

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE



For people who love native Hawaiian forest birds, Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge is a dream come true. Thirty years ago, very few natural area reserves were set aside strictly for the protection of native Hawaiian forest birds, and none as extensive as Hakalau. Since then a number of reserves and wilderness areas that have good habitat for native forest birds, like Hakalau Forest NWR, have been designated and are managed by state and federal government agencies as well as private organizations like The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i. Setting aside an area of land with a written proclamation, however, doesn't do much for bird protection unless it is accompanied by sound and careful management. That takes people, time and money, and there never seems to be enough of any of these things. The Friends of Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge was established in the Spring of 2006 to help the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service better protect and manage this unique refuge for some of Hawai'i's rarest and most beautiful birds, plants and invertebrates. We hope you will join us as we work to initiate volunteer programs that will assist managers in their work and help us make the public aware of this invaluable resource.

Sheila Conant, President

THE MANAGER'S PERCH



This is exciting! At long last, Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge has a friends group! Mahalo nui loa to the board members of the Friends of Hakalau Forest (FOHF) for their organizational efforts and for enduring the paperwork and meetings required for the setup. I have never seen folks who are so quick to volunteer for jobs like compiling address lists, taking minutes of board meetings and completing IRS forms. I would also like to thank and welcome all of you who are receiving this first e-newsletter. Most of your names came from lists of folks who have already assisted the Refuge with tree planting, weed pulling, visitor orientation and other services or through participation in recent Open Houses. If you have not already sent in a FOHF membership application form, please consider doing so, and encourage your friends to do likewise.

Now the fun begins! There will be lots of opportunities for FOHF members to use their skills, interests and motivation to restore native habitat and to generate greater understanding and appreciation for the rain forest community managed by the Refuge. In future newsletters, I hope to highlight some of these opportunities and some of your accomplishments.

Dick Wass, Refuge Manager

OPEN HOUSE AT HAKALAU FOREST NWR

This year's annual open house will be Saturday, October 13th. Those interested in spending a day at the Refuge viewing the greenhouse operation, reading of the research that's been done on the Refuge (as well as related areas) and take the opportunity to see some of Hawaii's rarest native birds should save this date. If you'd like to attend the open house you will need to call the FWS office 443-2300 and make your reservation even if you have your own four-wheel drive (the number of people and vehicles will be limited). It's a bumpy, long & slow 11 mile drive from the turnoff at Mauna Kea Summit Road along the Keanakolu-Mana Road so young children are not advised. If interested give the FWS Hakalau Forest Refuge office a call to make your reservation & their helpful staff will give you additional information. Hope to see you there.

PROJECTS - TWO INTERPRETIVE TRAILS FOR THE REFUGE

This year the FoHF Board hopes to establish and maintain interpretive trails at two sites on the Refuge which are most frequented by visitors. One trail will be located at the endangered species outplanting area in Maulua which is open to the general public on weekends and holidays (by reservations through the Refuge office in Hilo). The other will be established at the Refuge Administrative Site between the greenhouse and Hakalau Gulch. Numbered posts will be placed next to naturally occurring and outplanted native plants along the two trails. Visitors will be able to reference the post number on a printed handout for the name of the plant, descriptive information, ethnobotany and related information. FOHF project participants, in collaboration with FWS staff, will determine the best route for each trail, fabricate and place the numbered posts, prepare the handout, care for the plants and control weeds. Those interested in participating in this first project please email us at friendsofhakalauforest@gmail.com.

MEMBERSHIP REPORT JULY 2007

We're a small organization right now and yet considering there hasn't been a membership drive per say our numbers are looking very positive. Total membership is 48 and this month we are beginning our membership drive, sending out letters to those that know the Refuge but may not know of its supporting organization, *the Friends of Hakalau Forest*. Your Board has been the sole working group for this and other start up items and we are now looking to initiate committees for various select projects, which you'll read about in this newsletter. At this time we want to thank you for your membership and look forward to seeing you and hearing from you as we all work together help Hakalau Forest NWR.

Lorri Ellison, Membership Chair

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

ʻAKIAPOLAʻAU – *HEMIGNATHUS MUNROI*



Photo by Gus Bodner

The ʻAkiapolaʻau (ʻAki for short) is a bird of superlatives. Unique in the world in at least four ways, it depends on Hakalau for much, if not most, of its remaining habitat. (Some of us feel that way, too—hence, FHF.) How is the ʻAki unique? Let us count the ways: it is the only bird in the world to use its lower bill as a bark chisel—like half of a woodpecker. That’s one. The top bill is far longer than the bottom and must be held up out of the way when chopping fat grubs from Koa bark. Incredibly, the bird can touch together the tips of the top and bottom bills, like chopsticks—and it can do so in a flash. To chopstick, the skull of the animal must deform so much that the eyes visibly squish into ovals (and it seems the brain must change shape as well). Many birds have such cranial kinesis, but none so much; that’s two.

