Hawaii

Island Endemics

16th October to 23rd October 2024 (8 days)



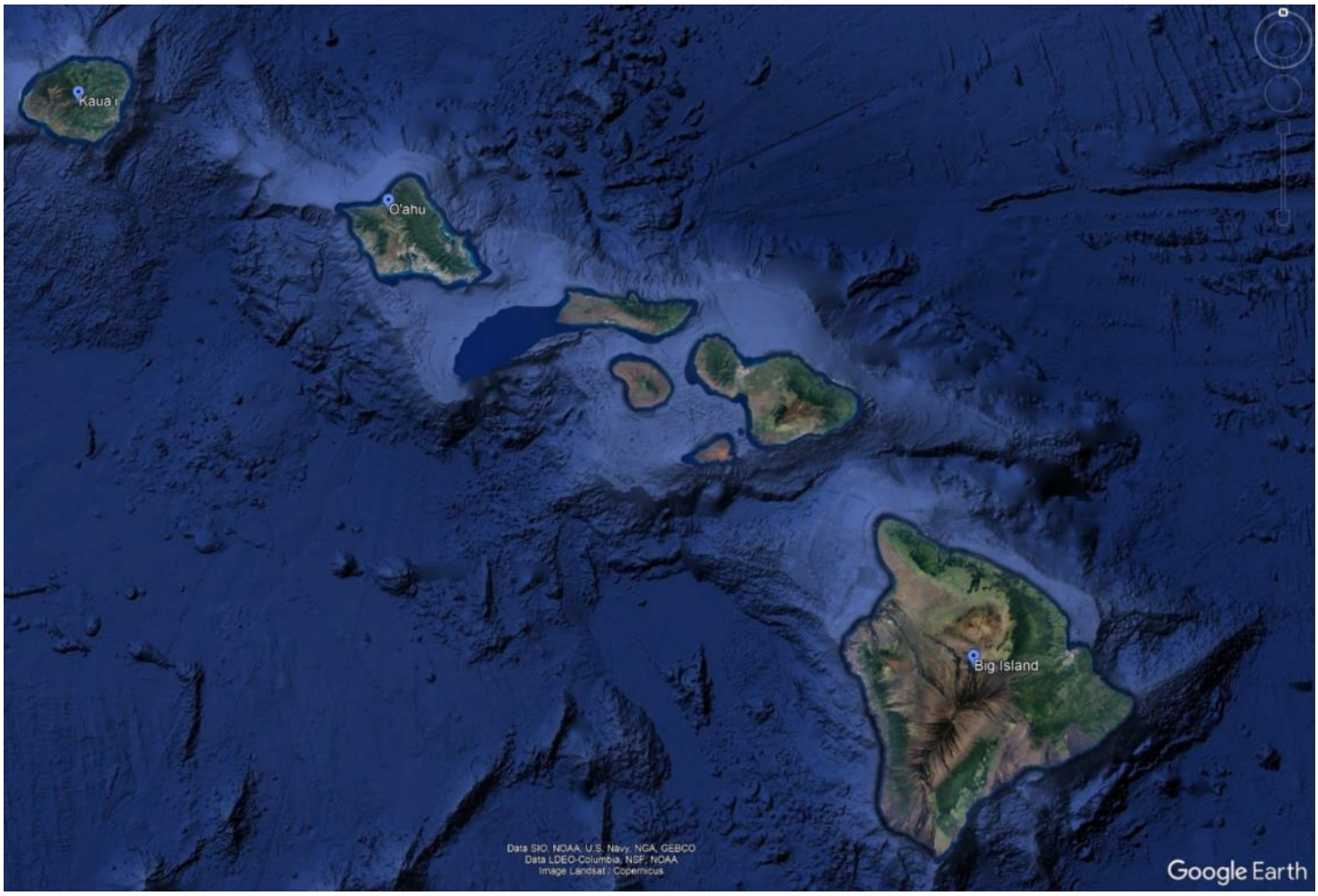
Iiwi by Stephan Lorenz

Hawaii is the most remote archipelago on Earth, located north of the equator in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. Aside from the Islands' world-renowned beauty, many unique features attract naturalists here, chiefly the high degree of endemism among the various life forms, active volcanism, verdant and varied native forests, and the surrounding great wilderness of the Pacific Ocean. The island chain's Hawaiian Honeycreepers have long attracted birders – and understandably so. The diverse forms evolved from a single ancestor akin to a North American finch, into nectarivores, bark-pickers, insect gleaners, or borers of many brilliant colours. These honeycreepers and native birds of other families have unfortunately been decimated, beginning with the arrival of the Polynesians and continuing with the introduction of mosquitoes and a multitude of alien plant and animal species. Many bird species have consequently gone extinct, and the remaining survivors face a precarious future.

