

‘Alalā Pilot Releases on Maui: Year One



Maui Forest Bird
Recovery Project

USFWS John Vetter, Colleen Cole, Jay Nelson, Chelsie Javar-Salas
SDZWA Alison Greggor, Bryce Masuda, Brissa Christophersen, Amy
Durham

MFBRP Hanna Mounce, Martin Frye, Tess Hebebrand, Natalie
Wronkiewicz, Idangie Sein, Faith Bellas, Hillary Foster, Nikki Preston
COUNTY OF MAUI Kapono'ai Molitau, Kekai Robinson

DLNR Lance De Silva

KUPU Connery Scott

Parula Innovations, LLC Adam Elzinga

PCSU Shaya Honavar

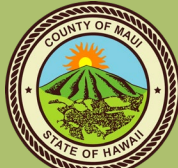


Image: DOFAW/MFBRP,
taken by Nate Watkins

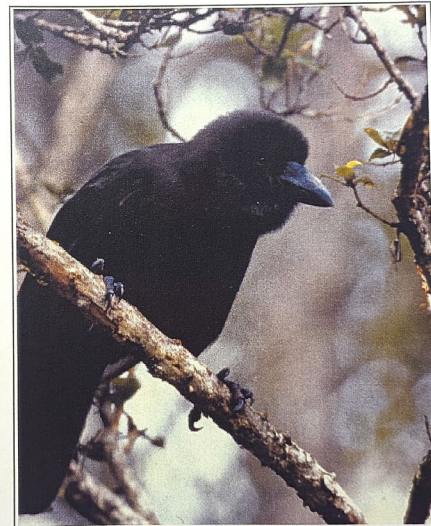
Background and scope of East Maui release

- Endemic to Hawai'i Island
- Extinct in the wild since 2002
- Previous releases face challenges, including predation by 'io



Draft Environmental Assessment for Population Reestablishment of the 'Alala

Hawaii County, Hawaii



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State of Hawaii

Department of Land and Natural Resources



United States Department of the Interior

Fish and Wildlife Service

December 1999

Background and scope of East Maui release

Why Maui?

- No resident 'io
- Wet native forest
- Historical presence confirmed by subfossils

Planning and Community Engagement

- Multi-agency planning with DLNR, USFWS, NPS, SDZWA
- Community meetings across East Maui
- Cultural advisor engagement

