



October 2024 Newsletter

A Perfect Day in Kalōpā Park

*A report on PMKCA's successful "A Day in Kalōpā Park" event
in support of the Kalōpā Park Team.*

Ruth Bennett
on behalf of the
Kalōpā Park Team



*The Native Forest Nature Trail winds through a grove of 'Ohi'a and Kopiko trees.
Can you spot the invasive yellow ginger? (Credit: Sarah Brown)*

On a gorgeous Saturday a few weeks ago, forty people met in Kalōpā State Park to experience an upcountry tropical forest. They were there to hear experts in forestry, native plants, and invasive species, describe the value of, and threats to, our forests, and to meet and support the small, dedicated team of volunteers who for many years have been working to maintain the unique features within the park.

In the September issue of our newsletter (published in the Hāmākua Times), we talked about our beautiful Kalōpā State Park and the Kalōpā Park Team. The team maintains the **Native Forest Nature Trail** which allows people to walk through a typical native forest

landscape and helps to inform them about the critical role Hawaii's upcountry forests play in conserving our island's fresh water supply while also providing habitat for Hawaii's native plants and animals.

The team's work hasn't been easy. In just the last ten to fifteen years, Kalōpā Park has seen the arrival and spread of aggressive invasive plants, the loss of 'Ohi'a trees killed by Rapid 'Ohi'a Death," and the impacts of strong windstorms on the remaining trees. The dedicated team volunteers, many of whom have become kupuna, were finding it hard to come up with the strength and endurance that their work sometimes requires. The team needed help.

So, there we were, on that bright day in mid-September, with a full agenda of presentations, walks in the park and discussions over a lunch provided by members of PMKCA. Our guests came from near and far – residents from the local communities of Pa'auilo, Kalōpā, Laupāhoehoe, and Honoka'a were there. Members of the island's Master Gardeners program came from as far away as Mountain View.

Our invited experts included Dr. J.B. Friday, UH Extension Forester, Chuck Chimera, Botanist specializing in Hawaiian plants and invasive weeds, Kawehi Young, Outreach Specialist from the Big Island Invasive Species Committee, and our own Sarah Brown, leader of the Kalōpā Park Team.



The day began with presentations from the park team and experts in forestry, native plants and invasive species. (Credit: J.B. Clarkson)

To begin the day, Sarah provided a historical perspective on the formation of Kalōpā State Park and the community efforts to keep the land out of the hands of commercial forestry interests until it could be designated a State Park.

Dr. Friday described the critical importance that the original Polynesians assigned to the high elevation forests in the storage and slow release of fresh water supplies to lowland communities. Current water shortages during drought years can be traced back to the loss of native forest watersheds.

Chuck Chimera introduced us to the native plants that are found within the park, huge 'Ohi'a and Kopiko, Hapu'u and Palapalai ferns, and more. As Chuck talked about the invasive plants gaining a foothold in the park, he waved (in gloved hands) a frond of the irritating Australian Tree Fern, and the yellow Kahili Ginger. Ending his talk, he described the devastating role that pigs play in damaging the soil and spreading invasives.

Kawehi Young continued the topic of invasive species, providing some success stories (the elimination of the dangerously invasive Pampas Grass on our island) and the recent invasive threats that may show up in our local forests and gardens, such as the Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle and the Twolined Spittle Bug. She asked attendees to be on the lookout for the newest invasives so that they can be eradicated before they spread uncontrollably.

Well! Our guests were ready for a walk on the Nature Trail at that point! Splitting up into two groups, one led by Dr. Friday and the other by Chuck Chimera and taking opposite directions on the Nature Trail's 0.7 mile-loop, off they went.



The pink new leaves of Kōlea brighten the forest against the grey trunk of a mature 'Ōhi'a.

In the natural settings of the trail, scrambling at times around fallen trees, our guests could see the impressive remaining stands of native 'Ohi'a, threatened by ROD, and the understory native plants that had evolved as companions in the forests.

The walkers could also see the damaging effects of the worst of the new invasives, contending with the natives for nutrients and sunlight. They learned to distinguish the native Hapu'u fern from the invasive Australian Tree Fern. They could see the dense patches of Night-blooming Jasmine which had escaped from residential gardens, and the Moreton Bay Fig, wrapping a tree in its strangling roots until the original tree died.

The walk was both uplifting and sobering, but also intensely interesting! And lunch awaited the group. Conversations blossomed and discussions abounded over salads and sandwiches. The day lasted almost 2 hours longer than planned, but the result was so very encouraging. The team collected the names of new volunteers, and ideas for projects and new tactics in fighting invasives were exchanged.

When our guests finally dispersed at nearly 4pm, tired, well-fed and energized, the team pronounced the day a great success. The proof of that success remains in the potential for new volunteers to join the team, either regularly or for special projects. If you are interested in helping:

**The Kalōpā Park Team meets in Kalōpā Park twice each month
on the FIRST THURSDAY and THIRD SATURDAY at 9:00am.**

**The team meets at the "Kiosk" near the cabins
and typically works for 2-3 hours.**

Call or text Sarah Brown - 317 474-3498 for details.

PMKCA and the Kalōpā Park Team wish to extend our gratitude to the many volunteers who helped make this event such a success!

- **For occupying the Pavilion at 5am and preparing it for the event:** Rick and Sarah Brown, Joe and Karen Clarkson, Steve and Bertie Wolfe, Peter Christensen, Irwin Francus, and the many PMKCA members who provided tables and chairs, just in case we needed to set up elsewhere in the park... thankfully, we didn't.
- **For buying the supplies, preparing, and laying out the food and drinks for 40+ attendees:** Joe Clarkson (PMKCA's supplies), Chuck Meier and Terri Gossè (Costco run!), their neighbor, Les (donation of pineapples), Sarah Brown, Diane Lewis, Nicole Chatigny, Peter Christensen, Terri Gossè, Ruth (food items).

Mahalo nui loa!!

~~~~~

## PMKCA Meetings & Events

~~~~~

Board of Directors Meeting

Thursday, October 12 - 6PM

Location: Denning's house, 44-3220 Kula Kahiko Rd.

If you have any interests or concerns, or just want to see what we do, we encourage you to email any Board member and attend the Board meeting.

~~~~~

### **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 ([p3t3rchr@gmail.com](mailto:p3t3rchr@gmail.com)) or mail a check made out to PMKCA, PO Box 408, Pa'auilo, HI 96776.**

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

Pa'auilo Mauka Kalōpā Community Association

P.O. Box 408, Pa'auilo, HI 96776

Email: [news.PMKCA@gmail.com](mailto:news.PMKCA@gmail.com)

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