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STATE OF HAWAIʻI | KA MOKUʻĀINA ʻO HAWAIʻI
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
KA ʻOIHANA KUMUWAIWAI ʻĀINA

DIVISION OF FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE
1151 PUNCHBOWL STREET, ROOM 325
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

February 21 ,2025

Endangered Species Recovery Committee
State of Hawaiʻi
Honolulu, Hawaiʻi

SUBJECT: Division of Forestry and Wildlife Evaluation of the Nēnē Maui Nui Safe Harbor Agreements Implementation During Fiscal Year 2024

Dear Committee Members,

The Department of Land and Natural Resources, Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW) is respectfully requesting the Endangered Species Recovery Committee (ESRC) review and provide a determination and recommendation for compliance regarding the Nēnē Maui Nui Safe Harbor Agreements during Fiscal Year 2024, on the islands of Maui and Molokaʻi. The annual reports were prepared by Chonsa Schmidt and John Medeiros (DOFAW Maui) on behalf of the following Licensees: Puʻu o Hōkū Ranch, Limited (Protected Wildlife Permit; Permit no. WLIT-01) and Haleakalā Ranch Company (ITL; ITL-19). DOFAW requests the ESRC review the annual report in accordance with the requirements outlined in Section 195D-25, Hawaii Revised Statutes. This submittal is a summary of the annual report and includes comments from DOFAW.

Safe Harbor Agreement for Puʻu o Hōkū Ranch on the island of Molokaʻi.

BACKGROUND

ITL Licensee: Puʻu o Hōkū Ranch, Limited

Project: Reintroduce Nēnē (*Branta sandvicensis*) to Puʻu o Hōkū Ranch, Molokaʻi

ITL Duration: The ITL has no specific expiration and is valid unless rescinded; The SHA period was from September 4, 2001, to September 3, 2008, and the current owners wish to remain with a Right of Entry with DOFAW.

Take Authorization: Incidental take of nēnē on lands owned or otherwise controlled by Puʻu o Hōkū Ranch, Limited.

Table 1. Observations of Nēnē translocated to Puʻu o Hōkū Ranch

Year	No. of Birds Translocated	Total Birds Translocated	No. of Known Fatalities	No. of Birds Sighted	Percentage (%) of Translocated Birds Sighted (excluding known fatalities)
2024	0	74	0	0	0
2023	0	74	0	0	0
2022	0	74	0	0	0
2021	0	74	0	0	0
2020	0	74	0	0	0
2019	0	74	0	1	2
2018	0	74	0	1	2
2017	0	74	0	1	2
2016	0	74	0	2	3
2015	0	74	0	4	5
2014	0	74	0	6	9
2013	0	74	0	6	9
2012	0	74	0	6	9
2011	0	74	0	7	11
2010	0	74	0	8	13
2009	0	74	0	18	28
2008	0	74	1	33	52
2007	0	74	0	38	58
2006	0	74	5	29	45
2005	11	74	2	47	67
2004	8	63	1	42	69
2003	41	55	1	54	100
2002	14	11	0	14	100

Figure 1: Visual representation of compiled nēnē data from ITL issuance through FY 2024

