

Puaiohi (Small Kaua‘i Thrush, *Myadestes palmeri*)

‘Aukake (August) 2024

Description

- One of only two endemic Hawaiian thrush species still in existence, along with the ‘ōma‘o.¹
- Adults are olive-brown above, grey below, with white eye rings.
- Juveniles are distinguished by the scalloped plumage on their breasts.
- The name derives from the high-pitched calls males sing at twilight.²



Distribution

- Endemic to Kaua‘i and restricted to a remote area of the Alaka‘i Plateau less than 20 km².
- Subfossil evidence suggests wider distribution on Kaua‘i prehistorically.³
- Occupy areas along streams lined with steep cliffs in which they nest.
- Threatened by introduced mammals and habitat loss due to invasive plants.⁴



Ecology

- The only remaining native fruit-eating bird on Kaua‘i, puaiohi are excellent seed dispersers for native Hawaiian forest plants, including ‘ōlapa, lapalapa, ‘ōhi‘a hā, kanawao, ‘ōhelo, pa‘iniu, pūkiawe, kāwa‘u, and pilo.¹
- Hawaiian thrushes appear to be more tolerant of avian malaria compared to Hawaiian honeycreepers.⁵



Mele

Auhea ‘oe e ka puaiohi
Eō, e ku‘u manu ‘āhē
‘ōhelo mai a lele i Alaka‘i
kāhiko i ka nani hulu ‘āhina.

Where are you, puaiohi?
Answer my timid bird
fly to and fro in Alaka‘i
Adorned with pretty gray feathers.

‘Ālapa kāua i māulukua
ua malu i ka ‘ōhi‘a lau koa
ko uka holokia manu ‘olu‘olu
‘ohi ‘ai pū kāua a pū ‘ai iho.

Let’s cavort in the upland forest
protected by the ‘ōhi‘a and koa leaves,
the upland’s darting, gracious bird,
let’s gather food together and eat.

Hūa‘i mai ke aloha e ka laha ‘ole
nāna e kū i ka makani mauhua
ua pehi e ka ua lehua makanoe
na nā ‘ōhelo i hanai a‘e.

Love is revealed, oh rare one,
she who resists the harsh wind,
pelted by the lehua makanoe rain,
nourished by the berries.

Eia nā kupa ‘ai au ho‘i
kōkua Makawao me Keauhou
e malii mai i ka hea a ka noa.
Pūnana kākou a ulu a kini.

Here we are, the natives returning,
assisted by Makawao and Keauhou,
Heed the call of the released one.
Let’s build nests and inspire a multitude.

Eō ‘olu mai ‘oe e ka puaiohi.
Ohaoha i ka noe o Kawaikōi.
Kō ‘i‘o ka mana‘o o nā puakea
alaka‘i ana i ke ala a nā manu.⁶

Answer me, gentle puaiohi.
Thrive in the Kawaikōi mist.
Truly accomplish the desire of the white
flowers guiding the path of the birds.

Composed by Keahi Manea, 8 Feb 2012