



September 2024 Newsletter

What's New in our Beautiful Kalōpā State Park?

**Join the Park Team for *"A Day in Kalōpā Park"*
Saturday, September 14 – 10 am to 2 pm
in the Main Pavilion**

(See below for details and reservation information.)

Ruth Bennett
For the Kalōpā Park Team

One of the best hidden wonderlands along the entire Hāmākua Coast is our own Kalōpā State Park. The park is a favored location for nature lovers, hikers, horseback riders, campers, and picnickers. Occasional tourists discover our park when their sunburns and sand-scoured eyes cry out for cool air and greenery.

Kalōpā Park is a remarkable community success story which began as an effort to rescue a forest from the scourges of the sugar cane industry. In the 1960s, members of the community petitioned the state government to protect the land from destructive, polluting, commercial use. When protection was granted in 1967, the community helped to carefully clear and develop the park's grounds and structures. You can read more details about this extraordinary effort in the first of two PMKCA newsletters. (On the [PMKCA.org](https://www.pmkca.org) website under "Resources", scroll down to locate our December 2020 Newsletter.)

While the Park is managed by the State Parks Division of the DLNR, the maintenance of trails within the park and in the neighboring forest reserve are not the state's responsibility. When trees fall across trails or invasive species (Strangler Fig, Rapid Ohi'a Death, Night-blooming Jasmine) smother native plants, this precious park can lose its value to the community and to Hawai'i.

For more than 20 years, members of the Kalōpā Park Team, closely affiliated with PMKCA and authorized by DLNR's State Parks Division, have been working within the park to protect and encourage native plants, monitor the condition of the park's trails, maintain the

accessible Nature Trail, and provide informative brochures to visitors. (For the second chapter of the Kalōpā Park story, see our January 2021 Newsletter.)

The needs of Kalōpā Park and its trails have become critical in recent years, and the capabilities of members of the Park Team have become more limited. The team needs volunteers to help preserve this historic piece of native forest!

***The Kalōpā Park Team meets:
The first Thursday and third Saturday of each month
at 9am in front of the park's Cabins***

Some original members of the team, now in their 80s, still put on their gardening gloves and pick up their tools, while other newcomers are just now discovering the joy of spending a purposeful morning in the park. With new energy and inspiration, the team will be pursuing some new objectives and forming some new connections.

Master Gardener Program Affiliation – A Win-Win... Win!

Gardening enthusiasts who wished to be certified, or to maintain their certifications, as Master Gardeners (a UH Cooperative Extension program), and who lived in the northern Hāmākua region, had few approved locations nearby to perform their required voluntary hours. The Kalōpā Park team needed new members, and the Park needed attention.

A new member of the Park Team, Sarah Brown, who was working on her own Master Gardener certification, saw an opportunity for a partnership. Her proposal to the Master Gardener Program to include work with the Kalōpā Park team as valid volunteer hours was approved! Now, Master Gardeners in our local area can contribute to the health of Kalōpā Park while meeting their certification requirements.

New Signs, Updated Brochures, and Technology for Kalōpā Park Visitors.

It's been a while since attention could be paid to the information provided to visitors. Old signs which identified plants in the park were missing – or pointed to spots where their described plants no longer survived.

The Kalōpā Park Team, with help from PMKCA and using funds from park visitor donations, is planning to replace the old signs, assuring that they mark correct, living plants, and that they contain more information useful to the reader. A similar kind of update will be made to the brochure which visitors refer to as they walk the Native Forest Nature Trail.

The team also expects to be able to provide technology links within the park (if cellular connectivity is available) using QR codes to connect smart phone users to more information while they experience the park in the “old fashioned” way (*see, smell, breathe...*).

Spend a day with the Kalōpā Park Team and forest and plant specialists!

“A Day in Kalōpā Park”

Saturday, September 14, 2024 – 10 am to 2 pm

To reserve your place, send an email to news.pmkca@gmail.com, Subject: “Kalōpā Park”

The Park Team and PMKCA are inviting up to 30 people to join them in Kalōpā Park for an “inside” look at our park, its unique environment, community heritage, natural beauty, and the challenges it faces.

We will meet the team at the **Main Pavilion** and learn how the team has been caring for the park for decades. Hear from experts in Hawaii’s forests, native plants, and invasive species. Those who wish can walk the 0.7-mile Nature Trail with guides and see what the team is doing in the park. If walking the trail isn’t your strong point, hang out and talk story with the team. We will reassemble at lunch time and PMKCA members will provide a picnic lunch for everyone.

Kalōpā State Park and the adjoining forest reserve are impressive examples of a community coming together to preserve a spectacular community treasure. Sixty years after its formation, the park remains a sanctuary for nature and for people, but it needs the community’s attention now more than ever. If you have enjoyed the park, its beautiful open spaces and deep forests, its quiet serenity and the opportunities to become immersed in nature, consider how you can give back by joining the Kalōpā Park Team. For more information, contact Sarah Brown at (317) 474-3498.

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***Join PMKCA or Renew Your Membership for 2024!!***

PMKCA dues are only \$20 per calendar year and help support so many great community activities. Click the "Visit our website" link below and choose Membership/Dues.

***We offer a PayPal option. Contact Peter, our treasurer ([p3t3rchr1s@gmail.com](mailto:p3t3rchr1s@gmail.com)) or mail a check made out to PMKCA, PO Box 408, Pa'auilo, HI 96776.***

**[Visit PMKCA.org](http://www.pmkca.org)**

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*(Please note that we may not be able to read and respond to replies.)*