

NORTHERN PINTAIL

Anas acuta

Other: Pintail (< 1983), *Koloa mapu*

monotypic

non-breeding visitor, regular winterer

Northern Pintail is a common and familiar species found throughout most of Eurasia and N America, migrating south in winter to n. S America, the Philippines, and Borneo (Dement'ev and Gladkov 1952, Cramp and Simmons 1977, AOU 1998). It winters regularly in the Hawaiian Islands and has reached practically every island group in Oceania (Udvardy and Engilis 2001) including Micronesia, Wake (Rauzon et al. 2008), Johnston (Amerson and Shelton 1976), Palmyra, and Jarvis, and S to the Tonga, Cook, Tahiti, and the Marquesas Is (Munro 1944; Pratt et al. 1987, 2010; Wiles 2005); there is at least one record for Australia (Marchant and Higgins 1990). It was familiar to pre-contact Hawaiians who knew the pintail as *koloa mapu*. Hunting of this species was active in Hawaii until banned in the 1940s.

Northern Pintail has been the most common migratory wintering duck in the Hawaiian Islands (HAS 1959-2005). Winter counts of several thousand statewide included peaks in 1943 (Schwartz and Schwartz 1949) and 1952-1953 when counts reached 7000-8000 individuals; but these had dropped sharply to <1300 by 1959 (Medeiros 1958, Udvardy and Engilis 2001). In 1954 the draining of Kaelepulu Pond (Enchanted Lake) on O'ahu, favored by large numbers of migrant waterfowl, added to continuing loss of natural wetlands in the Southeastern Islands and resulted in much lower numbers recorded near Honolulu (see [Graph](#)). Reduced breeding populations in North America (due to habitat loss there) likely contributed further to declining numbers of wintering ducks in Hawaii during the past century (Schwartz and Schwartz 1949, Medeiros 1958). [DOFAW Waterbird Survey](#) data in 1986-2007 recorded a statewide high count of 460 in Jan 1986, followed by cyclic pattern, with highs of 275-375 in 1989-1990, 1999-2000, and 2006-2007, and lows of 50-160 in 1991-1995, 1998, and 2001-2002 (*cf.* Udvardy and Engilis 2001). Udvardy and Engilis (2001) discuss sex-specific movements of banded pintails between Hawaii and the western U.S. (occasionally to Siberia), and Engilis et al. (2004) summarize the many pintail specimens from the Southeastern and Northwestern Hawaiian Islands.

In the *Southeastern Hawaiian Islands* most data on recent trends come from [DOFAW surveys](#) in 1980-2007. On *Ni'ihau* Northern Pintails were recorded on 8 of 15 winter surveys between 1976 and 1997, with a high count of 252 on 20 Jan 1986. On *Kaua'i*, high counts have included 150 at Hanalei NWR in Oct-Nov 1975 and in Nov 1995, and 370 on the Kapa'a Christmas Count 18 Dec 1976, but DOFAW winter surveys have recorded no more than 58 in 1980-2007. In the 1960-1970s, peak winter counts on *O'ahu* were of 100-350 at Pearl Harbor and Kahuku. Subsequent DOFAW winter surveys have shown a bimodal pattern, with an island-wide peak of 180 in 1988, dropping to lows of <25 in 1995-1998, and another peak of 175 in 2007 ([HRBP](#) 5382). On *Moloka'i*, counts of over 100 occurred in the 1950-1960s, including a high count on an aerial survey of 342 on 7 Jan 1953 (Dibben-Young 2016), but subsequent annual high counts have been lower, including 30-50 during the 1990s-mid 2010s except for as many as 60-80 recorded during the winters of 2005-2007. On *Maui*, island-wide counts

(primarily at Kealia and Kanaha ponds) were of up to 100 in the 1960s-1970s. During DOFAW surveys cyclic patterns followed those recorded state-wide (see above) with high counts >140 in Jan 1986, 1999, and 2006; an off-survey high count of 268 was recorded at Kealia 4 Jan 2007 and 128 were there 26 Nov 2014. On *Lana'i*, a flock of 15-30 pintails was near Lana'i City in Nov 1978 and a single bird was near Keomuku in Oct 1977. On the DOFAW survey they were recorded in four of 18 winters in 1989-2007, with high counts of 35 in Jan 1995 and 36 in Jan 2006. On *Hawai'i I*, pintails were recorded on every winter DOFAW survey in 1986-2007, with high counts of 81 in 1989 and 74 in 2004, and low counts of < 5 in 1994, 1998, and 2002. There is as yet no report of Northern Pintail from Kaho'olawe.

Pintails arrive to the Southeastern Islands in Aug-Oct and depart in Mar-May. Surprisingly few over-summer in Hawaii, with only 10 individuals recorded in Jun-Jul (Kaua'i, O'ahu, Moloka'i, and Hawai'i) since 1978. These may represent sick or injured birds. [DOFAW surveys](#) in mid-Aug have tallied small numbers of returning individuals on about half the surveys, with a high count of >50 in 2004, 48 of which were at Opaulea Pond, Hawai'i I, 18 Aug.

In the *Northwestern Hawaiian Islands*, Northern Pintails are regular winter visitors to island groups having suitable habitat. At *Midway*, 1-8 individuals winter annually (e.g., [HRBP](#) 0120, 0571, 0592, 1342-1347, 6008, 6143) with a high count of >30 reported in Dec 1961 (Fisher 1965); at *Laysan* the earliest reports are from 1896 (Shaunisland 1899) and high counts have reached 63 (9 Sep 1969; Ely and Clapp 1973), 48 (Sep-Nov 1988), and 40 (winter 1996-97); see also [HRBP](#) 0759-0761. At *French Frigate* 1-5 are recorded annually, primarily in fall. At the other island groups they are observed less frequently, and mostly as migrants: on *Kure* singles occurred Oct 1959 and 3 Feb 1962, 6 specimens were collected in fall and spring 1963-1968 (Woodward 1972), and individuals were photographed 12 Oct 1983, Sep 1985, and 7 Nov 2012 ([HRBP](#) 0262-0263, 0468-0469, 6007), the last found dead 13 Dec 2012 (BPBM 185733); at *Pearl and Hermes* an immature male was observed 13-14 Sep 1969 (Amerson et al. 1974); at *Lisianski* there is a single undated report (Clapp et al. 1977); and at *Nihoa* a live female and decomposed male (USNM 567292) were found on 15 Sep 1971 and another was photographed in Oct 2006 ([HRBP](#) 5562). A male recorded at Laysan in Jul 1995 is the only summer record for the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands.

[Acronyms and Abbreviations](#)

[Literature cited](#)

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