/2023 2:52:13 PM

Testimony for WTL on 3/24/2023 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christine A Villaflor	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in agreement that information regarding the **CRITICALLY** endangered Palila bird needs to be collected and studied **ASAP** by the DLNR as soon as possible to avoid extinction. Any further construction on Mauna Kea could mean losing the Palila forever.

Mālama,

Christine A Villaflor

SR-215

Submitted on: 3/22/2023 7:31:58 AM

Testimony for WTL on 3/24/2023 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Keith Okamoto	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Strongly support. Mahalo!