Celebrating 40 Years
How It All Began

Honoring the Nature-Culture Connection
Responding to COVID: Physically Distanced Coral Monitoring
Cooke Foundation Centennial
MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Ulalia Woodside

Hawai‘i is one of the remotest and biologically diverse locations on Earth. From the ‘i‘iwi (scarlet honeycreeper) that feeds on endangered lobelia flowers to the ecosystems that span the highest mountain summits to the depths of the ocean, Hawai‘i’s harbors plants and animals found nowhere else on Earth. This is what makes Hawai‘i a global “hotspot” for conservation. The Native Hawaiian worldview recognizes a reciprocal and loving relationship between people and the nature around them, and considers native species as venerable ancestors. The honoring of this connection in our conservation work—and in our daily lives—makes Hawai‘i stand out as an example of how this approach can lead to sustainability in our islands, and on our planet.

To share this concept more broadly, senior scientist and cultural advisor Sam ‘Ohu Gon is crafting a primer on “Native Hawaiian Conservation” (an approach that safeguards both biological and cultural diversity in Hawai‘i). The presentations, to be shared widely, are designed to introduce people of any background to the Hawaiian worldview and cultural significance of our species and ecosystems, with the aim of reconnecting to the natural world and restoring ecological abundance.

For the past three years, our Maui Marine Team and partners have been monitoring and photographing 40 tagged coral colonies in order to document changes in coral health over time and record bleaching responses when the ocean is warmer than usual. The photographic timeseries tells a compelling story about reef conditions and will deepen our understanding of coral resiliency in the face of climate change. A few corals have died completely since we started monitoring, while others have shown growth and recovery over the past two years. Having a continuous dataset is important to this effort.

With the arrival of COVID-19, our team worked with TNC’s dive safety officers to establish protocols to protect our team and operate responsibly in the field. Team members drive separately to sites, handle only their own gear, wear masks on land, maintain a 6-foot distance both on land and in the water, and disinfect all equipment after surveying.

This is one example of how TNC Hawai‘i and our partners will be able continue our work while safeguarding our teams from COVID-19.

Ulalia Woodside.

E Komo Mai! This summer we welcomed our new Director of Marketing and Communications, Toni Parras, who comes to us with decades of experience in conservation and communications.

Previously Director of Editorial and Media Relations at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution in Cape Cod, Massachusetts, she also served as the Communications Manager for NOAA’s Office of National Marine Sanctuaries in Hawai‘i.

“Toni’s extensive experience in conservation, strategic communications and media will elevate our efforts to preserve Hawai‘i’s lands and waters,” says Executive Director Ulalia Woodside.

Over her 20+ career, Toni has worked with world-renowned scientists, Pulitzer Prize-winning authors, high-ranking government officials, tribal clan chiefs, local fishermen and community leaders around the globe. She started her career in film production, working on movies, TV and wildlife documentaries for Animal Planet, Discovery, National Geographic, ABC, NBC, the BBC and many others. She has also worked as a freelance writer and photographer.

“I am honored and excited to be working with TNC,” says Parras. “Living in balance with nature is our best hope for the future, and I look forward to sharing stories about how TNC is working toward that goal by collaborating with communities and partners to revitalize natural habitats across the islands.”
Before there was even a law on the books in Hawai’i for conservation easements, local businessman Samuel Cooke and President of Moloka’i Ranch Philip Spalding signed on to Kamakou, establishing The Nature Conservancy’s first forest preserve in Hawai’i. It was the kind of pioneering excellence TNC is known for—informed by science, strategized with business acumen, and bolstered by strong relationships. Spalding called it the “most important thing I’ve done in my life.”

Establishing Kamakou Preserve on Moloka’i, and a few years later the Waikamoi Preserve on Maui, marked the beginning of a new norm for protecting nature. This TNC model forged partnerships between local businesses, scientists, government and landowners, and was supported by philanthropists who donated their time and resources to save what Cooke called “the real Hawai’i”—a land of incredible biological diversity and cultural connection, with spectacular landscapes, plants and animals found nowhere else on Earth.