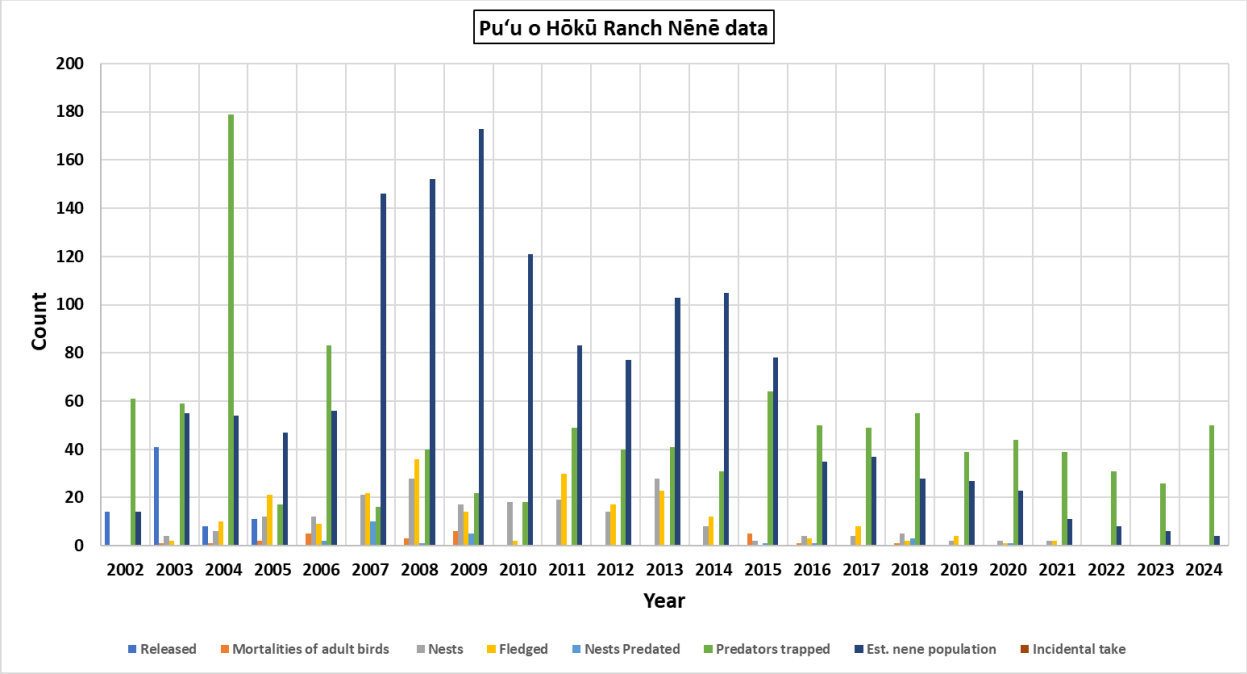
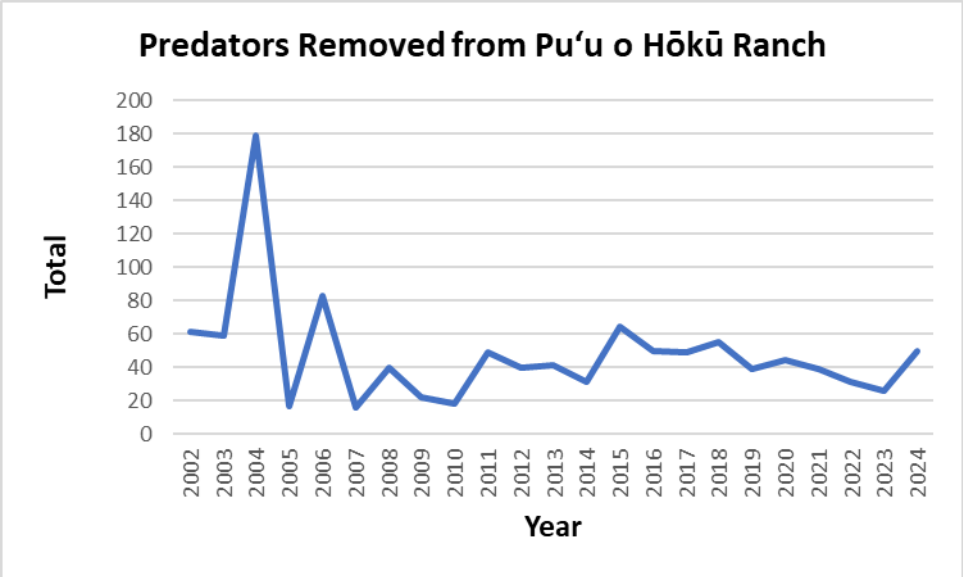


Figure 2: Predators removed from ITL issuance through FY 2024



<u>Status of ITL for Pu'u o Hōkū Ranch:</u>

Molokai DOFAW staff continues to monitor nēnē (Hawaiian goose) population at Pu'u o Hōkū Ranch in FY 2024. This past year only four (4) adult individuals were regularly observed; the population estimate for Moloka'i island is four (4) adult nēnē.

A total of 74 birds were translocated to the Puʻu o Hōkū Ranch from 2002-2005. Table 1 provides survey data for the original 74 birds translocated to the Puʻu o Hōkū Ranch. The percentage of the original 74 birds that were re-sighted is a factor of survey effort and does not account for any unknown mortality or emigration from the ranch and may not necessarily be a measure of translocation success.

