

## Migratory Birds

# Ulili or Wandering Tattler

*Heteroscelus incanus*

**SPECIES STATUS:**

State recognized as indigenous  
Moderate Concern in U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan

Wandering Tattler image



**SPECIES INFORMATION:** Remains one of North America's least known birds. Shows high fidelity to winter ranges. Winters in the Hawaiian Islands, however, arrivals seen in three stages (adults July-August, juveniles September to November, and March to May). Diet varies with season, however, mainly consists of invertebrates such as marine, aquatic insects, and small fish. On nonbreeding grounds, forages in intertidal habitats (such as coral reefs), less frequently in soft mud or sand. The tattler also forages along mountain streams, in wetlands, fish ponds, and human-modified areas.

**DISTRIBUTION:**

Map of Wandering Tattler distribution



**ABUNDANCE:** The global population is estimated at 10-25,000. Estimated population for Hawai'i is 1,000.

**LOCATION AND CONDITION OF KEY HABITAT:** Uses a variety of habitat for non-breeding grounds. Examples include coasts, river mouths, margins of lagoons, inland streams,

wetlands, understory of densely vegetated areas, and artificial impoundments and human-modified areas such as golf courses.

**THREATS:** Little information is available on threats faced by this species. In Hawai'i specific threats to the wandering tattler are:

- Loss of wetlands, increasing human disturbance at shorelines

**CONSERVATION ACTIONS:** The goals of conservation actions are to protect current populations. In addition to common state-wide and island conservation actions, specific actions include:

- Protection of current habitat

**MONITORING:**

- Continue monitoring population levels to assess size and trends of over-wintering populations

**RESEARCH PRIORITIES:**

- Better understanding of the extent of the nonbreeding component of the population on nonbreeding areas (for example, is it number density-dependent);
- Patterns of molt associated with nonbreeding regions;
- Selection of nonbreeding areas and interactions between established residents, nonbreeding subadults, and juveniles to determine how areas are first selected;
- Timing of migration and its influence on survival rates;
- Use of space in nonbreeding areas;
- Investigate migration routes and determine Hawaii's roles and linkages to Alaska and Asian populations;
- Identify important wintering sites, migratory stopover sites, and staging areas.

**References:**

Gill, Robert E., Brian J. McCaffery, and Pavel S. Tomkovich. 2002. Wandering Tattler (*Heteroscelus incanus*). In the Birds of North America, No. 642 (A. Poole and F. Gill, eds). The Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, PA and The American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C.

Brown, Stephen et al. 2001. United States Shorebird Conservation Plan. Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences. Manomet, Massachusetts.