The third is the sheer number of functional configurations of the bill—not only chisel and chopsticks as mentioned, but also use of the upper bill as a long probe or pry-bar for bark-beetle extraction. At least, I do not know of any other such ‘Swiss army knife’ bill in the bird world. Also, I have never held a bird with such a thick wrestler’s neck, though there must be competitors in this character.

Fourth, ʻAki youngsters spend more time dependent on their parents than any other known passerine. The “just so” story: it takes young birds 9 to 12 months to learn how to use their bills. However, ecology could also be responsible for the apparent record fledgling dependency; certainly, such “higher education” would be impossible without long-lived parents. Hawaiian land birds in general have extraordinary life spans; UH researchers have captured ʻElepaio, ʻAkepa, and other species between 12 and 18+ years old. With territories averaging from 24-50 acres, each ʻAkiapolaʻau pair forms a large and long-lasting homestead.

This species is one of many which make Hakalau worth preserving—for the year, for the century, and ... at the very least, until the new island of Loʻihi arises to accept its birthday gifts of plants and animals down the island chain, from the great Hawaiian evolutionary experiment five million years running. Our own human evolutionary journey began about as long ago, in Africa. It is hard to escape the conclusion that the destinies of the two experiments are entwined. So, for the ʻAki, and for us: Laulima, Hakalau.

Gus Bodner, Secretary

MONEY MATTERS – THE TREASURER’S REPORT

Although Friends of Hakalau Forest was not “advertised” until the October 2006 Open House, we now have quite a few members/donors & a grant that brings the FOHF account to approximately about \$9,040. Our initial expenses have been minimal and of a start-up nature such as filing fees for non-profit status, postage, copies. We now have our State and Federal non-profit status so your membership & donations (which help fund projects) are tax deductible. We can use membership funds for items and projects not specified by our National Fish & Wildlife Foundation grant (see below). Refuge Manager Dick Wass has given us his Wish List and we are choosing and prioritizing projects based on that.

Every new “Friends” group of a National Wildlife Refuge is eligible to receive a \$5,000 start-up grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. It’s a long, slow and often tedious process, but we have finally received the signed contract and the funds. What we spend the grant money on is limited by the grant budget: “Developing a membership base and engaging local partners, distributing educational materials and producing/implementing a conservation strategy”. Board members are working on several projects (a FOHF logo to use on outreach brochures, letterhead, website, newsletters; various incentive merchandise; an interpretive trail) and the funds we currently have will be able to cover these projects.

We invite your support and assistance. Please make your checks payable to Friends of Hakalau Forest NWR and mail them to P. O. Box 6065, Hilo, Hawai'i 96720. Mahalo nui loa,

René Siracusa, Treasurer

INTERESTED IN DOING WEEKDAY VOLUNTEERING?

If you’ve been thinking of volunteering at Hakalau Forest but can’t be away for several days, there is another possibility: One or two Mondays a month 4-5 of us travel to the refuge and do greenhouse work under Baron Horiuchi’s supervision. We work transplanting seedlings, doing cuttings, weed control, and/or whatever else needs to be done. It’s a wonderful contribution to the greenhouse effort and a great way to spend a Monday. Dates for the next several months are: August 13th, August 27th, September 10th, September 24th. If you’re interested & would like to do volunteer work at the greenhouse on one of these dates email me at kolea7@hawaii.rr.com. Details of departure time, where to meet, what to bring etc will be emailed to you.

Lorri Ellison



FoHF Board member Maile Sakamoto pictured at right with one of the endangered outplantings.



Board members pictured at the refuge:

Casey Jarmin,

Maile Sakamoto,

Rene Siracusa,

Lorri Ellison,

Gus Bodner

MEET THE BOARD:

Gus Bodner (Secretary)

Gus Bodner came to Hawaii in 2000 to study birds. He is a PhD student in Zoology at UH Manoa, working on Hakalau birds in relation to migration and disease patterns. Gus was awarded a National Science Foundation Graduate Teaching Fellowship several years ago. For his fellowship project he worked extensively with Hawai`i teachers and children in grades K-12 on something he called "Kolea Watch," a activity in which children followed pr-migration molt and timing of migration of the Kolea or Pacific Golden Plover.

Sara Burgess

Sara Burgess has been a Puna resident for 12 years. She is a former instructor in Communication at University of Phoenix, San Francisco State University, Antioch University, University of Washington, Washington State University, and four universities in People's Republic of China. Currently Sara is owner and President of Communication Unlimited workshop development and presentation for public and private organizations in the U.S. Singapore, Indonesia, California, and Washington

State. Sara belongs to a number of community organizations, including the United Nations Association Hawaii Island (Vice President), League of Women Voters, American Association of University Women, Sierra Club, ACLU, Friends of Pahoa Library, Land Use Committee for Puna Community Development Plan, Democratic Party of Hawaii and the Hawaii Island Press Club. Sara is also a volunteer for the Junior Achievement Program at Pahoa Elementary and a reader for Family Reading Night at Pahoa Elementary.