There were no nests found in the pen, however, one (1) gosling with two adults were observed outside of the pen on January 29, 2024. The gosling was never resighted again during this period.

No banding was conducted during this period.

Maintenance at the open top release pen includes monthly checks and patch repairs, regular mowing and weed control for habitat maintenance, and weekly checks of waterlines and water troughs. Ranch personnel mowed an additional ten-yard perimeter around the pen. A half-acre (0.5) of alien vegetation (lantana and haole koa) was removed from the pen.

DOFAW staff removed one (1) cat and thirty-four (34) mongoose from the pen area with a total of fourteen live cage traps. In addition, Ranch staff removed five (5) cats and ten (10) mongoose from the pen area.

Safe Harbor Agreement for the Reintroduction of Nēnē to Haleakalā Ranch on the island of Maui

BACKGROUND

ITL Licensee: Haleakalā Ranch Company.

Project: Establish a nēnē population on Haleakalā Ranch, Maui.

ITL Duration: The ITL is valid for 50 years from May 22, 2012, to May 21, 2062; the SHA has been finalized as of August 2019.

Take Authorization: Incidental take of nēnē on lands owned or otherwise controlled by Haleakalā Ranch.

Table 2. Observations of nēnē translocated to Haleakalā Ranch

Year	No. of Birds Translocated	Total Birds Translocated	No. of Known Fatalities	No. of Birds Sighted	Percentage (%) of Translocated Birds Sighted (excluding known fatalities)
2024	0	56	0	3	5.4
2023	3	56	0	Pending	Pending
2022	0	53	0	2	4
2021	0	53	1	8	15
2020	0	53	0	10	19
2019	0	53	0	10	19
2018	0	53	0	13	25
2017	0	53	0	19	40
2016	8	53	0	28	60
2015	8	45	1	25	64
2014	0	37	2	23	84
2013	7	37	1	31	91
2012	20	30	2	30	100
2011	10	10	0	10	100

Figure 3: Visual representation of compiled nēnē data from ITL issuance through FY 2024

