



Hawai'i

species spotlight Great Huki Begins Restoring a Hālau Maui Parrotbill



Kūka'iau Ranch:

On the landscape of the Big Island forever

Letter from the Executive Director



John De Mello

Dear Supporters:

This year marks the 30th anniversary of The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i. Thirty years is a significant milestone for any organization, especially the Conservancy, which has evolved from a small, non-profit start-up to a statewide institution with programs on all the major islands.

The person with the longest tenure among our staff is Ed Misaki, director of the Moloka'i Program. When Ed joined the Conservancy as a preserve manager back in 1983 he was an army of one—working out of an old tool shed with a donated Ford truck and a borrowed backpack.

Today, he directs a team of 10 and oversees three Moloka'i preserves totaling 9,000 acres. He also leads the East Moloka'i Watershed Partnership, a group of public and private landowners working to restore 11,000 acres on the Island's eroding south slope.

As a conservation organization that protects Hawaii's spectacular natural resources, the work we do has real public benefit—both environmental and economic. By protecting our coral reefs, for example, we are restoring healthy fisheries. And by protecting our native forests, we are ensuring our future water supply.

Throughout our 30-year history, the Conservancy has demonstrated an ability to lead and deliver meaningful conservation results. By blending sound science, strong partnerships and innovative thinking with the time-honored values of Hawaiian culture, we have repeatedly shown that, if we act in time, declining ecosystems can be protected and restored.

Since opening a Hawai'i office in 1980, we have accomplished much: We have established a statewide system of preserves and worked with federal agencies to create new wildlife refuges and expand national parks.

We have forged dynamic partnerships to bring active stewardship to our most important watershed forests and coral reefs, helped secure funding to protect important natural areas, and led efforts to stem the tide of alien species entering our state.

Today, we are pushing the boundaries of technological innovation to find and control invasive species, and expanding our reach deeper into marine conservation.

The Conservancy's collaborative, non-confrontational approach has enabled us to work with local communities, landowners, scientists, policymakers, businesses, fishers, native Hawaiians and the U.S. military. The ability to bring diverse interests together for the benefit of people and the nature that supports us has made The Nature Conservancy the most trusted and respected name in conservation.

We could not have achieved this alone, of course. Our success over the past three decades is directly attributable to our many partners and supporters: individuals, businesses, other conservation organizations, foundations and government at all levels—city, state and federal. Science guides our work to ensure the health and survival of the natural world that sustains us all. But what enables science and our on-the-ground conservation work is the ongoing financial support we receive from businesses, families and individuals like you.

With government funding in decline, the importance of private charitable giving rises. To help us continue our work this year and for the next 30, please consider making a tax-deductible gift today. Your generosity is appreciated by many.

WITH ALOHA,
SUZANNE CASE

The Nature Conservancy

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The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i is the local affiliate of The Nature Conservancy, an international, non-profit organization based in Arlington, VA.

Our mission is to preserve the plants, animals and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive.

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On the Cover:

A silhouetted koa tree basks in the sun's glow at Kūka'iau Ranch. Photo: Rob Shallenberger



Tales of the Pueo

There were times when the slopes of Puowaina on O‘ahu, now called Punchbowl, were covered in native *pili* grass. Hidden in the grass were the nests of the *pueo*, the Hawaiian owl.

Stories are told of the reverence that Hawaiians had for these eggs, encountered, but not molested, while *pili* grass was being collected for thatching. If eggs were taken to eat, dire consequences were sure to follow.

In 1825, a British explorer to Hawai‘i who was a naturalist wrote from O‘ahu that Hawaiian owls were “...very numerous here and constantly flying about all day, and not like those in England, which come out only at dusk.”

Today, *pueo* are still the only endemic birds that are found regularly in the lowlands of the islands. They are day-flying, medium sized owls, with a brown back and beige breast, streaked flame-like in darker feathers, and a dark mask around yellow eyes.

Pueo feed on birds and rodents, and are considered an endemic Hawaiian subspecies of the short-eared owl *Asio flammeus sandwichensis*, a widespread species found on all continents except Australia and Antarctica.

