



Friends of Hakalau Forest

National Wildlife Refuge

FOHF, PO Box 606) , Hilo, HI
96720

PRESIDENT’S PERCH

Greetings everyone,

My name is Layne Yoshida and I am serving as President of the Board for our non-profit group, the Friends of Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge. The Board has been meeting monthly and we have been actively working to fulfill our mission which is to provide assistance and support to the Hakalau Forest NWR.

Aloha to the members of our organization, Friends of Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge. As we begin 2015. I would like to welcome to the Board three new members; Patrick Hart, PhD, a faculty member and researcher at the University of Hawaii at Hilo, Cathy Lowder, who is very active with different conservation groups in Hawaii and Jon Giffin, a retired Biologist who worked for the State of Hawaii, Department of Land and Natural Resources. Both Cathy and Patrick have served on the Board in the past. The returning members of the Board are; Rob Shallenberger, J. B. Friday, Kenneth Kupchak, Mike Scott, and Layne Yoshida.

In 2014 the Friends of Hakalau Forest NWR participated in several community events and sponsored a booth at the Conservation Career Day held on the University of Hawaii at Hilo. We also partially sponsored several educational programs that use the Refuge as a field training and excursion site. Also in 2014 our Friends organization has assisted the Refuge in the purchase of several items that could not be funded in their budget.

In 2015, our organization has been busy and has already sponsored one talk. The presentation was on the *Ethnobotany and Feathers of Hawaiian Capes and Adornments* was given by Sheila Conant, PhD, a retired researcher and faculty member from the UH Manoa and a past President of the Friends of Hakalau Forest NWR. The talk was very well received. We have also sponsored a volunteer weekend trip to the Refuge on March 21 and 22. The volunteer group was larger than usual and so some helped in the nursery.



April 17th will see our group sponsoring a table at the Conservation Career Day at the University of Hawaii at Hilo and April 18th is the date for the spring Open House at the Refuge. For those members who are interested in helping the Refuge on the day of the Open House please call the Refuge Office at (808) 443-2300 to volunteer. Even if you do not volunteer, you may want to visit the Refuge as the event will be great fun. If you do intend to visit, please call the Refuge Office to register.

In October of this year there will be a second Open House at the Refuge and also we are planning an anniversary celebration as the Refuge will be 32 years old. We will be sending more information to the Friends members as this celebration gets closer. Also in conjunction with the anniversary celebration, we will be announcing kicking off a major fund raiser to hopefully help the Refuge by creating an endowment.

We are looking forward to an exciting year and hope that all of you will continue to remain members and help us in our efforts to support the Refuge.

Layne Yoshida, FOHF President

Refuge Manager's Update- April 2015

Aloha Friends,

We are already half way through our fiscal year 2015. The aftermath of extensive koa looper moth defoliation in 2014 was not catastrophic, but clearly damaged a lot of our koa tree plantings in upper elevations. Fortunately most have recovered. Hurricane Kelle largely spared the refuge area and swung south into Puna's *Albizia*-infested secondary forests with a different and ferocious result. However, over 13 inches of rain fell at the refuge in slightly over 24 hours. The effects of the rain event were discovered far down into the forest. Damage was seen in the form of washed out tree roots and trees toppled on fence lines rather than wind damage. We later endured safety based cancellation of our fall Open



House in October 2014 due to high winds and impending tropical storm concerns. Then in January, the refuge greenhouse was ripped asunder by a surprise wind event that picked its way, tornado-like, across the upper and mid elevations of Mauna Kea and Hakalau Forest, ripping trees out of the ground, twisting metal structures like pretzels and completely missing adjacent buildings, trees and equipment. The plants in the greenhouse were exposed to high winds and chilly temperatures overnight. Once the winds subsided, a crew of six was rapidly mustered the next day (Sunday) to re-cover the main greenhouse structure, patch up internal shade cloth, and clean up the mess. Now things are back to normal and the greenhouse is populated by our usual varieties of native plants for the coming out planting season.

2014 was a bit rough. 2015 promises to be another challenging year ahead for the refuge.

Budget news: Recent budget numbers have come in looking pretty good for the refuge. While the budget news for projects funds looks better than we expected, it does not allow us to restore staffing to our 2013 levels. Expect to hear us frequently remind everyone we have to “do less with less” to conserve our dedicated staff and continue to adjust to “the new normal” of budget and staffing realities overall.