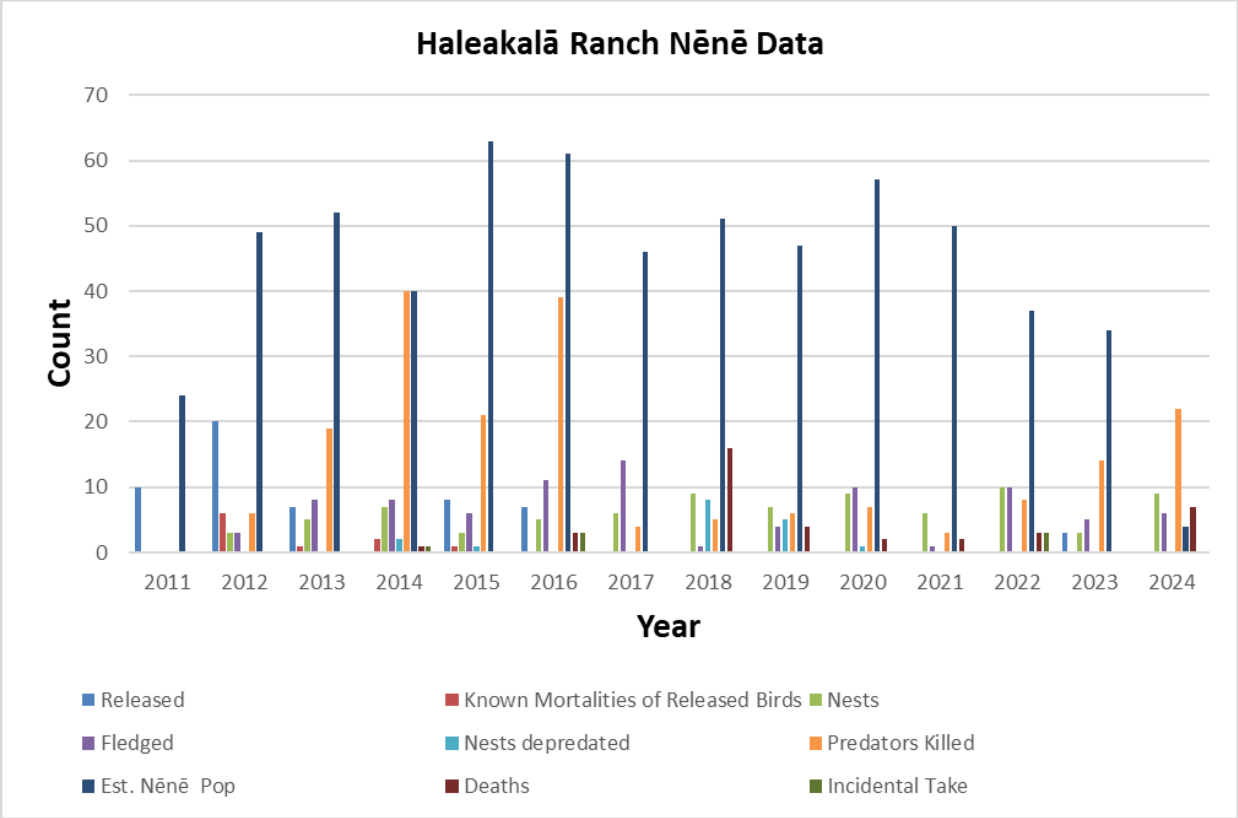
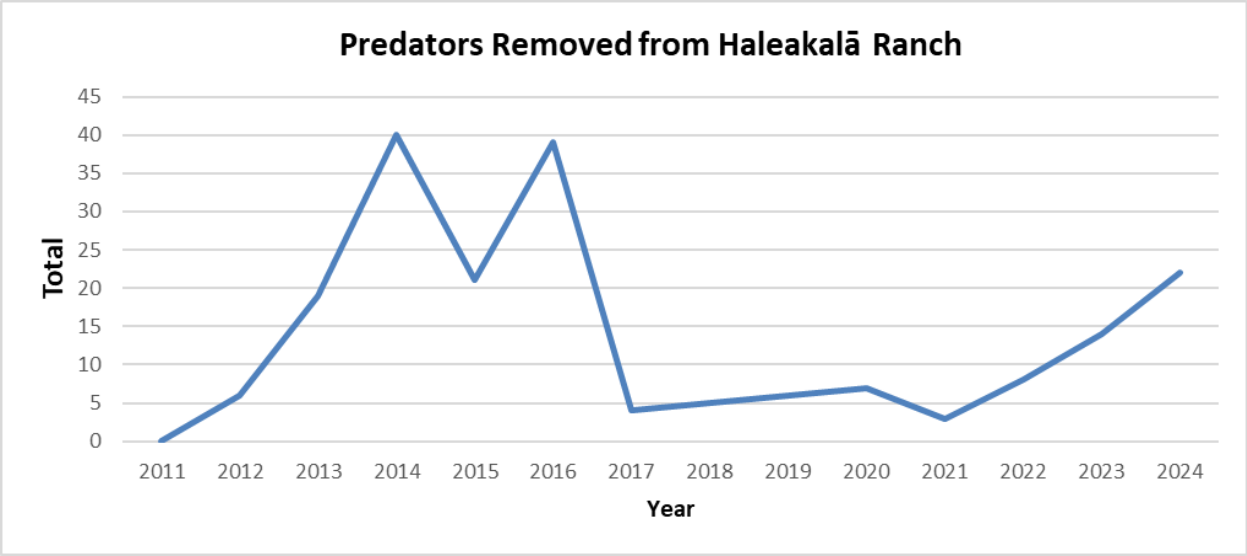


Figure 4: Predators removed from ITL issuance through FY 2024



Status of ITL for Haleakalā Ranch Company:

Management of the Haleakalā Ranch pen was turned over to Kaheawa Wind Power (KWP)/TetraTech, as is completed by a local contractor as of January 2023. This includes mowing, weed control, fence maintenance, water maintenance, predator control trapping, and road maintenance. DOFAW conducts monthly nēnē monitoring surveys, tracks nesting success, and banding.

During this period a total of twenty (25) banded adult birds were observed at the pen with additional six (6) unbanded adults.

A total of nine (9) nests were found with four (4) being abandoned and five (5) successful nests. A total of thirteen (13) eggs hatched and six (6) were fledged and banded.

A total of fourteen (14) individuals were banded at the Haleakalā Ranch pen this past season, eight (8) adults and six (6) fledglings.

