

NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD

Mimus polyglottos

Other: Mockingbird (<1983)

monotypic

naturalized (non-native) resident, long established

The Northern Mockingbird is a well-known songster found throughout the United States, Mexico, and the Caribbean, withdrawing from n. regions in winter (Derrickson and Breitwisch 1992, AOU 1998). Vagrants have been recorded well N of the breeding range in fall and there are records of vagrants for islands off w. Mexico and in Britain (Derrickson and Breitwisch 1992, AOU 1998). Because of its popularity, attempted introductions have been made in Tahiti and elsewhere around the world, but only in the *Southeastern Hawaiian Islands* and Bermuda have released birds become established (Long 1981, Lever 1987, AOU 1998). Marsh (1855) felt it "would probably be preferable as musicians, even to the frogs above mentioned", and Henshaw (1911) thought it would make "a fine addition to the Island avifauna, though it cannot be recommended unreservedly" due to its fruit-eating habits. These last reservations did not prevent the HBAF from introducing it as a control for insect pests in 1928, and the [Hui Manu](#) also liberated at least 84 individuals for aesthetic purposes on O'ahu and Maui in 1928-1933 (*PoP* 54[11]:13), on which they have since become established in drier habitats and from which they have dispersed to such habitats on all other Southeastern Islands and a few Northwestern Islands. There is little in the published record indicating the origin of birds released in the Hawaiian Islands (other than "mainland United States"), except for four birds introduced by HBAF as being from Mexico via San Francisco (Thrum 1928), the latter locality also being the origin for many releases by the [Hui Manu](#). We follow P. Pyle (1997b) in considering Northern Mockingbird as monotypic; the w. N American "*M.p. leucopterus*" (Clements et al. 2016) would be most likely, but specimens from Hawaii at BPBM and USNM are not diagnosable to population of origin (PP examination).

There are no confirmed records of Northern Mockingbirds being liberated on *Kaua'i* and it seems likely that they dispersed there on their own (*cf.* Richardson and Bowles 1964). The first record is of one at a Lihue hotel 5 Sep 1946 (*E* 7:33), followed by reports from Kapa'a, Kipu Kai, Poipu, Kekaha, and Barking Sands in the 1960s (Richardson and Bowles 1964; *E* 21:8-9, 26:62, 29:24), suggesting that they were established by this time (Berger 1972, 1981; *E* 27:28). Signs of further expansion were recorded in 1977-1979, when groups of 1-4 birds were noted at Hanalei NWR, Waimea, Waimea Canyon, and Polihale SP, although no trends occurred during 1971-1992 on the Lihue [Christmas Bird Count](#). Through the mid-2010s they continued to be recorded around Kaua'i, in suburbs from Kilauea to Lihue and, more commonly, in drier habitats from Poipu to Barking Sands beach (Denny 1999); up to 10 birds per day were recorded during the early 2010s. On *Ni'ihau*, Fisher (1951) failed to record them but reports during the early 2000s suggest that they had become established in appropriate habitats of this island. Two were also observed on Kaula Rock, 32 km SW of Ni'ihau, in Sep 1976 (USNC 2016).

On *O'ahu*, 6 Northern Mockingbirds were released in about 1897 on the Queens Hospital Grounds in Honolulu but, other than one found dead three days after release (rumored to be flightless and killed by [Common Mynas](#)), the others were not seen again,

these rumored to have been destroyed by [House Sparrows](#), which "in superior numbers attacked the strangers" (*PoP* 14[9]:11, 18[11]:16). No further sightings were reported on O'ahu until HBAF imported over 100 mockingbirds for release in 1928 and the [Hui Manu](#) liberated an unknown number of individuals in 1928-1933 (Thrum 1928, Caum 1933, Bryan 1958, Swedberg 1967a; *HFA* 25:41; *E*:21:81). These releases resulted in established breeding: by the 1940s they were not spreading as quickly as some other species (*PoP* 54[11]:14) but were being seen regularly in Kalihi (*E* 1[4]:5, 3:33, 4:55); by the mid-1950s multiples were being recorded at nearby Salt Lake in Moanalua (e.g., *E* 16:42, 16:52-53, 17:37); by the late 1950s they had expanded to the airport (*E* 17:43), Palehua above Nanakuli (*E* 17:87, 18:71), and Punchbowl Cemetery (*E* 19:49); and by the 1970s they were being seen throughout the island (Shallenberger 1977c), from Diamond Head to Mokapu Peninsula, and Kahuku to Kaena Point. By the mid-2010s however, both range and numbers of Northern Mockingbird had contracted and they were found uncommonly and primarily in drier regions of the island from Waimanalo around to Honolulu and the w. coastline N to Kaena Pt. The increase and decline of the Northern Mockingbird in lush regions of O'ahu is reflected by numbers recorded on the Honolulu [Christmas Bird Count](#) ([Graph](#)), where they have virtually disappeared.