The great cultural significance of *pueo* extends to the present with many Hawaiian families pointing to this bird as an *‘aumakua* (ancestral guardian).

They tell of warrior ancestors who were saved by the *pueo*; people prevented from falling on dangerous cliff trails by a *pueo*, or guided to safety by a *pueo* when lost. In more modern times, it is said that the flight of the *pueo* in the path of a car may signify danger ahead.

In my training as a chanter, I had an experience on the island of Kaho‘olawe that was particularly significant. I was participating in multi-day meetings on the island, planning its restoration, and one morning before dawn I was moved to awake early, walk up a trail in the predawn light to the top of a nearby hill, to present a chant to the silent morning. The chant begins:

E ala, ua ao, ua malamalama, ua hele kanaka aia I luna...

Awaken, day has come, the sky is brightening, people are stirring above...

But as I uttered those words there was a stirring, as in the air around me came a soft whistling of feathers, and the dark silhouettes of *pueo* circling. Four had flown in from the nearby *pili* grasslands toward the sound of chant breaking the silence of the dawn. It was all I could do to maintain my composure and finish the chant, then stand in awe as the four owls continued to circle for a time, before heading off into the surrounding landscape.

As one of the few endemic birds that can still be seen in our lowlands, the *pueo* is a reminder to us that we need to work to ensure the continued presence of native species that provide so much enrichment to our lives.

by Sam ‘Olu Gon, senior scientist and cultural advisor for The Nature Conservancy of Hawai‘i

Photos by: Rob Shallenberger





Michael Walther



Conservation in Brief

THE “GREAT HUKI” BEGINS

A traditional Hawaiian blessing recently kicked off the “Great Huki” in Maunalua Bay. The project, funded by NOAA under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), will reclaim native coral reef and seagrass habitat by removing at least 22 acres of the invasive alga *Avrainvillea amadelpha* or “leather mudweed.” The invasive alga outgrows, outcompetes and smothers native algae, coral and seagrass.

One of the primary goals of the ARRA program is job creation. Local firm Pono Pacific selected 50 people from almost 500 applicants for this project. The newly employed men and women come from a variety of backgrounds, from fire fighting to life guarding to military service. Many are from East O’ahu and were hired in part based on their passion for the environment and the area.

Community volunteers have been working with the Conservancy and Mālama Maunalua to remove alien algae from Maunalua Bay for several years, and have taken about 30 tons to local farms for composting. The algae removed by Pono Pacific will be turned into green waste or converted to an organic liquid fertilizer.

DEFYING THE ODDS

A recent survey revealed that the population of the critically endangered Maui parrotbill may be increasing in the Conservancy’s Waikamoi Preserve.

“The typical storyline with endangered forest birds is one of decline,” said Sam Gon, the Conservancy’s senior scientist and cultural advisor. “To have an endangered bird show signs of increasing is very encouraging and cause for celebration.”

The rare bird survey was led by Dr. Dusti Becker, an ornithologist and project coordinator for the Maui Forest Bird Recovery Project. Her team estimated that there are about 20 parrotbills per square kilometer of forest between Waikamoi Stream and the Ko’olau Gap, on the windward slope of Haleakalā.

A previous survey had placed the density at less than half that number.

“I didn’t expect that there would be that many birds there,” said Becker. “My sense is that it’s a growing population, fundamentally because of forest recovery at Waikamoi.”

The Maui parrotbill is only found within a range of 19 square miles on the high windward slopes of Haleakalā. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimates that only 500 individual birds survive.

NEW WAVE

Two new Fellows have been selected for a program designed to produce the next wave of marine conservation leaders in Hawai’i.

Bradley Wong and Nahuku Kalei will spend the next two years undergoing training in the Marine Conservation Fellowship Program, a joint project between The Nature Conservancy of Hawai’i and the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Pacific Services Center.

Designed to increase the state’s pool of qualified local marine resource managers, the program blends training in traditional and western science-based resource management with community-based conservation.

“By the end of their fellowships, Brad and Nahuku will have the necessary skills to be highly competitive in Hawai’i’s conservation job market,” said Kim Hum, the Conservancy’s director of marine conservation. “We also expect that they will someday sit in positions of influence and be the local decision-makers who promote the sustainable management, conservation and wise use of Hawai’i’s natural resources.