The big news for 2015 is that **we are the recipients of a \$1 million Invasive Species Project Grant** for pig eradication on the Hakalau Forest Refuge. This grant is competitively awarded to only one National Wildlife Refuge each year so we are very fortunate to get this level of support. It is our hope that this infusion of badly needed funding will allow us to clear pigs from our management areas to assure greater success for out-plantings of native forest plants and endangered plant species.

At Hakalau Forest the threat posed by avian malaria is another critical reason for keeping refuge lands pig free. Pig foraging behavior creates conditions favorable for larval mosquitoes to thrive which indirectly increases the risk of forest bird exposure to diseases for which they have little or no immunity. Studies have shown that pig eradication can only be achieved through intensive removal efforts that take 70% or more of the pigs from an area each year. Recreational hunting does not provide this level of intense pressure, so pig reproduction rates can easily maintain the population and quickly rebound if given any opportunity to do so. Maintaining fences and trapping efforts must be constant and unwavering to keep pigs out of managed lands. Pigs have been cited as the primary invasive vertebrate pest species on over 30 National Wildlife Refuges in recent years.

Additional good news on the funding front is deferred maintenance funding will be available to supplement the pig control work with contract fence rehabilitation on some of our most degraded fence lines. Weed control funds to the tune of \$100,000 from the USDA/Forest Service, Forest Health Program will allow us to continue blackberry and holly control efforts. We are also expecting funds to modernize and upgrade our photovoltaic power plant to accommodate additional facilities for maintenance, water works and plant propagation.

Kona Forest update: In 2014, the refuge funded road maintenance work, costing \$50,000, on the Kona Forest access road. Work was completed in February, 2015 by big island contracting firm Bolton, Inc. Road maintenance took place on a strip of private land leading to the refuge from 800 to 2,200 feet in elevation. It is part of the 2007 lawsuit settlement over access to our 5,300 acre management unit, purchased for ‘alala and other forest birds.

We expect construction of the Phase II Kona Forest fencing project to begin within the next couple of months. This project, costing approximately \$250,000, will complete the fencing for the third and lowest of three management units in the refuge. Management activities in the unit will consist of invasive weed and ungulate control, habitat restoration, and endangered species recovery. Some support funds from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) will aid us in getting the active management process underway. The unit is not expected to be open to public use although periodically we will sponsor visits by the Friends group and our key conservation partners accompanied by refuge staff.

McCandless Ranch lies just to the south of the Kona refuge unit. Portions of the ranch were included in the refuge’s 2012 Land Acquisition Plan (LPP) in accordance with the refuge system’s willing seller policy. These are lands that warrant consideration for adding to the refuge system for their unique conservation value and may be available for purchase or conservation easements. An interagency funding proposal for conservation acquisitions entitled “Islands at Risk” was submitted to Washington for funding

consideration for a third year in a row. These lands include all of the Big Island NWR Complex parcels as well as lands of interest to the National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service. I wanted to include a note about this for the benefit of Friends members who are following refuge developments. To learn more about properties in our LPP, it can be easily accessed from the refuge website at our website.

On the horizon, I like to think things are brighter. Our Spring Earth Day Open House on April 18 is right around the corner. Come rain or shine, please join us for the day and bring a friend to introduce them to “their refuge”. Make it a family day; bring a keiki or grandma and grandpa to help us celebrate our love of the land and the magic of Hawaii’s native wildlife species. I hope to see you there.

http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Hakalau_Forest/what_we_do/planning.html

By Jim Kraus, Refuge Manager



Here’s a recent look at who’s who on the refuge.

Our Crew, Big Island National Wildlife Refuge Complex, December, 2014. Left to right, Ben Ikeda (Resource Management Field Crew), Josiah Jones (KUPU AmeriCorps), Steve Kendall (Wildlife Biologist), Andy Kikuta (Fire Management Specialist), Kaiulani Carter (Admin Assistant), Leland Jardine (Resource Management Field Crew), Baron Horiuchi (Horticulturist), Austin Jardine (KUPU AmeriCorps), Cashell Villa (Wildlife Refuge Specialist), Lynne Hanzawa (Administrative Officer), Jim Kraus (Project Leader).



