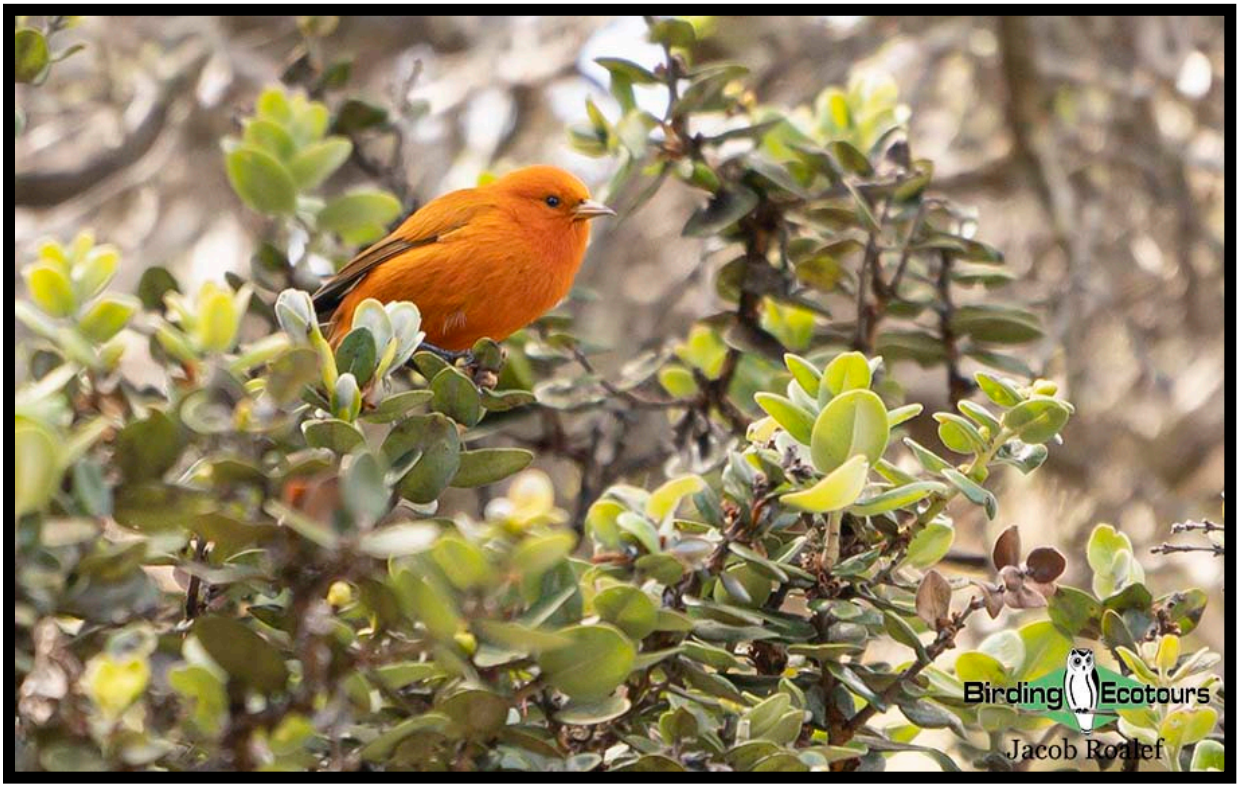
HAWAII BIRDING TOUR – ABA, ENDEMIC AND PELAGIC BIRDING IN THE PACIFIC

16 – 25 FEBRUARY 2028
07 – 16 FEBRUARY 2029



Hawaii Akepa *is one of the many Hawaiian endemics, and a highly sought-after species.*

Our Hawaiian birding tour takes in the three most accessible islands of this remote Pacific archipelago.

This tour is dedicated to tracking down the islands' extraordinary endemics—some found nowhere else on Earth and teetering on the brink of extinction. Beyond these coveted treasures, birding in Hawaii brings with it an incredible array of other birds, both on land and at sea—Hawaii's pelagic birding is truly world-class! Whether you're chasing additions to your ABA list or yearning to encounter some of the planet's rarest species, this is the ultimate Hawaiian birding experience. Join us and experience Hawaii like never before!