Kalei and Wong were among 67 applicants for the two fellowship positions. They follow in the footsteps of inaugural fellows Russell Amimoto and Marion Ano, who graduated in April.

WINGED JOURNEY

The Conservancy’s Hawai’i Island Conservation Director, Dr. Rob Shallenberger, shares his fascination with seabirds and expert photography in his new book, *Hawaiian Birds of the Sea: Nā Manu Kai*, a visual and educational journey across the 1,500-mile string of islands that make up the Hawaiian Archipelago.

The book provides a provocative look at these unique and wonderful seabirds for people who may never have the chance to see them. More than 135 color photographs illustrate the book, which provides a wealth of information about birds that survive long stretches feeding at sea, but return to land to breed, nest and raise their young.

Before joining the Conservancy, Shallenberger spent more than two decades managing national wildlife refuges for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, including the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands and Midway Atoll. He spent seven years as Chief of Refuges in Washington, D.C.

His photographs have appeared in several books and magazines, including *National Geographic*, *Audubon*, *National Wildlife* and *Defenders*.

For more information on *Hawaiian Birds of the Sea: Nā Manu Kai*, visit www.uhpress.Hawaii.edu.



Meet the Graduates

“...connecting with people and maintaining those relationships is key to doing things the right way.”

Marine Fellows Marion Ano and Russell Amimoto have spent their last two years immersed in marine conservation. Their journey was “transformational” according to the fellows, who recently graduated and are now ready to take on some of the island’s toughest conservation challenges.



Photos: Grady Timmons

“The Marine Fellowship Program was both a professional and personal journey for me,” says Ano, one of the two inaugural graduates. “In my 30 years, I’ve never grown so much—and that includes my four years in college.”

“The Conservancy launched the program to build a new generation of highly skilled marine stewards,” says Manuel Mejia, the Conservancy’s Hawai‘i project manager. “Protecting vast ocean areas with intense needs has been a critical problem, but now we can count on two fully equipped professionals who are also amazing individuals.”

Ano and Amimoto spent their first year learning a core set of technical skills, including GIS, hydrology, fish taxonomy and invasive species control. Both also received their scientific diver certification. Traditional practices such as *pono* (responsible) fishing methods and the *ahupua‘a* system of resource management were also part of their well-rounded curriculum.

In their second year they applied their knowledge to real-life, community-based conservation projects. Ano participated in restoration work at He‘eia ahupua‘a, while Amimoto conducted fish surveys on O‘ahu and Hawai‘i Island. Both were also instrumental in scaling up invasive algae removal efforts in Maunalua Bay, and in creating a plan for protecting a Natural Area Reserve on Maui.

“I learned that you need to know much more than biology to be an effective conservation professional,” Ano says. “Within a community you also need to listen and be sensitive to political and socio-economic issues. I discovered that connecting with people and maintaining those relationships is key to doing things the right way.”

According to Mejia, the fellowship program was in its infancy so everything about it was new and uncharted. “Russell and Marion learned a lot and grew a lot,” he says. “But we also learned from them.”

Amimoto, a canoe builder and captain on the Polynesian voyaging vessel *Hōkūle‘a*, brought years of traditional voyaging skills and a deep commitment to protecting the ocean. Ano, an educator who has helped restore fishponds on O‘ahu and Moloka‘i, brought her passion for educating youth about science and traditional approaches to ocean stewardship.

There will be little rest for the graduates. Ano recently accepted a position as a GIS climate change intern with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). In addition, she will participate in an upcoming 10-day NOAA leadership program in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands and represent Hawai‘i and the United States in an indigenous leadership program called Americans for Indian Opportunity.

Amimoto is already transitioning to the Conservancy’s scientific dive team, where he has become a valuable addition surveying reefs across the state. He is also training future crews for the Polynesian Voyaging Society’s worldwide voyage in 2012, and introducing young people to ocean activities that foster love and respect for our marine environment.

“By being exposed to the many different aspects of conservation, I’ve learned what I enjoy doing and where I can make the biggest difference,” he says.

