

Honeycreeper Predation on Caterpillars  
on the Island of Hawaii

Steven L. Montgomery  
UH Entomology Dept.  
3050 Maile Way  
Honolulu, HI 96822

Since food scarcity has been advanced as one reason for declining native forest bird density below 1100 m, a search for changes in diet was begun as a by-product of disease studies by C. van Riper, who collected the gizzard contents of 55 honeycreepers. The variously fragmented insect remains were identified at least to order and compared to Paul Baldwin's 1938-1949 data. He reported 87% of the apapane, 71% of amakihi and 100% of iiwi to contain Lepidoptera remains and the 1977-79 data show similarly high usage: 73, 82, and 67%, respectively. The recent frequencies of all other orders except Psocoptera were higher, indicating a trend toward more opportunistic foraging. Because only four birds were collected from the critical zone below 1100 m, more samples and a repeat of Baldwin's insect census are required to test the diet theory.