The **Waihe’e Ridge Trail** offers spectacular views of Waihe’e valley which is recognized as one of the 4 valleys termed Na Wai ’Ēhā (The four streams). In early Hawaiian times these four valleys, Waihe’e, Waiehu, ʻIao and Waikapū, formed a watershed that traditionally supported a rich native aquatic ecosystem and a thriving Native Hawaiian community cultivating the largest continuous area of wetland kalo farming in Hawaii. This trail is also part of the “Na Ala Hele”, a trail and access program created by the State of Hawaii.

---

**Endemic Plants** | **Indigenous Plants**

**ʻOLAPA** (*Cheirodendron trigynum*)
GINSENG Family (ARALIACEAE)

The leaf of this small tree is divided into three to five leaflets and is characterized by the fluttering of its leaves, even in the slightest breeze, creating the sound of the gentle rain in the mountains. ʻOlapa, meaning ‘dancer’, is a style of hula where the dancer’s body imitates these graceful movements. The early Hawaiians obtained a bluish dye for tapa from the leaves and bark.

**ʻOHIʻA** (*Metrosideros polymorpha*)
MYRTLE Family (MYRTACEAE)

The dark red, hard wood of this common native tree was used for bowls, spears, and parts of canoes. The ʻohiʻa’s lehua blossoms are an important source of nectar for the native birds ʻAmakihi, ʻApapane, and ʻIʻiwi and are sacred to Pele, the goddess of fire. The ʻohiʻa is one of the first trees to come up through the lava rock.

**ULOHE** (*Dicranopteris linearis*)
VINE FERN Family (GLEICHENIACEAE)

This native fern is an important component in collecting moisture and reducing erosion along high angle slopes and in wet forests. Often mistaken for a weed, it is actually a pioneer plant that is fast growing, widespread and abundant among native forest floors.

**ʻIEʻIE** (*Freycinetia arborea*)
SCREW PINE Family (Pandanaceae)

Although ʻieʻie is neither a shrub nor a tree, it is a woody plant. This vine often climbs ʻohiʻa trees and spirals tightly around the trunk. The finest Hawaiian baskets were twined from the roots. It is also related to a well known plant, hala.
THE HAWAIIAN ISLANDS

The Hawaiian Islands are the most isolated group of high islands in the world. Plants and animals that arrived in Hawai‘i long ago, without the help of people, had to cross at least 2,500 miles of open ocean. They had to make it here by one of the 3 W’s: 

**Wind, Wings, or Waves.**

Consequently, there are no native terrestrial reptiles and amphibians, only 2 native mammals (Hawaiian monk seal and hoary bat), and a handful of fresh water fishes. There are dozens of species of native birds, thousands of different invertebrates such as insects, arthropods, and mollusks, and an enormous diversity of native plants.

PLANTS & ANIMALS UNIQUE TO THE WORLD

The plants and animals that did arrive in Hawai‘i long ago evolved over thousands of years to become unique in the world, or ENDEMIC, found here and nowhere else. Many defense mechanisms have been lost (smells, thorns, poisons) in a world free of grazing mammals and large predators. Some animals, such as snails, evolved from producing millions of young to only a handful. Many birds, with no need to flee from predators or to leave for winter, lost their ability to fly.

These adaptations were previously beneficial, but have made native Hawaiian species extremely vulnerable today.

ENDANGERED SPECIES CAPITAL

With the arrival of the first Polynesians about 1,500 years ago and the subsequent rediscovery of Hawai‘i by Captain Cook, new diseases, new predators, invasive species, new land use practices and human population growth have made life difficult, if not impossible, for many native species.

The Hawaiian Islands are sometimes called the endangered species capital of the world. Today, over half our native forest birds are endangered or have disappeared altogether. Hundreds of plants and animals, some found only in tiny pockets of remnant forest, are threatened with imminent extinction.

This web continues to unravel as plants lose their insect or bird pollinators, or animals lose their plant food or habitat. The single greatest threat to our watersheds is invasion of non-native species. Native forests have been out competed by the encroachment of invasive weeds and destroyed by wild ungulates ( hoofed animals).

TODAY’S EFFORTS OF PROTECTION

Land holders are uniting in Watershed Partnerships, along with scientists, educators, visitors, and the general public in efforts statewide to learn more about our precious resources and how to protect them. Thank you for doing your part to preserve our native Hawaiian ecosystems.

---

**Hawaiian Natural History. . .**

**THE HAWAIIAN ISLANDS**

The Hawaiian Islands are the most isolated group of high islands in the world. Plants and animals that arrived in Hawai‘i long ago, without the help of people, had to cross at least 2,500 miles of open ocean. They had to make it here by one of the 3 W’s: Wind, Wings, or Waves.

Consequently, there are no native terrestrial reptiles and amphibians, only 2 native mammals (Hawaiian monk seal and hoary bat), and a handful of fresh water fishes. There are dozens of species of native birds, thousands of different invertebrates such as insects, arthropods, and mollusks, and an enormous diversity of native plants.

**ENDANGERED SPECIES CAPITAL**

With the arrival of the first Polynesians about 1,500 years ago and the subsequent rediscovery of Hawai‘i by Captain Cook, new diseases, new predators, invasive species, new land use practices and human population growth have made life difficult, if not impossible, for many native species.

The Hawaiian Islands are sometimes called the endangered species capital of the world. Today, over half our native forest birds are endangered or have disappeared altogether. Hundreds of plants and animals, some found only in tiny pockets of remnant forest, are threatened with imminent extinction.

This web continues to unravel as plants lose their insect or bird pollinators, or animals lose their plant food or habitat. The single greatest threat to our watersheds is invasion of non-native species. Native forests have been out competed by the encroachment of invasive weeds and destroyed by wild ungulates ( hoofed animals).

**TODAY’S EFFORTS OF PROTECTION**

Land holders are uniting in Watershed Partnerships, along with scientists, educators, visitors, and the general public in efforts statewide to learn more about our precious resources and how to protect them. Thank you for doing your part to preserve our native Hawaiian ecosystems.

---

**12 Conservation Tips You Can Do to Help . . .**

1. Watch out for invasive plants and animals. If found, call Maui Invasive Species Committee @ 808-573-6472.

2. Be careful not to introduce non-native plants and animals.

3. Cultivate gardens that require little water (xeriscaping) & grow native flowers & plants whenever possible.

4. Use motorcycles & other 4-wheel drive or off-road vehicles responsibly & stay on marked roads or designated trails.

5. Clean hiking boots, running shoes & other gear before you enter native forest areas or travel inter-island.


7. Avoid littering & dispose of plastic bags, 6-pack rings & fishing lines properly.

8. Please prevent wildfires. Wildfires are not natural in Hawai‘i and can greatly disturb native species and the watershed.

9. Support conservation organizations working hard to protect rare species & ecosystems.

10. Support legislation & government actions designed to protect vanishing species, their habitats, and watersheds.

11. Learn more about Hawaii’s unique natural heritage.

12. Spread the word, not the seeds!