



WHAT ARE 'ĀINA WAI?

'Āina wai are wetlands, which are areas in our 'ahupua'a that are covered and saturated in wai (water) for long periods of time. Some 'āina wai include riverine wetlands (marshes and bogs), estuarine wetlands (swamps and mudflats), and marine wetlands (internal shorelines, seagrass beds, and tide pools). The ecosystems in 'āina wai help to filter wastes and impurities in the wai (water) flowing through our 'ahupua'a. These areas include cultural landscapes such as lo'i kalo and loko i'a which feed not only our 'ohana but also nature.

WHAT CAN WE DO AS KĀNAKA?

The 'āina and its ecosystems is a reflection of us kānaka, so the more we mālama 'āina, the more we mālama ourselves and our 'ohana. Let's take the time to learn more about these birds. Also the next time you see the birds in the wetlands: show them respect and mālama them by not scaring them off and not allowing our keiki or pets to chase and kill them. Let's give these manu space to be themselves.

PI-AK-CASC

Moloka'i Manu Ne'ekau Project (Molokai Migratory Wetland Birds) is a project with three main objectives:

- (1) to describe and elevate Indigenous approaches for tracking phenological changes in coastal bird migration and associated habitats in Moloka'i and southcentral Alaska,
- (2) to create or expand the content and accessibility of existing databases that track phenological changes in migratory birds and associated habitats in both locations, and
- (3) to synthesize and share gathered phenological knowledge with students and other community members in hopes of strengthening cultural ties among humans, coastal birds, and their habitats.

This project includes a huaka'i to follow our Manu Ne'ekau to the shores of Alaska & attend the 2025 Copper River Delta Shorebird Festival.

The following key questions will be addressed by this project:

1. What can Indigenous groups from Moloka'i and the Chugach region teach each other and the world about approaches for tracking phenological changes in coastal migratory birds and their associated habitats?
2. How can on-going collection of such phenological data assist local communities in understanding the pace and scope of climate change?
3. How can the sharing of phenological knowledge and TEK with students and other community members in both locations help strengthen ties among humans, coastal birds, and their habitats?

MANU NE'EKAU PARTNERS



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MOLOKAI MANU NE'EKAU Migratory Wetland Birds Project



WHAT BIRDS LIVE IN 'ĀINA WAI?

Different species of birds take refuge in 'āina wai (wetlands). These birds include the 'Ae'o, 'Auku'u, 'Akekeke, 'Alae 'Ula, 'Alae Ke'oke'o, 'Ūlili, Upupā, Hunakai, Kioea, Kōlea, Kōloa, Koloa Māpu, Koloa Mōhā, Northern Shoveler, and more.

Some species live in 'āina wai year round, which is where they mate, nest, and raise their young.

Some of them migrate to Alaska and to other sub-polar and temperate climates to also mate, nest, and raise their young. These migratory birds include: Kōlea, Kioea, 'Akekeke, and 'Ūlili.

BIRDS INDICATE HEALTHY 'ĀINA WAI

These birds eat a variety of plants, insects, and aquatic species with wetland ecosystems. This helps to reduce and control disease outbreaks, pests, and insect populations, while also spreading the nutrients and seed diversity within the 'āina wai and across our islands.

The presence of these birds indicates that the 'āina wai has a diverse and abundant ecosystem. This diversity means that the 'āina wai is healthy and thriving.

Manu Embassadors



Photo Credit: Meredith Miller



WAIHĀLA'I PURDY-AVELINO

-FROM HO'OLEHUA
-15 YEARS OLD
-KANU O KA 'ĀINA, KA 'OHĀ

Waihāla'i is interested in manu and other mea Hawai'i because the traveling between the places reminds her of how our people travelled long distances and is interested in knowing why and how our manu does this. She also sees the decline and slow extinction of our mea Hawai'i happening in our lāhui too and also wants to do what she can to save our mea Hawai'i. Waihāla'i knows that in order to save our manu and mea Hawai'i we have to protect their ecosystem, their food source, and manage the predators that threaten them.

Kiai Manu



Photo Credit: Hob Osterlund



WAILA'AHIA LIMA-MAIOHO

-FROM KAMILOLOA
-11 YEARS OLD
-KE KULA KAIAPUNI O
KUALAPU'U

"I'm from Moloka'i. I like learning about the migratory birds because I am interested to know how it changes, if they become skinny over there and how they lay their eggs, and to actually see that. I want to see the different ecosystems of these birds. I also want to be a guardian so that I can protect different types of birds."



HI'IKAPU LIMA

-FROM KUALAPU'U
-14 YEARS OLD
-MMS, 'O HINA I KA MALAMA

"Aloha, I'm Hi'ikapu. I live in Kualapu'u Molokai. I'm interested in birds because we have connections to Hawaiian birds. I want to learn about birds because I love all birds and it is special to me."



PO'OHIWI HELM

-FROM KALAMA'ULA
-14 YEARS OLD
-AKA'ULA

"Im interested in manu ne'ekau and other Hawaiian things because its a way for me to connect back to my Hawaiian kūpuna and its a way to help my Hawaiian culture grow stronger, [it allows me] to connect to my culture and its a way to give back to my 'āina. So that knowledge doesnt get lost and to pass it down to people and share with community."