

JAVA SPARROW

Lonchura oryzivora

Other: Java Ricebird, Java Finch

monotypic

naturalized (non-native) resident, recently established

Java Sparrows are resident on Java and Bali Is in Indonesia, and have been introduced throughout SE Asia, in India, and on many islands around the world (Long 1981, Lever 1987, Pratt et al. 1987, Islam 1997, AOU 1998, Higgins et al. 2006). In the Pacific they were introduced for a short time during the 1960s on Guam (until a hurricane apparently did them in), they have been established in Fiji since the 1920s, and at least 1-2 were observed on Wake sporadically between 1952 and 1966 (Rauzon et al. 2008). In the *Southeastern Hawaiian Islands* they were first detected on O'ahu in the 1960s and on Kaua'i, Moloka'i, Maui, and Hawai'i I in the 1980s, and they have been implicated in a number of problems associated with disturbance to neighborhoods, threats to agriculture, and the spreading of noxious plants in Hawaii (Kishinami 2001). The AOU (2014) lumped Java Sparrow into *Lonchura* from the monotypic genus *Padda*.

There are early rumors of Java Sparrows having been introduced to *O'ahu* sometime before 1900 (Henshaw 1900b, Phillips 1928), perhaps by W. Hillebrand (Caum 1933), who had returned directly from Java with many species of birds after a trip to Asia in 1865-1866 (see [Common Myna](#)). Because of its reputation as a pest to rice-growers, Caum remarked that it "fortunately, failed to survive". No records followed until a tame individual, thought to be a pet, was noted on the lawn of the B.P. Bishop Museum in Kalihi near Honolulu 22 Jul 1964 (*E* 25:25), followed by two in nearby Fort Shafter in Aug 1965 (*E* 26:40), and 9-10 reported regularly coming to a feeder and breeding on the w. slope of Diamond Head in 1967-1969 (*E* 29:80-81), likely part of releases of many cage finches here in the mid-1960s. Berger (1972, 1975e, 1981) chronicles subsequent rapid increase of Java Sparrows on Diamond Head and in Kapiolani Park, into e. Honolulu (*cf.* [HRBP](#) 1469), and up Manoa Valley during 1970-1974. By Feb 1977, 12 were recorded at Lyon Arboretum at the top of Manoa (*E* 38:5), in Sep 1977 about 100 were reported from the slopes of Punchbowl Crater (*E* 38:105), and by Apr-May 1979 they had spread westward to Moanalua. [Christmas Bird Count](#) data illustrate the continued expansion of Java Sparrows in the Honolulu area, peaking in 1991 and showing irregular but general declines through 2014 ([Graph](#)). Population expansion thereafter followed a pattern of singles or small numbers showing up in an area followed by fairly rapid population increases. They were first reported from Kaneohe in May 1979, Kailua in May 1980, Aiea in Nov 1980, Wiapi'o Peninsula in Sep 1981, Hawaii Kai in Dec 1981, Pearl City in Dec 1983, Ewa Beach in Nov 1984, Waimanalo in Dec 1985, Haleiwa in Aug 1986, and Kuilima Pond near the N tip of the island in Feb 1990. Through the 1990-mid 2010s numbers continued to expand throughout the island, perhaps stabilizing, as illustrated by data from the Waipi'o [Christmas Count](#) ([Graph](#)), with single-location high counts of 400 in Honolulu 21 May 2009, 584 on Mokapu Peninsula 20 Dec 2014, and 1,750 going to roost in Hamakua Marsh, Kailua 4 Aug 2012. Breeding appears to occur primarily in winter (Berger 1975e, 1981; Islam 1997).

First reports of Java Sparrows on Kaua'i, Moloka'i, Maui, and Hawai'i were all in 1982-1986, during the expansion period on O'ahu which, along with at least one report from a fisherman of flocks (up to 30) crossing the middle of the Moloka'i Channel toward

Moloka'i in Dec 1986, suggests natural dispersal. On *Kaua'i*, first reports were of individuals in Lihu'e and Princeville sometime during summer 1983. Singles, pairs, and small flocks of up to 25 continued to be recorded from both of these locations in 1984-1987 (e.g., *E*: 47:43; [HRBP](#) 0443). In 1986 they were first recorded on the Waimea [Christmas Bird Count](#), in 1988 they were reported from Kilauea and Hanalei NWR, by 1991 they were seen in Hanalei, and in Jan-Apr 1992 over 300 were eradicated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture officials at the Lihue Airport. Through the 1990s-2000s Java Sparrows continued to be seen throughout coastal areas (Denny 1999). On the Lihu'e Christmas Count abundance peaked in 1990 (with 88 observed), on the Kapa'a count it peaked in 1993 (when 280 were recorded) but has since disappeared from the circle ([Graph](#)), and on the Waimea count a high of 166 was recorded in 2000. During the 2000-2010s good numbers were recorded around the lowlands of Kaua'i, with high counts of 150 in Princeville 7 Dec 2015, 258 in Waimea 13 Feb 2013, and 1,000 leaving a roost tree there 22 Mar 2014. Following the report of a flock flying toward *Moloka'i* in 1986 (see above), no reports were received from this, at-the-time, sparsely covered island until spring 1995, when they showed up at a feeder E of Kaunakakai. Through the 1990s-mid 2010s small flocks have been recorded sporadically throughout the w. and s. portions of the island, with a single-location high count of 37 in Kaunakakai 10 Sep 2011. There were no reports of Java Sparrows from *Lana'i* until early in 2009, when residents noted small numbers in Lana'i City for the first time, suggesting a recent expansion from Maui. They were not seen during extensive searching in Nov 2010 but 63 were observed around Manele Bay 14 Jun 2010 and 21 were recorded on the island during the Lana'i [Christmas Bird Count](#) 26 Dec 2011, suggesting that populations were on their way to establishment on this island.

On *Maui*, five Java Sparrows were first reported at Kapalua Bay at the w. end of the island in Oct 1985. From this sighting they have spread slowly, to Kihea by Sep 1986 (*E* 47:43), Wailuku and Haiku by Jan 1989, Makawao by Jul 1993, and Ke'anae by Dec 2003. Numbers reportedly increased rapidly in these areas during the mid 1990s, and a high count of 282 was recorded on the 'Iao Valley [Christmas Count](#) in 2002, the final year of this count. During 2010-2016 they continued to be observed commonly around the lowlands of Maui and up to Olinda, with high counts of 120 at Lanipoko Beach 25 Feb 2016, 124 in Kihei 14 Feb 2013, and 300 near Makena 5 Oct 2014. On *Hawai'i I*, three adults and two juveniles were first reported N of the Kona Surf Hotel, Kona, in Jan 1982. By May this group had increased to 10 adults and 3 juveniles and by Jun an estimate of 100 was provided by a resident whose feeder the birds were attending. Numbers expanded in Kona through the 1980s, but none were reported away from this town until one was observed in Captain Cook in Dec 1989, followed by one near Volcano NP headquarters in Aug 1993, and 3-4 in Hilo in Aug 1995. Through the mid-2010s they had spread throughout the cultivated lowlands of the island, with single-location high counts of 150 near Kona 23 May 2013 and 450 in Hilo 29 Jan 2012.

[Acronyms and Abbreviations](#)

[Literature cited](#)

Citation: Pyle, R.L., and P. Pyle. 2017. The Birds of the Hawaiian Islands: Occurrence, History, Distribution, and Status. B.P. Bishop Museum, Honolulu, HI, U.S.A. Version 2 (1 January 2017) <http://hbs.bishopmuseum.org/birds/rfp-monograph/>