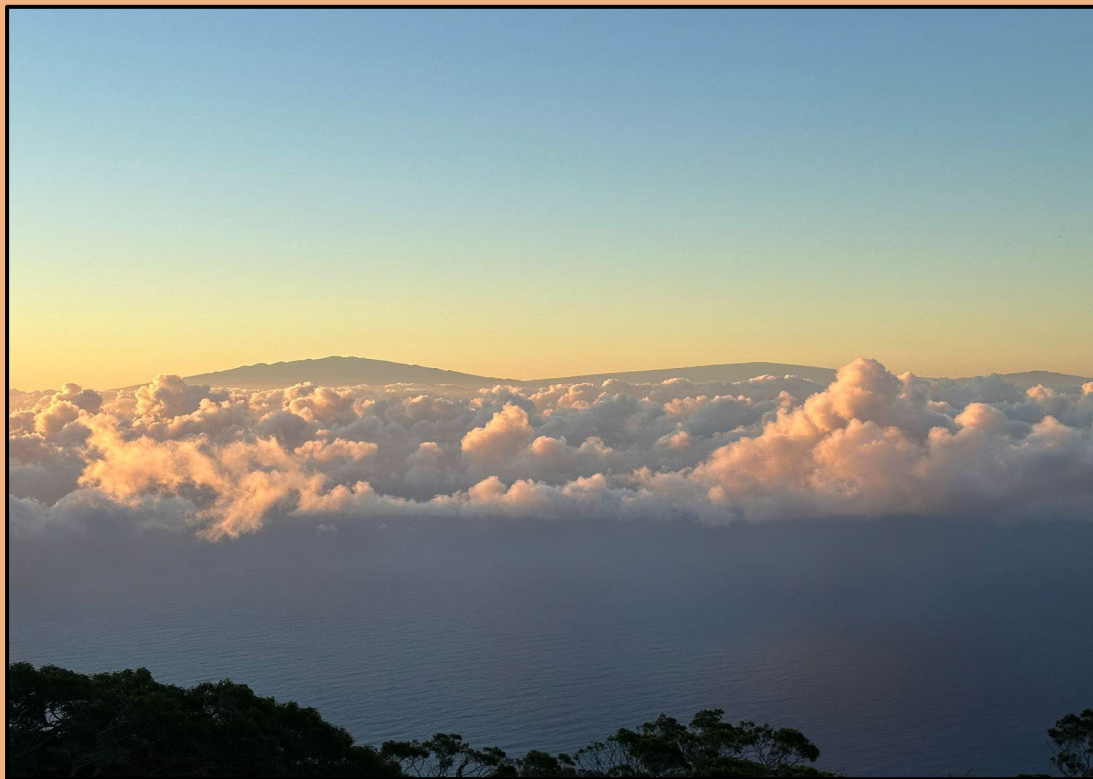


Image: DOFAW/MFBRP

Background and scope of East Maui release

Project Design

- Remote site, helicopter access
- Short-term pilot Supplemental feeding, predator control
- Remote monitoring and adaptive management

Release & Monitoring Methods

- Pre-release training on feeders
- Satellite and VHF transmitters
- Trail cameras and in-person field monitoring

Final Environmental Assessment for Pilot Release of
'Alalā (*Corvus hawaiiensis*) on East Maui, Hawai'i



January 2023
Prepared jointly by:

Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources
Division of Forestry and Wildlife
Honolulu, Hawai'i

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Pacific Islands Fish and Wildlife Office
Honolulu, Hawai'i

Pre-release

Construction of soft-release aviary

Design & Function

- 40' x 20' x 8-15'
- Keeper Vestibule, Hack Box, covered perch
- Perching spaced for longer flights
- No mosquito netting





- Assessed for fitness and social cohesion
- Inhabit longer flight chamber
- Practice wearing transmitters harnesses
- Assignment of color bands
- Successfully use new feeders



Hālau Nā Hanona Kūlike 'O Pi'ilani



Image: DLNR comms

Helicopter ride and hike to aviary



Image: DOFAW/MFBRP

Pre-release

6 weeks in aviary October-November 2024



Image: DOFAW/MFBRP, Tess Hebebrand



Images: DOFAW/MFBRP, Martin Frye

November 2024 – Present



Post-release monitoring

Diet sampling

Characterizing cast contents



January, 2025 spiders, possibly dysderids or Salticidae here (best guesses)

Fecal sample collection



Images: DOFAW/MFBRP

Challenges

GPS Transmitters

- First time using satellite GPS tags on species
- 3 attempts with different programming in September, October November, 2024
- Difficulty getting devices to sit correctly on the birds

