Birds, Malaria and the Changing Climate

Birds get malaria too. As in humans, the microorganism that causes the disease is transmitted by a mosquito bite. In Hawaii, several species of native honeycreepers are endangered by avian malaria and others are already extinct. Higher temperatures in the mountains play a role in this epidemic.

How do birds get avian malaria?

Pathogen: A microorganism—such as a bacterium, virus or protozoan—that can cause disease.

Vector: Any organism capable of carrying a pathogen from one organism to another.

How does climate change affect habitats in Hawaii?

Bird habitats

Mosquito habitat

What lies ahead for avian malaria?

Malaria—in humans or other animals—is very difficult to eradicate, despite efforts to control the mosquito vector population. Reducing standing water larval habitats can help slow the spread of avian malaria.