In 1980, Henry Little, a Regional Director for TNC who assisted with the Kamakou deal, helped established the Hawai’i state chapter—TNC’s twentieth. Little says the success of the chapter rested on hiring the right local people, such as Kelvin Taketa, who started as a field representative and then led TNC Hawai’i as its Executive Director into the 1990s.

Little also credits a strong board, led by Cooke, that brought unlikely partners together.

“At that time, businesses and environmentalists didn’t mix and didn’t realize they had shared values,” says Little. “Sam Cooke changed that and built a powerhouse board that made everything else possible.”

While the organization recognized Hawai’i as the endangered species capital of the world, TNC’s early staffers note that the unique natural heritage of these islands—and the threats to it—was not taught in schools while growing up in Hawai’i.

Education and building awareness were essential components of TNC’s early work. Internship programs and lesson plans were taught in the Hawaiian language were restored through language immersion schools, and O’ahu residents voted against condo development above Sandy Beach.

TNC doubled its membership, opened five more preserves across four islands, and created the first comprehensive maps of Hawai’i’s ecosystems. TNC also helped secure state and federal funding for conservation management, resulting in the first national wildlife refuge for endangered tropical forest birds in the U.S. at Hakalau on the island of Hawai’i.

In the early 1990s, TNC partnered with the state’s Division of Forestry and Wildlife, Haleakalā National Park, Maui Board of Water Supply and Haleakalā Ranch to form the first of what would become many Watershed Partnerships—voluntary alliances among private and public landowners to manage forests, a critical source of the islands’ fresh water.

The Waikamoi Preserve’s Kamakou Forest Reserve, in four panels ©TNC

The rare happy face honeycreeper in four panels ©TNC

In the first national wildlife refuge for endangered tropical forest birds in the U.S. at Hakalau on the island of Hawai’i.

Hawaiian tree snails have unique and beautiful markings. © Vs. J. Laren

The Islands of Life, co-authored by TNC’s Senior Scientist and Cultural Advisor Sam ‘Ohu Gon and historian Gavan Daws in 1988, brought native plants and birds into people’s livings rooms and thoughts.

“We were able to share the plight of our endangered birds, insects like the happy face spider and gorgeous singing land snails, unique plants and trees,” says Taketa. “Seeing it firsthand ignited people’s passion for and pride in Hawai’i. We built a new norm for conservation.”

During the 1980s, Hawai’i’s population reached 1 million, teaching and learning in the Hawaiian language were restored through language immersion schools, and O’ahu residents voted against condo development above Sandy Beach. TNC doubled its membership, opened five more preserves across four islands, and created the first comprehensive maps of Hawai’i’s ecosystems. TNC also helped secure state and federal funding for conservation management, resulting in the first national wildlife refuge for endangered tropical forest birds in the U.S. at Hakalau on the island of Hawai’i.

B UT even these expansive partnerships couldn’t stop the spread of threats like invasive weeds and feral animals. A 1992 TNC report found that Hawai’i had the nation’s highest rate of invasive species due to gaps in prevention, detection and control programs.

In response, TNC spearheaded the Coordinating Group on Alien Pest Species (CGAPS) and the Invasive Species Committees, which brought together government, local farmers and ranchers, business, and community groups to combat this problem. The related Silent Invasion campaign made invasive species a household phrase.

“I am humbled by TNC’s legacy of conservation in Hawai’i and excited to be part of the next generation guiding the way into the future,” says Ualalia Woodside, current Executive Director for the Hawai’i chapter.

TNC continues to expand protected lands and forge partnerships to effectively manage Hawai’i’s natural lands and the vital resources and unique species they support. Stay tuned for Part Two of our 40th anniversary story, which includes the addition of a Marine Program, the acquisition of Palmyra Atoll, and a deeper focus on the nature-culture connection.
Celebrating Legacy Club Members

Malaho to our newest Legacy Club members who have made a lasting gift to protect Hawai‘i’s lands and waters for generations to come. In their honor; we plant and dedicated rare native loulu palms (Pritchardia schizophylla) in Kona He‘eia Preserve on Hawaii Island.

If you would like to create a legacy for conservation in your will, trust, retirement plan, life insurance, or if you have already named TNC in your estate plans, please let us know. We would be delighted to welcome you to the Legacy Club and plant a loulu in your honor. We have 50 loulu to dedicate each year; and 500 over the next decade.

