

Hawaiian Common Moorhen

COMMON NAME: Hawaiian common moorhen or Hawaiian common gallinule

HAWAIIAN NAME: 'Alae 'ula

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Gallinula galeata sandvicensis*

LEGAL STATUS: Endangered (Federal and State)

APPEARANCE: The Hawaiian common moorhen is black on the top portion of its body with dark slate blue below and a white stripe on the flanks. They have a red shield over their red and yellow bill and feet are lobed rather than webbed. The 'alae 'ula is associated with the goddess Hina and with legends about bringing the secret of fire-making to the Hawaiian people.

NATIVE RANGE: The Hawaiian common moorhen is a non-migratory, endemic subspecies of the common moorhen (*Gallinula galeata sandvicensis*).

HABITAT: Hawaiian common moorhens generally occur in freshwater wetlands below 400 feet elevation. They are found in freshwater marshes, wetland agricultural areas, reservoirs, wet pastures, and occasionally brackish water.

DIET: The Hawaiian common moorhen's diet varies with habitat but includes algae, grass seeds, plant material, insects, and snails.

REPRODUCTION: Nesting habitat is restricted to areas of standing freshwater less than two feet deep with dense emergent vegetation. Nesting occurs year round, but mainly takes place during spring and summer months. Floating nests are constructed in dense vegetation.



ECOLOGICAL THREATS: Hawaiian common moorhens are threatened by habitat loss, non-native invasive plants, introduced predators, avian disease and environmental contaminants.

MCBH CONSERVATION MEASURES: Hawaiian common moorhens occur in wetlands at MCBH Kaneohe Bay, primarily at the Klipper Golf Course Ponds, the Percolation Ditch wetland, and the freshwater influenced sections of Nu'upia Ponds Wildlife Management Area. They are also found at MCTAB.

Regular conservation measures that benefit Hawaiian

common moorhens include:

- **Habitat protection and enhancement.** Although maintaining healthy non-invasive vegetation is important, moorhens on MCBH have adapted well to an urbanized environment. Breeding activity documented at Klipper Golf Course Ponds and the Percolation Ditch wetland has increased since the implementation of habitat enhancement projects in these locations in 2003 and 2007 respectively. Established BMPs and conservation measures are employed when a project may have an effect on birds.

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- **Limiting disturbance.** Hawaiian common moorhen appear unfazed by human activity, including normal light and noise pollution associated with the Base, and it does not appear to affect their breeding success.
- **Predator Control.** Moorhen benefit from the on-going trapping of cats, mongoose, and rats within the Wildlife Management Area and wetlands.
- **Wildlife Friendly Lighting.** Although lighting on Base does not appear to be an issue, Natural Resources staff diligently work with Base and contract planners to incorporate International Dark-Sky lighting recommendations into all projects.
- **Monitoring to help direct management activities.** Natural Resources staff record occurrences and consult with USFWS as needed.
- **Education and outreach.** Development and distribution of informational material including videos, fact sheets, and briefings for military personnel and civilians on Base including new arrivals, and outreach with volunteers.

For more information: MCBH Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan, 2016. Sections 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, Appendix C & D.

PHOTOS

1. Hawaiian common moorhen. MCBH.
2. Hawaiian common moorhens parents and chicks. MCBH.