Hawaii, known as the 'Aloha State,' is a tropical paradise unlike anywhere else. Once an independent nation, it is now the 50th U.S. state, comprising the remote Hawaiian Archipelago in the far reaches of the Pacific Ocean. The chain includes eight main islands: Niʻihau, Kauaʻi, Oʻahu, Molokaʻi, Lānaʻi, Kahoʻolawe, Maui, and Hawaiʻi (Big Island).

A top birding destination

While Hawaii is renowned for its luxurious weddings, stunning beaches, world-class surfing, and premier vacation resorts, it is also a top birding destination. Due to its isolation, Hawaii has an incredibly high rate of endemism, with many strange and peculiar-looking birds found nowhere else. Unfortunately, competition and predation by invasive species (primarily from Europe and Asia), habitat loss, and the spread of avian malaria by mosquitoes have devastated Hawaii's birdlife, leading to extinctions and placing many species on the brink. It is one of those birding destinations to visit as soon as possible, before more endemics go extinct. Many species are now thinly distributed, becoming increasingly difficult to find.

*During this tour, we target all three endemic elepaio species including this **Kauai Elepaio**.*

Our expertly guided Hawaiian birding tour focuses on the three most accessible islands:

O‘ahu, Kaua‘i, and Hawai‘i (Big Island). We visit pristine montane forests and coastal hotspots to target sought-after endemic species, such as **Iiwi**, **Akiapolaau**, **Apapane**, and **Anianiau**, along with common and widespread species like the **Nene** (Hawaiian Goose) – Hawaii’s state bird. Other highlights include **Bristle-thighed Curlew**, **Hawaiian Petrel**, **Laysan Albatross**, and **Blue-billed White Tern**, along with notable introduced species that now form part of Hawaii’s birding landscape. Unfortunately, since 2021, Palila has become very difficult to find; this Hawaii tour is definitely one to do as soon as possible before more species slip into extinction. We've slightly abbreviated our tour by a day as we will only make an attempt for Palila if we feel it worthwhile based on recent sightings.

Iiwi *is one of the most spectacular of Hawaii’s native birds.*

With Hawaii and its birds officially recognized as countable on the ABA checklist, our tours are ideal for both North American birders adding to their ABA list and global birders seeking Hawaii’s endemics. We aim to see as many species as possible while raising awareness around Hawaii’s threatened birds and supporting local conservation efforts.

Hawaii’s combination of spectacular endemic birds, lush forests, and breathtaking scenery makes it a must-visit birding destination.

Join our Hawaiian birdwatching tour and experience the best of birding in Hawaii!

Detailed Itinerary (10 days/9 nights)

Day 1. Arrival in Honolulu, O'ahu

Today is your arrival day, and you can arrive at your leisure. Upon arrival in Honolulu (HNL) you will be transferred to our comfortable lodge, where we will spend the next three nights. Should there be time available in the afternoon, we may do some local birding nearby, getting familiar with some of the more regularly occurring species (see under Day 2 below for more details). We will gather in the lobby at 6 pm for our welcome dinner.

Overnight: Queen Kapi'olani Hotel, Waikiki or similar

*We will search for **Oahu Amakihi** in the forests of the Ko'olau Range.*

Day 2. Birding O'ahu – Waikiki to the Ko'olau Range

Our first morning will be spent birding around the Kapi'olani Regional Park. One of the star species here is **Blue-billed White Tern**, while **Pacific Golden Plover** is another sought-after bird at this site. A wide array of introduced species can also be sought and include the likes of **Rose-ringed Parakeet**, **Zebra** and **Spotted Doves**, **Java Sparrow**, **Common Waxbill**, **Red-crested Cardinal** and **Yellow-fronted Canary**. The rest of the day is spent outside of Wakiki in the forests of the Ko'olau Range where we will primarily search for the endemic **Oahu Amakihi** and the **Oahu Elepaio**. Both of these species are red-listed as per the IUCN Red List (being Vulnerable and Endangered, respectively). Indeed, rather tragically, many of the other endemic species occurring throughout the Hawaiian Islands are also red-listed and many of them Critically Endangered. Further introduced species, such as **White-rumped Shama**, **Warbling White-eye** and **Red-billed Leiothrix** can be seen in this area as well.