Adds Ano, “I got so much out of the Fellowship, but the one thing this program made crystal clear for me is that I can align my professional career with what I value personally. Whatever the future holds, I hope to always make sure those two things are in alignment.”

The Conservancy would like to thank the Atherton Family Foundation, Mr. James K. Campbell of The Pohaku Fund through the Tides Foundation, The Strong Foundation and NOAA’s CORAL Program (through the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation) and the Pacific Services Center for making this program possible.



Saving the Ranch

Story by Jan TenBruggencate
Photos by Rob Shallenberger



IT WAS AN INNOVATIVE SOLUTION to a difficult problem. David and Josephine DeLuz, owners of Hawaiʻi Island’s Kūkaʻiau Ranch, used a flexible land and estate management tool called a conservation easement to ensure that their land would never be subdivided or used in a way that would compromise its conservation value.

Their choice—and one being used more and more across the state—preserves a culturally important landscape, safeguards native wildlife, protects watersheds and allows the landowners the certainty that their vision will be carried on for generations.

“We realized that if we didn’t move to protect the ranch now, it could be divided up and sold off for development after we were gone. And then it wouldn’t be a ranch any more. It would be a residential area,” said David DeLuz.

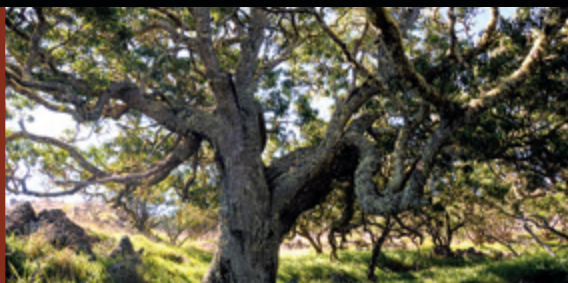
Large native ecosystems exist in the mauka portions of many island ranches, representing one of the greatest conservation opportunities in Hawaiʻi.

CUSTOM CRAFTED

In the case of the DeLuzes, the upper reaches of their 10,200-acre Kūkaʻiau Ranch lie adjacent to the Mauna Kea Forest Reserve. Here, there are two dominant native tree species, koa and māmane. The Hawaiian hawk or ‘io and the yellow palila wing through the forest. And streams flow from elevations above 8,000 feet down to the ocean.

Working with The Nature Conservancy and the Hawaiʻi Island Land Trust, the DeLuz family crafted a conservation easement unique to their ranch and their desires. The mauka 4,500 acres of the ranch are covered by the easement. About a quarter of that acreage will be preserved strictly for conservation, while the remainder will be available for limited forestry and sustainable agriculture.

The team that hammered out Kūkaʻiau’s conservation easement used the singular characteristics of this land and the requirements of its owners to shape the agreement. Such flexibility is a key feature of conservation easements, which convey development rights while the landowner retains title and the ability to use the land within limits the landowner sets.



KUKAIAU RANCH

EST. 1885



“With a conservation easement, the landowner can in a sense codify their vision of the land forever. It has the power of law and the watchdog of a conservation organization behind it,” said John Henshaw, director of conservation programs for The Nature Conservancy of Hawai‘i.

MULTIPLE BENEFITS

Most conservation easements held by land conservation organizations are donated by the landowner, for which he can receive a substantial tax deduction. In some cases, easements may be purchased by the conservation organization, utilizing funding from any of a range of federal, state or county programs, or grants of private money.

If the easement is sold at a bargain sale price, the landowner may also have some tax benefit, in addition to the direct income.

An easement generally reduces the value of the property due to the removal of development entitlements and thus can reduce inheritance taxes.

At Ulupalakua Ranch on Maui, the Erdman family worked with the Maui Coastal Land Trust to donate an agricultural conservation easement on 11,030 acres of

pasture and native dry forest. Protecting agricultural lands was the key benefit here, but that is just one of the many potential uses of conservation easements.

“We take easements for a variety of reasons,” said Dale Bonar, executive director of the Maui Coastal Land Trust. “Easements can protect agricultural lands, scenic views, watersheds, public access, native habitats, cultural features or educational values.”