Our tour covers three of the major islands searching for some of the most endangered birds on the planet, while also featuring fantastic scenery and phenomenal underwater life. Some of the top birds of the tour include the bizarre Akiapolaau, endangered Bristle-thighed Curlew, tricky Hawaiian Petrel, elegant White (Fairy) Tern and the charismatic Iiwi amongst other endemic targets such as Oahu Elepaio, Hawaii Creeper, Anianiau and Hawaii Akepa. Join us as we focus on these surviving endemic forest species, seabirds, and other Hawaiian avian specialities, along with the riches of this fabulous chain of picturesque tropical islands!

Itinerary & Map

Day 1	**Arrival into O'ahu**
Day 2	**Birding O'ahu (Kapiolani Park, Koolau Mountains, North Shore & Laie Point)**
Day 3	**O'ahu to Big Island**
Day 4	**Birding Big Island (Hakalau Forest NWR & Saddle Road)**
Day 5	**Big Island pelagic**
Day 6	**Big Island to Kaua'i**
Day 7	**Birding Kaua'I (Kilauea Point NWR, Hanalei NWR, Koke SP & Waimea Canyon)**
Day 8	**Final departures**



Birding sites in detail



Oahu Elepaio by Forrest Rowland

O'ahu: Kapiolani Park. Kapiolani Park is conveniently located close to our hotel. We'll admire the many visiting Pacific Golden Plovers and Honolulu's city bird, the beautiful White Tern. While exploring the park we are sure to encounter a myriad of introduced species among the banyan and rainbow shower trees, such as Common Myna, Red-crested Cardinal, Red-vented Bulbul, Yellow-fronted Canary, Java Sparrow, Common Waxbill, Spotted Dove, Zebra Dove, and Rose-ringed Parakeet.

O'ahu: Koolau Mountains. A high elevation ridge road provide access to the upper rainforest of the Koolau Mountains, with beautiful views down over Honolulu and Pearl Harbour. Here we'll pursue Oahu's endemic honeycreeper, the Oahu Amakihi, before we transcend down into the valleys to search for the endangered Oahu Elepaio. While on our endemic bird adventure we will most likely encounter White-rumped Shama, a thrush from Asia, noisy flocks of Red-billed Leiothrix, an occasional Red-whiskered Bulbul, and chattering Warbling (Japanese) White-eyes.

O'ahu: Laie Point. The overlook at Laie Point on Oahu's north shore, is a prominent spot to scan the ocean's surface below in attempts to pick out seabirds such as Sooty Tern, Sooty Shearwater, and if we are very lucky, the rarely encountered near-endemic Christmas Shearwater or Grey-backed Tern.

O'ahu: North Shore. While cruising the coastline, famous for world class surf beaches and secluded coves with basking sea turtles, we are sure to find some flashy finches, such as the Saffron Finch and Chestnut Munia. The North Shore is also home to some of the last family farms on O'ahu with crops of coffee, cacao, eggplant, papaya, pineapple, banana, and even scattered shrimp farms where we may find a Black-crowned Night Heron or two.

A series of small wetlands are a good spot to search for Hawaiian Coot, the Hawaiian subspecies of Common Gallinule, Wandering Tattler and Black-necked Stilt, as well as a few introduced species that could include Common Waxbill, Spotted and Zebra Doves, and Red-vented Bulbul. Our primary target in this area, however, is the Vulnerable Bristle-thighed Curlew, a unique, rare shorebird that winters here in modest numbers.

Big Island: Kailua-Kona. The youngest and most geologically active island, Hawaii is twice as big as all the other islands put together, hence it is more commonly known simply as 'The Big Island'. We'll transfer to the west of the island and small town of Kailua-Kona. Time permitting, we may find some of the islands trickier



Fairy Tern by Forrest Rowland

introduced species such as Indian Peafowl, Red-masked Parakeet, Lavender Waxbill and Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse in the vicinity.