WINTER SERVICE TRIP

On December 13-14, 2014, I was lucky enough to be invited to Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge for an overnight camping trip to outplant trees with the Friends of Hakalau Forest. While I'd visited the refuge several times as a documentary artist, this was my first visit as a volunteer. I was quite excited because I'd be working with the infamous Friends group. I say "infamous" because I'd been told that Hakalau Forest is *the* model for reforestation projects and that this group is one of the reasons that the Refuge's efforts have been so successful. The waiting list to volunteer at Hakalau is two years! Do they give away magic beans on these trips? On a crisp Saturday morning, a dozen of us gathered at the refuge office in Hilo. A few others flew in from Honolulu just to participate in this weekend outplanting trip. We briefly introduced ourselves and then headed out in 4-wheel drive vehicles for a two hour-long drive to Hakalau forest.

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At the refuge, we were greeted by Baron Horiuchi, master horticulturalist and volunteer coordinator. After settling into our cabins, we loaded up trucks with native 'akala, 'olapa, pilo and 'ohi'a seedlings and drove to the edge of a koa grove. Our task was to clear away grass, bore planting holes with an auger, add fertilizer, and plant trees.

I've never used an auger, a loud, heavy tool with a large helical bit. I also lack the body mass and muscle to handle one. When Baron offered me the auger, I politely declined because I was terrified of drilling a hole in my or someone else's foot. Thankfully there were plenty of strong, tall men and women who were up for the job and I chose to put plants in the ground.

The experience of working with the Friends group was like being with a crew of old-timers; everyone knew the procedure, working quickly and efficiently. We put hundreds of tree seedlings into the ground. These will hopefully form a thick canopy cover and produce habitat for birds like the 'oma'o and nene.

We finished the fieldwork early and returned to the greenhouse. Baron let each of us choose and outplant a "personal tree." After much consternation, I picked a fuzzy, dwarf 'ohi'a. At the end of the day, I wondered how many seedlings each person could say he or she was responsible for planting: hundreds or thousands? How do volunteers remember where their personal trees are planted if they've been volunteering for 20+ years?

Visiting a beautiful, native forest is reward in itself, but being there with a group of passionate, dedicated people who come out year after year to give their time and energy to the 'aina was priceless. It was incredible to hear their stories of what it was like "back in the day." I learned more than simply outplanting trees, gleaning wisdom from those who have known the forest over a lifetime of caring for it.

We had amazing weather, great food, interesting conversation, good camaraderie, and viewed an incredible meteor shower at night. As a bonus, Steve Kendall (Hakalau's Wildlife Biologist) provided a bird tour. I couldn't have asked for a better time! Baron didn't give me any magic beans, but I did score a cool T-shirt and some wonderful memories.

Submitted by Laurie Sumiy

SPRING SERVICE TRIP

March 21-22, 2015.

The Friends work trip of March 21-22 2015 may have set a new record with 19 volunteers! The rainy Saturday was perfect for transplanting hundreds of koa seedlings into pots. At 5:00 pm the weather cleared for an hour and the photographers had a field day in the late afternoon sunlight. 'I'iwi were flocking to the flowering 'ākala, so close one didn't even need binoculars to see them well. Everyone packed into the volunteer cabin for dinner, with a few people departing afterward to sleep at the UH research house. Thanks to Refuge Manager Jim Kraus for spending Saturday with the group getting us oriented to what needed to be done. Sunday morning cleared up in time for an outstanding bird walk below Pua 'Akala. Down at the rain shelter we met UH Hilo graduate student Angela Beck, who explained her work in recording and comparing bird calls from different populations of native birds. (Angela's major advisor is FOHF board member Dr. Pat Hart). Once the mist cleared we saw several 'akepa along with many 'i'iwi, 'apapane, and 'amakihi. Then a Hawai'i Creeper appeared foraging along an old 'ōhi'a. Finally, just when we were thinking we couldn't get any luckier, an 'akiapōlā'au appeared moving along a huge horizontal koa branch. After lunch, the mist closed in again and a pueo watched us depart out the Refuge gate.

Submitted by J.B. Friday

They saw 'I'iwi,
'akepa, 'apapane,
'amakihi, Hawai'i
Creeper,
'akiapola'au, and
pueo