Jean Campbell (Board Member)

Jean Campbell lives in Kailua on Oahu and works as an attorney at Carlsmith Ball LLP in Honolulu. She attended the William S. Richardson School of Law at the University of Hawaii. During her free time, Jean enjoys running, working in her garden, traveling to watch birds and restoring the native forest on her property in Volcano.

Sheila Conant (President)

Sheila Conant was born and raised in Hawai`i (Mānoa). Interested in the biology and conservation of Hawaiian birds and plants for over 40 years. Began teaching and research at UH Mānoa in 1974. Avocations: training working Border Collies, reading and gardening, and, oh yes, birdwatching. She plans to retire to Volcano in a few years. Graduated from Maryknoll High School (Honolulu), then got a BA and MS in Zoology from UH Mānoa, later a PhD in Zoology and an MS in Botany at U of Oklahoma. For more on professional activities, go to www.hawaii.edu/eecb/FacultyPgs/sheilaconant.html

Lorraine (Lorri) Ellison (Board Member)

Lorraine Ellison graduated from UH Manoa (1972) with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing and worked initially in hospital nursing, then transferred into Public Health where she covered the North Kohala district, then Waimea & lastly Puna district before retiring in 2004. Lorri has been volunteering in conservation since 1979 and volunteering at Hakalau Forest NWR since 1989. The Big Island has been her home since 1972 and she presently resides in Keaau. Hakalau Forest NWR is a very special place and Lorri feels it is an honor to be a member of the Friends of Hakalau Forest board. She says, "What has been achieved at the refuge is phenomenal and as a board member I feel it is important to acknowledge those who have made this happen, as well as support and work cooperatively in goals to educate, to fund raise, and to do hands on projects for the refuge."

Ken Goodenow (Board Member)

Ken Goodenow, born and raised on Oahu, moved to Hawaii Island in 2002. Mr. Goodenow, a local attorney and former state representative, is currently employed as the Deputy County Clerk. Previous volunteer work includes being a board member of the Waimanalo Health Center, the Friends of Waimanalo and the Bellows Air Force Base Advisory Board. He graduated with honors from the William S. Richardson Law School in 2003.

Patrick Hart

Patrick Hart has been working with Hawaiian forest birds since 1991, when he began his PhD studies at UH Manoa. Since then, he has spent thousands of hours banding and watching birds at Hakalau Forest NWR, which he considers to be one of the loveliest places in the world. Pat worked as a post-doc from 2002-2005 on the Biocomplexity of Avian Disease project in Volcanoes National Park. He is now an Assistant Professor of Biology at UH Hilo, where he continues to study Hawaiian forests and forest birds.



Casey Jarman (Vice-President)

Board Member Casey Jarman is a Professor at the University of Hawai`i William S. Richardson School of Law. Casey is the founding director of the law school's nationally recognized Environmental Law Program and is a former Commissioner of the State Land Use Commission. She has been a Board member of several organizations, including the Audubon Society, the Hawai`i Wildlife Fund, and the Sierra Club, and is currently President of the Friends of Hawai`i Volcanoes National Park. An inter-island commuter, her home is in Volcano.

Rene Siracusa (Treasurer)

Rene was born New York City 1938. Raised in Rip Van Winkle country, Hudson Valley, NY, and is a lifelong "tree hugger." BA in linguistic anthropology at City College of N. Y. MA and ABD in same area UH Manoa. She has been an organic farmer and orchardist in Puna since 1979, and lives with 1 horse, 4 sheep, 1 Border Collie, 3 ducks and several cats. Rene's involvement in community activities has been extremely broad. She is currently a member of the Big Island Invasive Species Committee, the Coqui Working Group, and the Hawaii County Planning Commission. Among other things she is also past President and co-founder Puna Outdoor Circle, President and founder

Malama O Puna, past president Puna Friends of the Parks, founding member Pahoia Weed & Seed, past Board member Friends of Pahoia Library, past V-P Malamalama Waldorf School, Treasurer Puna Malama Pono.

Maile Sakamoto (Vice-President)

Maile Sakamoto is the Public Participation Coordinator for the Department of Health, Environmental Planning Office. She was formerly the Information/Education Coordinator for the Dept of Land & Natural Resources, Division of Forestry & Wildlife, and Program Designer/Director of the Youth Conservation Corps. Outside of the office, she's a ceramic artist and foodie.

Emily Needham (non-board Editor)

Emily worked for many years as a RN in the Emergency Department of a Trauma Center in So Ca. She and her husband retired to the Big Island a year ago and feel they have really found the best place to smell the plumeria and watch the birds. She feels working with newsletters is a creative outlet as much as her singing with community vocal groups. She has been Newsletter Editor for the Assistance League of Riverside, as well as several other community organizations and churches.