The first record for *Moloka'i* was of a bird heard in May 1951 (*E* 11:70) and by the 1960s they were considered established (Peterson 1961, *E* 27:28) and abundant in lowland and residential areas (Pekelo 1964, Berger 1981). They may have declined in abundance a bit following this report, as on other islands, but they continued to be considered fairly common in the drier sections of Moloka'i through the mid-2010s (e.g., Scott et al. 1986). There are no specific records of mockingbirds for *Lana'i* prior to the late 1970s (cf. *E* 27:28) but they were likely present in the 1950-1960s, during a time of few observations from this island (cf. Peterson 1961, Berger 1972). During the 1980-1990s they were considered common on this relatively dry island, and probably remained so through the mid-2010s; e.g., 18 noted island-wide during 22-24 Nov 2010 and 12 around Manele Bay 14 Jun 2010. Likewise, on drier *Kaho'olawe*, most or all visiting observers between 1980 and the mid-2010s (e.g., Conant 1983a, Gon et al. 1992, Morin et al. 1998) observed them in singles or small groups (9-15 counted on [Christmas Bird Counts](#) there in 2012-2015) and we consider them well established.

Large numbers of mockingbirds were released on *Maui* by the [Hui Manu](#) in 1931-1933 (Caum 1933, Bryan 1958, Swedberg 1967a; *E* 21:81). They were recorded by Munro (1944) in 1936 and were considered common to abundant by the 1950-1960s, on at least the leeward portions of Maui (e.g., *E* 11:70, 12:31; Udvardy 1961b, Yocom 1968). Through the mid-2010s they continued to be reported frequently, notably in Kihei and up to 2600 m on drier s. and w. slopes of Mt. Haleakala and throughout the crater (Berger 1981, Scott et al. 1986; *E* 21:81, 35:05). On *Hawai'i I*, Dunmire (1961) and Udvardy (1961b) speculated that records beginning in 1959-1960 (*E* 20:88) were based on individuals crossing the 48-km channel from Maui. They became established on Hawai'i between the mid 1960s and the 1970s (Berger 1981, Scott et al. 1986; *E* 27:28, 35:139), and through the mid-2010s they were noted uncommonly in drier sections of the island (usually < 5 observed per day), but with some indication of continued expansion through the mid-2010s along the w. coast; e.g., 15 recorded at the Mauna Kea Beach Hotel 15 Feb 2014.

Patterns of records from the *Northwestern Hawaiian Islands*, concentrated in late summer and fall at the se. portion of these islands, indicate natural dispersal from the Southeastern Islands, as does a record at sea, 230 km SSW of Ni'ihau 30 Oct 2002 (Rowlett 2002). At least five individuals have been recorded on sparsely covered *Nihoa* and *Necker*, between 29 Jun and 15 Sep, 1967-2011 (e.g., Clapp and Kridler 1977, Clapp et al. 1977; [HRBP](#) 6749). A record of two adults and a first-year individual observed on Nihoa in Sep 2002 suggests that they may have bred on this island. Approximately 15 individuals were recorded on *French Frigate* from 19 Oct 1960 through Aug 2003 (Clapp and Woodward 1968, Amerson 1971; [HRBP](#) 5561). A specimen obtained on Tern I 18 Aug 1965 (USNM 495887) is in complete juvenal plumage (PP examination), perhaps indicating local breeding there, as well. Most were first observed in Aug-Oct and 1-3 individuals over-wintered on Tern I in each of 1960-1961, 1978-1979, 1979-1980, 1982-1983, 1991-1992, and 2002-2003; three at once were recorded during winter 1979-1980 and in Aug-Nov 1985. The report by Pratt et al. (1987) for Midway is apparently in error (H.D. Pratt, pers. comm.).

[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/rlp-monograph/>