PROVIDING PROTECTION

Sometimes, a conservation organization will take over management of the land, as The Nature Conservancy does with Moloka‘i Ranch lands it handles at Kamakou on Moloka‘i. In other cases, the landowner continues to use and maintain the land, with oversight by the conservation agency.

“There are a variety of things that a landowner will find attractive about a conservation easement,” said Greg Hendrickson, real property administrator for Hokukano Ranch and Kealakekua Heritage Ranch on Hawai‘i Island.

The key players at those ranches—John and Gussie Pace and one of their sons, Tom—are working to donate a conservation

easement covering 9,000 of Kealakekua Heritage Ranch’s 11,490 acres. It is generally prime native forest bird habitat, Hendrickson said, above the range of mosquitoes that carry the bird disease avian malaria.

The ranch has entitlements for 500 residential units. The elder Paces thought that was excessive and settled on the conservation easement process to protect their property from fragmentation, while allowing its continued use for traditional purposes.

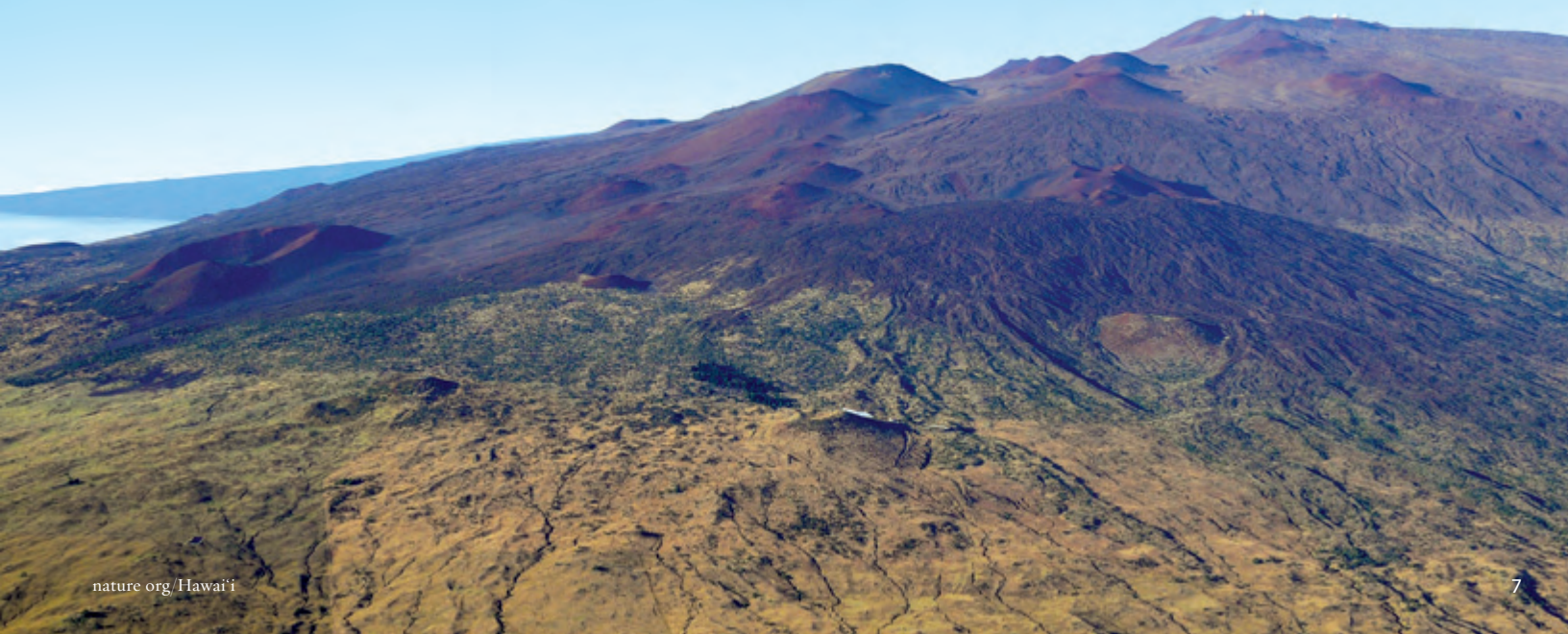
“You try to design an easement that accomplishes the base level management without prescribing too much management,” Hendrickson said.