“Medium” Tag

Weight 15 g

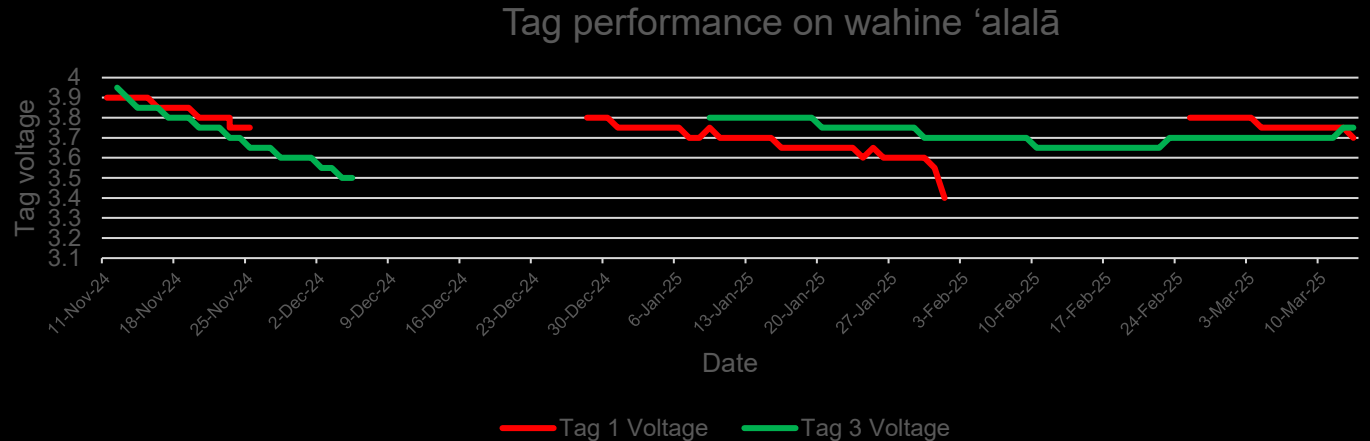
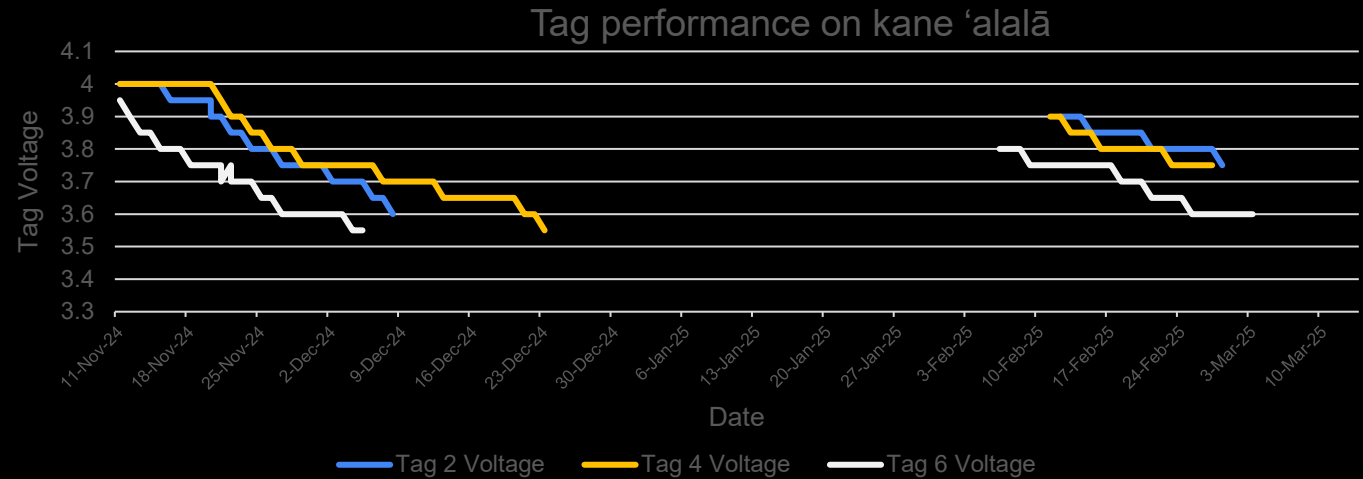
Height 28 mm