Akiapolaau by Stephan Lorenz

Big Island: Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge. Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge is one of the finest birding sites on the island of Hawaii – Hawaii's Honeycreeper heaven! Hakalau Forest NWR is a publicly restricted montane cloud forest refuge and is home to many of Hawaii's endangered plants, native arthropods, and endemic birds. Here we'll work our way through the open forest to locate the endangered Hawaii Creeper, beautiful tangerine-orange Hawaii Akepa, Hawaii Elepaio, Omao, Akiapolaau (recognized for its remarkable bill including a short lower mandible for chiselling, coupled with a long flexible upper mandible sharply decurved for probing inside cavities.), and one of the signature birds of Hawaii, the stunning Iiwi. We will also keep a keen eye out for the very scarce endemic Hawaiian Hawk.

Big Island: Saddle Road. Mauna Kea is a massive dormant volcanic peak rising over 4 200 meters above sea level. Measured from its base, Mauna Kea is, in fact, the tallest mountain on earth, surpassing even Mount Everest at over 10 000m high. The pockets of unique tropical forest that surround this volcano along the famous Saddle Road support a wide diversity of avifauna. We'll make a few short stops on Saddle Road where we'll no doubt find a number of introduced species that occur here such as Short-eared Owl (endemic subspecies), Eurasian Skylark, Black and Grey Francolins, Chukar Partridge, California Quail, Wild Turkey and Erckel's Spurfowl.

Big Island: Pelagic. We have set aside much of today for a pelagic trip out of Honokohau, weather permitting of course. During our morning's outing, we hope to see Masked Booby, both Black and Brown Noddies, Great Frigatebird, White-tailed Tropicbird, Brown Booby and White-tailed Tropicbirds in the inshore waters. As we venture further away from the coast, Sooty and Wedge-tailed Shearwaters are likely, Bulwer's Petrel and both Sooty and White Terns.

Reaching deeper water, we will carefully scan for fast flying petrels that could include Black-winged, Juan Fernandez, Mottled and with great luck Hawaiian, plus several rarer possibilities that may include White-necked Petrel, Newell's Shearwater and Christmas Shearwaters, Leach's Storm Petrel, Long-tailed and South Polar Skuas as well as incidental cetacean sightings.



Hawaii Akepa by Forrest Rowland

Kaua'i: Kilauea Point National Wildlife Refuge. The island of Kauai is widely regarded as the greenest and most beautiful island of the Hawaiian Archipelago, and it's also the oldest of the main islands. With a wonderful view of the sea and the



Anianiau by Stephan Lorenz

surrounding coastline, Kilauea NWR will have both Brown and Red-footed Boobies as well as Red-tailed and White-tailed Tropicbirds vying for our attention as they soar back and forth near the lighthouse. With a bit luck, we may find the majestic Laysan Albatross. We also have a great opportunity to see the celebrated Nene, the endemic Hawaiian goose. Re-introduced to the mongoose-free island of Kauai, conservation efforts here have helped save the state bird from extinction.

Kaua'i: Hanalei National Wildlife Refuge. Time permitting, we'll stop in at Hanalei NWR, a great site for waterbirds, including Hawaiian Coot, the endemic Hawaiian Duck (Koloa), and can hold migrant and vagrant birds as well.

Kaua'i: Koke State Park. The rugged mountains of Kauai are richly forested, and the winding unpaved roads give us access to the interior of this picturesque island. To find the scarce, native songbirds, it is necessary to travel to mountain forests above 3000 feet to avoid the devastating effects of invasive mosquitoes. Probably introduced from Central America in the nineteenth century, the warmer lowlands provided fertile breeding grounds for these pests which rapidly spread avian diseases (avian malaria), literally decimating the thriving native bird population. Today, only in the cooler highlands where mosquitoes are less successful, do native songbirds persist.

Trekking our way on foot along boardwalks and forest trails, we will search for several critically endangered species. Our first Apapane, one of the most abundant and vocal honeycreepers, should light the way, and with luck we can hope for the canary yellow Anianiau, the heavy-billed Kauai Amakihi, and Kauai Elepaio. Meanwhile introduced species abound, with Warbling White-eyes zipping all about, the skulky Japanese Bush Warbler, melodious Chinese Hwamei, and this is also one of the few areas where Red Junglefowl are deemed 'countable'.

Kaua'i: Waimea Canyon. On the drive down from the highlands, we will stop at the spectacular Waimea Canyon, Hawaii's own version of the Grand Canyon, where resident White-tailed Tropicbirds cruise the cliffs, and along the way we could happen upon the introduced Erckel's Spurfowl.