Maintenance conducted by the contractor, AES, year-round. The one-acre pen was mowed 33 times this past year. Approximately 1 acre of alien vegetation were mechanically removed including lantana, strawberry guava, Bocconia, fireweed, and bur.

Predator control conducted by AES maintained sixteen (16) live cage traps, ten (10) DOC200s, and five (5) A24s. A total of twenty (20) mongoose, two (2) rats were removed. Multiple observations of pueo in person and on game cameras were noted throughout the nesting season. No aerial predator control was conducted.

Five (5) goslings were predated by either aerial predators or possibly mongoose, no carcasses were found in the area. Two (2) goslings died of natural causes and the carcasses were salvaged and placed in the DOFAW freezer.

A total of 53 birds were translocated to Haleakalā Ranch between 2011 – 2016. Three birds were translocated in FY 2023. All three birds were previously injured and released in the pen. Table 3 provides survey data for the 56 translocated birds. The percentage of the original 53 birds that were re-sighted is a factor of survey effort and does not account for any unknown mortality or emigration from the Ranch and may not necessarily be a measure of release success.

Programmatic Safe Harbor Agreement for the Reintroduction of Nēnē to the island of Moloka‘i

BACKGROUND

ITL Licensee: DOFAW to issue Certificates of Inclusion under authority of §195D-22, HRS, to landowners signing Cooperative Agreements.

Project: Encourage private landowner management activities to benefit nēnē and provide regulatory assurances if nēnē occupy or breed on their property.

ITL Duration: April 7, 2003- April 6, 2053

Take Authorization: Any nēnē or nēnē habitat above Baseline Conditions, as defined in respective landowner Cooperative Agreements.

Status of ITL and SHA: During the reporting period and to date, there are no landowners enrolled under this SHA.

ISSUES & CONCERNS

DOFAW is continuing to reach out to landowners to participate in the Programmatic Safe Harbor Agreement for nēnē on Moloka‘i. The translocation of a cohort of Kaua’i nēnē to the island of Moloka’i at Pu‘u o Hōkū Ranch will occur at the end of March or beginning of April 2025, and could provide more traction for other landowners to participate in the Programmatic Safe Harbor Agreement for the reintroduction of nēnē to the island of Moloka’i. DOFAW will be performing outreach on the Moloka‘i regarding nēnē and their reintroduction to the island.

AGENCY RECOMMENDATIONS

After internal review, and consultation with DOFAW Maui, it is the intent of the agency to keep the ITLs in place for the Maui Nui safe harbor agreements. Work and maintenance remain ongoing at the ranches. There are currently no issues with Haleakalā Ranch SHA. KWP I and KWP II have taken over maintenance/management of the nēnē release pen for mitigation purposes, and an MOU regarding the roles and responsibilities between parties is currently being executed.

In the FY 2023 annual review, positive and increased management efforts occurring at Puʻu o Hōkū Ranch were shared. Furthermore, in FY 2024 and into FY 2025, the predator control and management increased on the ranch property as DOFAW prepared for the 2025 translocation of nēnē to the site. DOFAW Maui has an ongoing relationship with the current owners of Puʻu o Hōkū Ranch. Access to the nēnē release pen remains open for maintenance and monitoring. The ranch does not wish to enter into a new safe harbor agreement, however, the ITL and ITP are valid. The ranch is excited to be working with DOFAW and KWP for management of the upcoming translocated nēnē. In FY 2025 Q2, DOFAW began reconstructing the nēnē pen in preparation for the translocation and continued management of the species at the site. After translocation, TerraForm on behalf of KWP I and II Wind Farms, will take over management of the nēnē at the ranch as part of their continued mitigation for the species. DOFAW Administration, DOFAW Maui, USFWS, and TerraForm on behalf of KWP traveled to Moloka'i for a site visit in the Fall of 2024 to meet with the new ranch manager Galen McCleary and discuss management actions and plans. The landowner is very eager to participate in the conservation of nēnē on their private land and help support and foster suitable habitat for the perpetuation of the species on Moloka'i. We are looking forward to this promising opportunity for the species.

If you have any questions, please contact Habitat Conservation Planning Program Associate, Kinsley McEachern, at laurinda.k.mceachern.researcher@hawaii.gov

Respectfully submitted,

for DGS Robert Hauff

DAVID G. SMITH
Administrator