Contact: Lara Sui, (808) 587-6235, lsui@tnc.org

Loulu dedicated to:
Mark & Lori Admiral
Paul & Tanya Alston
Paula & Carl Bonham
Anne Carter
Joyce Chung & René Lacerte
Laureen Elizabeth
Dr. Jean Kenyon
Eric & Kathee LeBus
Elizabeth McCutcheson
Melinda & Harold Mizuno
Douglas Perrine & Lisa Diaz
Louisa P. Sizemore
In honor of Finteanne Tice-Burros
In memory of Wilma Ann Tice

Stand Up for Nature

Every acre we protect, every reef we restore, every species we shelter, and every community we support—begins with you. Your commitment and generosity make a lasting impact on Hawai‘i’s lands and waters, now and into the future.

Please consider a gift in honor of our 40th anniversary to keep our mission strong into the next 40 years. Visit support.nature.org/hawaii.

Malaho for your support!

The Nature Conservancy, Hawai‘i Chapter

A s we look back on The Nature Conservancy’s 40 years in Hawai‘i, we are deeply appreciative of those donors and supporters who have consistently nurtured our work, growth and success. One of these special supporters is The Cooke Foundation, Ltd. Anne Rice Cooke formed the Cooke Foundation in 1920 with the mission of helping “all worthy endeavors for the betterment and welfare of [the Hawai‘i] community” flourish. In the 100 years since, this family foundation has been a significant factor in the growth of communities and services in Hawai‘i, supporting over 300 nonprofit organizations.

The Nature Conservancy in Hawai‘i is one of those organizations the Cooke Foundation has helped enable to succeed. In 1981, Sam Cooke, then-president of the foundation, was selected to be founding Chairman of the Board of Governors of the newly formed Hawai‘i chapter of TNC, and served in various board leadership roles until 1992. In those early years, Sam directed campaigns that raised at least $125 million for the protection of more than 50,000 acres of key conservation lands in the state.

Gregory Wrenn, after 22 years of working with the foundation, stepped into the role of president in 2017. Wrenn says Hawai‘i remains a source of inspiration as he and the board consider how the foundation can best support the vital work taking place in the islands.

“I think about the beauty of Hawai‘i, this profound beauty that can’t be found anywhere else in the world,” says Wrenn. “It’s so important to support causes that care about the environment, to support the protection of the beauty and health of our ecosystems far into the future.”

Since 1991, the Cooke Foundation has donated over $1 million to TNC Hawai‘i. Wrenn feels preserving and protecting the environment of Hawai‘i is deeply important. “The years of commitment and trust in our work has led the Foundation to name TNC as one of five annual grant recipients,” Wrenn says.

Wrenn acknowledges it can be hard to plan for the future, especially after witnessing just how uncertain the future can be. Nonetheless, he says one thing is certain: Conservation will always be important to the health of Hawai‘i. Wrenn is confident that the Cooke Foundation will continue to value and support the conservation work of TNC and hopes that the partnership between the two organizations will continue to make a significant positive impact on all the islands and their communities.

“I’m very proud of the work of the Cooke Foundation,” says Wrenn, “and I feel a very strong sense of commitment to what my great-great-grandmother started for Hawai‘i. Giving back to the community is very important to us because Hawai‘i is important to us, and the Cooke Foundation will continue to work to be at the forefront of the collaborations that will transform Hawai‘i, in conservation and beyond.”

We at TNC Hawai‘i are grateful for the many years of support from the Cooke Foundation, and are thrilled to celebrate their centennial as we celebrate our 40th anniversary.
CELEBRATING 40 YEARS IN HAWAI’I

This special edition aloha shirt entitled ‘Āina Pūlama Mau, meaning “islands forever treasured” in Hawaiian, celebrates the 40th anniversary of The Nature Conservancy of Hawai‘i, and features over 30 species of native flora and fauna designed in striking detail by Kahala with guidance from TNC’s scientists and Hawaiian cultural advisors. A portion of the proceeds goes toward supporting The Nature Conservancy of Hawai‘i.