Overnight: Queen Kapi'olani Hotel, Waikiki or similar

Day 3. Birding O'ahu – The north shore

Our day will be spent birding and exploring the coastal region along the north shore of the island. Although perhaps more well-known for its picturesque beaches, with world-class surfing, the secluded coves and tracts of shoreline, along with the vast family farms (with crops of coffee, cacao and many others) are home to the highly sought-after **Bristle-thighed Curlew**, along with a wide range of other targets such as **Wandering Tattler**, an endemic subspecies of **Black-necked Stilt** and the endemic **Hawaiian Coot**. Further introduced species such as **Saffron Finch** and **Chestnut Munia** can also be found in the area.

Overnight: Queen Kapi'olani Hotel, Waikiki or similar

Bristle-thighed Curlew *can be seen on O'ahu.*

Day 4. Flight to Kaua'i and birding Kaua'i

After breakfast we will head to the airport for our flight (usually mid-morning) to Lihue on Kaua'i. Following our arrival, we will begin exploring Kaua'i's beautiful north shore. We will focus our efforts around the rugged cliffs of the coastal Kīlauea Point National Wildlife Refuge and the freshwater-dominated Hanalei National Wildlife Refuge. One of our main targets at Kīlauea Point is the stunning **Laysan Albatross** – small numbers of which breed here. Other species we'll search for are **Red-footed** and **Brown Boobies**, stunning **Red-tailed** and **White-tailed Tropicbirds** and **Great Frigatebird** (a similar, yet different species from the Magnificent Frigatebird occurring on mainland USA). **Nene** (also known as Hawaiian Goose), which is the state bird of Hawaii, usually provide us with great views throughout the day as well. **Hawaiian Duck** will be one of our main targets at the Hanalei National Wildlife Refuge.

Overnight: Sheraton Kauai Coconut Beach Resort, Kapaa or similar

Nene *(also known as Hawaiian Goose) is the state bird of Hawaii.*

Day 5. Birding Kaua'i – Kōke'e State Park

We will dedicate the day to birding and exploring the glorious Kōke'e State Park. This lush mountainous park offers the best endemic birding on the island, and we will spend our time birding the rainforests for a wide assortment of difficult-to-pronounce specials such as **Kauai Amakihi**, **Apapane**, **Anianiau**, and **Kauai Elepaio**. Sadly, these species are declining dramatically, so we will give as much effort as possible to find them. This area also plays host to further introduced (yet countable) species such as **Red Junglefowl**, the difficult-to-see **Japanese Bush Warbler**, and **Chinese Hwamei**. Aside from this exciting endemic birding, we are also assured to enjoy incredible vistas of the Waimea Canyon, known as the 'Grand Canyon of the Pacific'.

Overnight: Sheraton Kauai Coconut Beach Resort, Kapaa or similar

Day 6. Birding Kaua'i and flight to Kona, Big Island

We have a full morning available to us to continue birding and exploring Kaua'i. We will search for **Greater Necklaced Laughingthrush** today in particular, although we will need some luck to see this species, along with any of the island's specials we may have missed, listed under Days 4 and 5 above. We will undertake an afternoon flight to Kona, on Big Island (also known as Hawai'i) from where we will settle in for the afternoon and spend the next four nights.

Overnight: Royal Kona Resort, Kona or similar

Day 7. Birding Big Island - Pu'u La'au, Mauna Kea and surrounds

We have a full day set aside to explore other important birding areas on the island – ranging from the high elevations of Pu'u La'au on the slopes of the dormant volcano, Mauna Kea, along the Saddle Road, to the more coastal Waikōloa area. Two important endemic species that we will focus our efforts on today are the **Hawaii Elepaio** and the Critically Endangered (IUCN) **Palila**. Various other new species we are unlikely to have seen yet might include **Short-eared Owl**, **Wild Turkey**, **California Quail**, **Erckel's Spurfowl**, **Black** and **Grey Francolins**, **Chukar Partridge**, **Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse**, **Eurasian Skylark** and **African Silverbill**.