At Kūkai‘au, David and Josephine DeLuz wanted to have a productive working ranch but also protect important areas for their historic and ecological value.

“The family’s goal is to prove that working ranches can be profitable agricultural centers, while at the same time providing protection of watershed, species and cultural resources,” Josephine DeLuz said.

By using a conservation easement, the DeLuzes now have the opportunity to achieve that goal.

The 10,200-acre Kūkai‘au Ranch, located on the northeast slopes of Mauna Kea.





**“I realized Australian tree fern
was everywhere”**

Wainiha Valley, one of many botanical marvels on the Garden Isle of Kauaʻi. PHOTO: JON FAFORD

GAME CHANGER

Imagine that it’s your job to protect the ancient forests that helped inspire *Avatar*, and that the most immediate threat is an introduced ornamental gone wild: the invasive Australian tree fern. 🍄 Imagine also that you have adapted existing technology for conservation use—technology that dramatically boosts your chances of success. 🍄 That’s the position Trae Menard, Kauaʻi Island director for The Nature Conservancy, finds himself in.

Menard is leading an alliance of Kauaʻi landowners who are working to protect a 144,000-acre watershed known for its abundant rainfall and extreme terrain.

Halt the spread of the prolific tree fern and Kauaʻi can avert a future crisis, one that over time could drastically alter the island’s native forests and their ability to capture and store water.

“There is a real sense of urgency because right now we have a 10-year window to get in there and control it,” Menard says. “If we don’t, this invasive plant is going to take over.”

WEED WARRIOR

In 2008 the Conservancy began using a hi-tech aerial camera system to map Australian tree fern and other major weeds across 50,000 acres of the island’s steep interior.

More recently Menard has been testing the application of a safe and effective herbicide at the Conservancy’s Wainiha Preserve—using a helicopter to lower a 100-foot cable weighted with an applicator directly over the plant and deliver a dose with near surgical precision.

Menard calls the combination of tools a “game changer”—not only for Hawaiʻi but conservation in general. Last fall, he eliminated almost half of the 3,500 tree ferns he had mapped in Wainiha, and this spring he will finish up and continue on.



Trae and Resource Mapping Hawaii's pilot prepare to utilize the Cessna 182 with hi-tech aerial mapping technology. MONTE COSTA



TNC crew lowers applicator directly over weed to deliver herbicide with surgical precision.



Trae Menard, Kaua'i Island director for The Nature Conservancy. JOHN DE MELLO



The "superweed" Australian tree fern releases millions of windborne spores.

The ultimate goal: to protect a 12,000-acre core wilderness area of rare birds and plants, many of them endangered and struggling to survive.

CRADLE OF DIVERSITY

A combination of age, isolation and topography has made Kaua'i a botanical marvel, home to more than 400 species of plants and animals found only in Hawai'i. The Garden Isle has almost half of Hawaii's endemic flowering plants and natural communities, and more than half of its native bird species.

Six million years of rainfall have eroded the single-shield volcano that formed the island, creating deep verdant valleys, magnificent canyon gorges and razorback sea cliffs. Mt. Wai'ale'ale, at 5,148 feet, is one of two summit peaks and one of the two wettest spots on Earth.

The island's greatest biological treasure, however, is the Alaka'i, a mile-high plateau cradled between the mountains.

The Alaka'i lies at the very center of the island—on the flank of Mt. Wai'ale'ale and at the head of Kauai's five largest aquifers—and its native ecosystems include Hawaii's oldest bog and most diverse high-elevation rain forest.

In all, it contains 105 endemic plant species, 87 of which are found only on Kaua'i.

Ken Wood, a prominent biologist with the National Tropical Botanical Garden, a key partner in the Kaua'i alliance, calls it "the most important biodiversity conservation site in the entire archipelago." That's why alliance members are so determined to protect it.

SUPERWEED

Chipper Wichman, director of the National Tropical Botanical Garden, calls the Australian tree fern a "superweed" because it releases millions of windborne spores that can be dispersed miles from the source plant.