Nene by Forrest Rowland

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease		Moderate. Suitable for all birding / wildlife interest levels. Several early starts, some long days with tiring weather conditions.
Birding Ease		Moderate. Several endemics (and some exotics) require much effort to find.
Accommodation		Comfortable to very comfortable.
Walking / Trails		Mostly easy roadside birding, but a few tougher hikes.
Vehicles / Roads		Mostly quality gravel roads in good vehicles.
Photography		Worthwhile, some species high in the canopy.
Annoyances		High humidity, frequent afternoon rain, bugs.

Financial Arrangements and Important Notes

Tour dates, prices, single supplement, approximate flight costs and tour spaces are displayed on our website.

Tour inclusions:

- All meals from dinner on day 1 to breakfast on day 8;
- All lodgings;
- Bottled drinking water;
- All ground transportation during the tour;
- All reserve entrance fees;
- Pelagic;
- All guiding services
- Tips for local guides, drivers and services.

Tour exclusions:

- Visa fees;
- ANY flights;
- Any beverages (including mini-bar charges at hotels);
- Optional excursions;
- Special gratuities;
- Telephone calls, laundry and other items of a personal nature.

Single Supplement: The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

Tipping: As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, restaurants etc.) are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leader/s. If you feel that they have given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them at your discretion.

- **Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing. The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates.**
- **Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registrations, a small group supplement will be offered to confirm the tour.**
- **Tour prices are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.**
- **The designated tour leader/s may be changed at short due to unforeseen circumstances.**
- **The itinerary is indicative only. Changes made need to be made to the order in which the tour is conducted, or some of the venues we visit closer to departure. We will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.**

- Much of our birding will be easy walking on roads, wide trails, and from a boat. The Koolau Valley trails can often be rocky, humid, slippery, muddy and buggy with a gradual and slight elevation gain. The Alaka'i, bordering Koke State Park, is montane wet forest, with temperatures ranging from 50 to 80°F (10 to 27°C) at +-4 000ft (1 200m) above sea level, and is one of the wettest places on Earth. Hakalau Forest NWR is also a montane rainforest. Even if it's not raining, it will most likely be wet, slippery and muddy with temperatures ranging from 50 -70°F (10 to 21°C) at +-6 400ft (1 950m) above sea level.
- You should be in good health and reasonable fitness to undertake this tour.
- The hotels are of a comfortable standard throughout.
- Transport on the islands is by minibus. The roads are mostly in good condition; however, due to the nature of the topography, there is the possibility of landslides having a minor interference with our trip.
- Most days in the lowlands will be hot, humid, and sunny. In montane areas, it will range from very cool (bring a fleece and a raincoat) to warm. The central mountain range of Kauai is one of the wettest locations in the world (up to 10m of annual rainfall!), but the weather here, as in much of Hawaii, varies. We do anticipate encountering some rain during the tour but preparing to protect yourself from the sun is equally, or more important.
- To reach the highland forests where the native birds are found and searching for pelagic birds by boat, will require us to start some of our days early, as we'll want to be near our destinations before the typical Hawaii trade wind patterns bring afternoon showers and light wind. Other departures will be more leisurely, but we do make sure we are out in the morning when bird activity is highest and the heat and/or chance of rain is lowest.
- Sea conditions on the pelagic trips can range from calm seas to moderately rough, so you must have decent balance and an ability to steady yourself on a moving boat.

Arrival and Departure Details

The tour will depart from Honolulu International Airport (IATA: HNL), O'ahu on day 1. As this day has been set aside as an arrival day, you are welcome to arrive at any time. The tour will conclude in the late morning of day 8 at Lihue Airport (IATA: LIH).

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your Tour Confirmation package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

Honolulu International Airport (IATA: HNL) is the main port of entry into Hawaii for this tour, whilst Lihue Airport (IATA: LIH) is the main port of exit.

Visa requirements differ by country, nationality of the traveller and duration and purpose of your intended stay. It may be necessary to obtain a visa or an electronic travel authorization in advance of your travel. It is therefore vitally important that you check with your travel agent/consulate/embassy for exact visa requirements. The following website provides detailed information about visa eligibility and assistance with online applications options where viable: Visa HQ for Travel

DO NOT book any flights until the Rockjumper Team have officially confirmed the tour.