Challenges

Battery failures

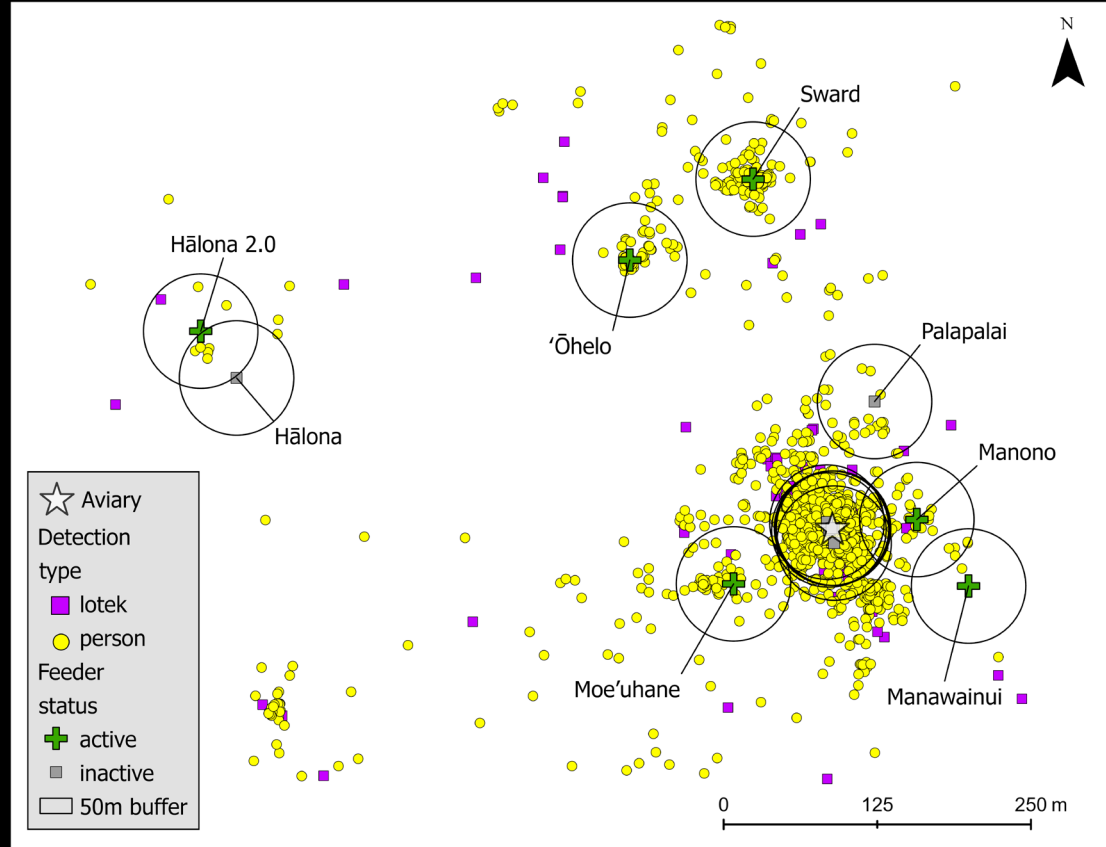
- GPS functions 3.6v and above
- VHF functional lower
- Unsustainable rates of charging
- Back to VHF for now... and constant field presence



Challenges

Capturing 'alalā movements without GPS

- Challenging terrain makes keeping up with 'alalā difficult
- Expanding ranges and new territories
- Need GPS for remote monitoring



Lessons Learned & Adaptive Management

- Improved feeder design and use of more robust components
- Pivot to use of different transmitters and considerations for harness modifications
- Redundant tracking approaches during troubleshooting phases
- Real-time data helped adaptive decisions



Mahalo

Sarah Malick-Wahls, Enzo Reyes, Laura Berthold, Erin Johnson, Jess Eden, Sharona Belcher, Chris Warren, Lindsay Moore, Barry Soloman, James Yrigoyen, Jamie Mounce, Rory Kuczek, Lauren Shearer, Dustin Palos, Moed Gerveni, Chelsea Haitz, Gavin Nuttall, Ryan Aguilar, Frankie Ayala, Adrian Burke, Lilley Brookshire, Rebecca Zochbauer, Sasha Smith, Kaitlyn Baugh, Molly Wirth, Julien Ueda, Mackenzie Myrick, Rachel Sitzler, Bryan Berkowitz, Casey Tabor, Abby Drood, Sophia Rooney, Jory Teltser, Joe Imhoff, Elena Pray, Adam Knox, Zach Pezzillo, Alex Sinkler, Gus Forrest, Nate Watkins, Kim and Forest Starr, Jennifer Pribble, Jennifer Learned and MNSRP, Scott Fisher and HILT, Fern Duvall and all the OGs



Some post-release observations



- Bark peeling and flaking
- Foraging on fruits of pukiawe, maile, 'ōlapa, pilo and others.
- Finding shelter during inclement weather
- Spring 2025 nest

Images: DOFAW/MFBRP taken by Nate Watkins, Idangie Sein, Alex Sinker, and Zach Pezzillo

“Ho‘olaukanaka i ka leo o nā manu”



Image: DOFAW/MFBRP