Once the spores sprout, the tree ferns grow quickly, forming a dense canopy that chokes out the layers of native forest that capture rainfall and prevent erosion. The result: a 'monotypic forest' of one dominant species that increases sedimentation and is prone to landslides.

Menard didn't realize the extent of the problem until he began surveying Kauai's backcountry in 2006. Hanging out of a helicopter while flying low over the canopy, he and his staff spent 80 hours identifying major weeds by eye and marking their location with a hand-held GPS device.

"By the time we were done I realized Australian tree fern was everywhere and that the tools we had to map and fight it were inadequate," he says.

HI-TECH BREAKTHROUGH

That's when he contracted Dana Slaymaker of Resource Mapping Hawai'i, whose genius was to adapt existing aerial mapping technology for conservation use and make it affordable.

Slaymaker developed a three-camera system that he mounted in the belly of a Cessna 182. From 2,000 feet above the forest floor, the camera snaps digital images so detailed that weeds are easily identified and their precise coordinates mapped and adjusted for changes in terrain.

"All this for about \$5 dollars an acre," says Menard, who can download three-dimensional files that identify and show the location of virtually every invasive plant.

Menard says the technology can be used to monitor progress, track new invasions and document changes to natural areas over time, including the impacts of feral animals and climate change.

"This is a huge breakthrough for our conservation efforts," he says. "This changes everything." — *Grady Timmons*

Introducing **T**rustees

Our New

DON HORNER

Don Horner is chairman and CEO of First Hawaiian Bank. He has an MBA from the University of Southern California and is an honors graduate of the Pacific Coast Banking School at the University of Washington. He currently chairs the steering committee for The Salvation Army's Kroe Center and is a board member and treasurer of 'Iolani School. He also serves on the boards of the Children's Discovery Center, Hawai'i Asia-Pacific Association, Filipino Community Center and the Japan-America Society of Hawai'i.

ANNE CARTER

Anne Carter has been a dedicated Conservancy supporter for more than 15 years, beginning in the 1990s as an intern and a member of the Conservancy's Maui field staff. She has volunteered to conduct forest bird surveys and lead hikes into Waikamoi Preserve. A trustee along with Sam Cooke of the Strong Foundation, she also serves on the boards of the National Tropical Botanical Garden and Maui Nui Botanical Garden. She is a past president of the Conservation Council of Hawai'i.

EIICHIRO KUWANA

Eiichiro Kuwana is president and founding principal of Cook Pine Capital, where he oversees the asset allocation and manager selection processes and has responsibility for investor relations. He previously spent 12 years at Goldman, Sachs & Co. where he held various senior level management positions in both New York and Asia. A graduate of Phillips Exeter Academy, he received an AB, magna cum laude, and an MBA from Harvard University. He lives in Greenwich, Connecticut and owns a home in Kapalua, Maui.

NATE SMITH

Nate Smith is the owner of Nate Smith Studio, LLC, which manages the design and construction of residential and hospitality developments in Hawai'i and on the U.S. mainland. He is also a partner in Smith Wong Projects, a small real estate holding company. He holds a BA in Urban Planning from the University of California at San Diego, and an MA in Architecture from the University of Hawai'i at Manoa. He also serves on the boards of the GIFT Foundation, McInerney Foundation, Reuse Hawai'i and The Contemporary Museum.



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70	5.7%	\$570	\$3,814
80	7.1%	\$710	\$5,023
87+	8.5%	\$850	\$5,926

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Remembering a Waterman

Michael Jennings Keola Morriss, a 2004 graduate of Hawai'i Preparatory Academy, was an accomplished diver, spearfisher and surfer who was passionate about the ocean. But in January of last year, at age 23, he lost his life while free diving with friends on the Kohala Coast of Hawai'i Island.

"Michael was so young, happy and always full of excitement. There were so many things he was getting ready to see and do," remembers his mother, Liz Morriss. "His life was cut way too short, but what brings me some comfort is that I know he passed doing what he absolutely loved."

