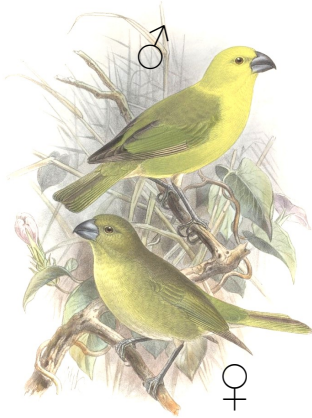


EXTINCT BIRDS OF THE WORLD

#24 LESSER KOA-FINCH



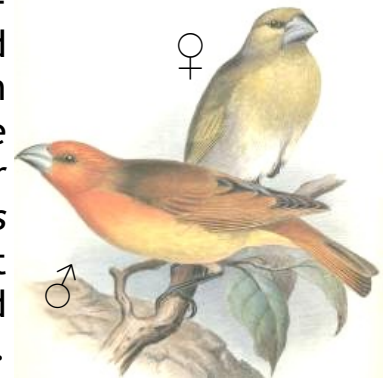
LESSER KOA-FINCH

Illustration:

John Gerrard Keulemans

The Lesser Koa-Finch, *Rhodacanthis flaviceps*, an extinct species of finch in the Hawaiian Honeycreeper subfamily, Drepanididae, is one of the earliest of all the recorded lost species. Their colouring depended on the sex and age of the bird. The only specimens caught were a family group of different ages and genders, perfect for studying. Males were gold-yellow and were olive-green on the stomach and vent. The females were a much diluted version of the male. Juveniles were similar to the females, but slightly mottled on the belly. They measured 13cm (5") in length.

The life cycle of the Lesser Koa-Finch depended on the Koa tree where it gathered nectar and fruit. The Koa also provided a refuge in which to hide from danger, and from the heat of the sun. They often congregated with their larger relative, the Greater-Koa Finch, *Rhodacanthis palmeri*. Several specimens were collected and sent to London, Cambridge, New York, Philadelphia, and Berlin. In all there were eight specimens collected. All of them from trees also frequented by the Greater Koa Finch.



GREATER KOA-FINCH

Illustration: F.W. Frohawk



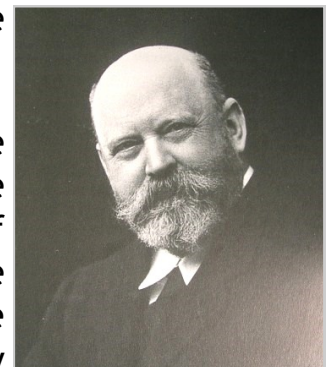
O'U

Illustration: F.W. Frohawk

The Lesser Koa-Finch has been confused with the O'u, *Psittirostra psittacea*, which was still common when the Lesser Koa-Finch became extinct, but is now critically endangered. This confusion has led to many a novice bird-watcher claiming a false sighting of the Lesser Koa-Finch.

It has been suggested that the Lesser Koa-Finch became extinct as a result of collecting activities, as the last ever sighting of the species was a bird killed by one of Rothschild's collectors.

R.V.C. with help from Wikipedia



Lionel Walter Rothschild
2nd Baron Rothschild
1868–1937