Overnight: Royal Kona Resort, Kona

Day 8. Birding Big Island - Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge

One of the most important birding sites for endemic Hawaiian species, throughout all of the Hawaiian Islands, is the Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge. Dominated by montane cloud forest, with a strong suite of native plants and general wildlife still largely persisting, we will spend the entire day birding this wonderful protected and highly restricted area. Some of our target species here include the likes of **Hawaiian Hawk**, **Omao**, **Hawaii Creeper**, **Hawaii Akepa**, **Akiapolaau**, **Iiwi**, **Hawaii Amakihi** and **Apapane**. Whilst exploring the area for these species, and others, the ancient ohia trees that dominate the area will take you to a time long past, allowing us to better understand the plight of Hawaii's endemic species.

Overnight: Royal Kona Resort, Kona

Akiapolaau *is another highly sought-after Hawaiian endemic – just look at that beak!*

Day 9. Pelagic Birding off Big Island

Today we will undertake a pelagic trip out of Honokohau Harbor. Together with our trusty captain and boat, we will spend most of the day out in the deep. In between the more regularly occurring species, we'll keep a keen eye open for the likes of a wide range of exciting and fast-flying gadfly *Pterodroma* petrels, namely **Hawaiian**, **Juan Fernandez**, **Mottled**, **White-necked** and **Black-winged Petrels**, **Christmas** and the Critically Endangered (IUCN) **Newell's Shearwaters**, **Leach's** and **Band-rumped Storm Petrels**, **Masked Booby**, **South Polar Skua** and more. Indeed, the truly exciting aspect about pelagic birding is that you can never truly predict what you'll see out there! More regularly occurring species typically seen include **Wedge-tailed** and **Sooty Shearwaters**, **Bulwer's Petrel**, **Great Frigatebird**, the stunning **White-tailed Tropicbird**, **Brown Booby**, **Sooty Tern** and both **Black** and **Brown Noddies**. Occasional cetacean sightings can also feature on these trips. Following an excellent day out on the water, we will enjoy our dinner together and reminisce about the many exciting birds we would have seen.

Overnight: Royal Kona Resort, Kona or similar

*We'll be on the lookout for **White-tailed Tropicbird** and more on our pelagic day trip.*

Day 10. Departure from Kona, Hawai'i

The tour comes to an end today after breakfast, and you can depart home from Kona Airport.

Please note that the itinerary cannot be guaranteed as it is only a rough guide and can be changed (usually slightly) due to factors such as availability of accommodation, updated information on the state of accommodation, roads, or birding sites, the discretion of the guides and other factors. In addition, we sometimes have to use a different guide from the one advertised due to tour scheduling and other factors.

Tour Details

Duration:	10 days
Group size:	6 – 12. This is a larger maximum group size than usual for us; we will have one guide for groups 6-8 and two guides for groups 9-12.
Dates:	16–25 February 2028 07–16 February 2029
Start:	Honolulu, Hawaii, USA
End:	Kona, Hawaii, USA
Price (incl. domestic flights):	US$9,690 per person sharing based on 6-12 participants (2028) US$10,290 per person sharing based on 6-12 participants (2029)
Single supplement:	US$1,690 (2028) US$1,790 (2029)

Price includes:

All accommodation
Meals (from dinner on Day 1 until breakfast on Day 10)
Unlimited bottled water in the vehicle (restaurant-bought water is for your account, though)
Permits
In-tour flights
Expert tour leader
Local bird guide fees
All entrance fees
All ground transport, including airport pick-up and drop-off

Price excludes:

Pre/post-tour flights (to Honolulu/from Kona)
Visas (if needed)
Items of a personal nature, e.g. gifts, laundry, internet access, phone calls, etc.
Any pre- or post-tour accommodation, meals, or birding excursions
Soft/alcoholic drinks
Personal travel insurance
Gratuities (please see our tipping guidelines blog)