Michael's love for the ocean has not been forgotten. Through a partnership with The Nature Conservancy, his family and friends have established the Michael Morriss Memorial Fund in his honor. The fund will help restore Puakō Bay on the South Kohala Coast, one of the many places Michael loved to dive and an area identified as one of the top marine conservation sites in the state.

"Michael left too early," says Chad Wiggins, the Conservancy's Hawai'i Island marine coordinator. "But through this memorial fund, his passion for the ocean will live on."



Michael at the helm during a recent sailing trip. Michael photos courtesy of the Morriss family and friends. Top of Page: The reef at Puakō. Photo: Chad Wiggins

Sheltered from ocean swells in all directions except due west, Puakō Bay supports a diverse coral and reef fish community. Pacific green sea turtles bask and forage in its calm waters, and during the winter months, it is a breeding and calving ground for the humpback whale.

Here, the Conservancy will work with the local fishing community, the Puakō Community Association, the State Division of Aquatic Resources, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the University of Hawai'i on a multi-year project to restore Puakō's coral reef habitat.

A top priority: to manage invasive fish, especially peacock grouper, or roi, which may pose a serious threat to Hawai'i's native fish species.

Roi were originally introduced from Moorea in 1956 to augment Hawaii's food supply. But without any natural predators

or competitors, roi numbers have increased dramatically. One University of Hawai'i study estimates that roi may consume up to one-fifth of all native juvenile fish along the west coast of Hawai'i Island annually.

In addition, the close association of roi with ciguatera fish poisoning makes the fish undesirable for consumption.

According to Wiggins, the Puakō project will focus on two patch reefs dominated by finger coral, the roi's preferred habitat. Roi will be removed primarily by spearfishing, and the effects of roi removal on the larger reef community will be evaluated.

"The Conservancy and our partners will take what we learn from this project and apply it to other areas," says Wiggins. "In this way, the fund will strengthen marine conservation efforts not only on the South Kohala Coast, but across the state."

"It has been exciting for us to work with the Conservancy," says Liz Morriss. "I think Michael is chuckling and cheering us on saying 'Go Mom, go family, you're heading in the right direction!'"

Adds Wiggins: "Michael's family is amazing, and we're really committed to working with them to make sure we honor Michael's spirit by engaging fishers in conservation. They have so many people supporting them. It's a testament to who they are and how much they are loved in their community."



Invasive roi on reef. Photo: Chad Wiggins

Marine conservation efforts at Puakō cost more than \$100,000 annually. Contributions to the Michael Morriss Memorial Fund support these efforts and may be made to The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i, 923 Nu'uuanu Avenue, Honolulu, HI, 96817. Please add "Michael Morriss Memorial Fund" on the memo line of your check. Contact: Laurel Chun, 808.587.6268, lchun@tnc.org



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Florence Chong

Restoring a Hālau

Pu'u Honua o Hōnaunau National Historical Park on the Kona Coast of the island of Hawai'i recently opened a new *hālau* (house)—thanks in part to The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i.

Late last year, the park asked for permission to gather 'ōhi'a logs from the Conservancy's Kona Hema Preserve (located in the uplands a short ways down the coast), to be used in reconstructing their hālau.

Because this was a traditional use of this material for Hawaiian cultural purposes, and because the Conservancy determined that the 'ōhi'a trees could be taken with minimal impact to the forest, the request was granted.

Sam Gon, the Conservancy's senior scientist and cultural advisor, oversaw protocol for the gathering process. This involved entering the forest properly with the crew, blessing the grounds from which the 'ōhi'a were taken, asking permission to collect the trees and blessing all of the crew

involved in the act of cutting the trees.

Over a period of three weeks, park employees gathered 200, two-inch basal diameter logs and 50, six-inch basal diameter logs. These logs form the basic frame for the new hālau, which is being used to house cultural demonstrations for park visitors.

With the work completed, visitors can now see a traditional hālau built with native materials and learn about the importance of mauka-makai (upland-coastal) connections in ancient Hawai'i.



Sam Gon blesses the project.



Park employees taking logs from forest.



Partially completed hālau.



Jack Casuga oversaw the construction.

PHOTOS: ROB SHALEMBERGER