



Original cartoon by Callum Raine

Celebrating the 'Alae 'Ula: A Partnership Approach to Reconnecting Community with an Endangered Waterbird

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Block print commissioned from Holly Ka'iakapu

'Alae 'Ula History and Status

Native Hawaiians have had a long relationship with the 'alae 'ula (*Gallinula galeata sandvicensis*). Humans created lo'i kalo that helped to maintain habitat that benefited the bird, and it features in multiple mo'olelo (Gomes 2024; Cody 2024). **But today, only 712 'alae 'ula remain in the world.** It has been lost from all Hawaiian Islands except for O'ahu and Kaua'i (Gorresen et al. 2024).



Gomes 2024



Cody 2024



Gorresen et al. 2024

Outreach Campaign Goals

Throughout 2026, Pacific Birds Habitat Joint Venture has worked with Hawai'i Audubon Society, Livable Maunaloa Hui, and over 20 other public, private, and non-profit partners on an outreach and education campaign that celebrates the 'alae 'ula.

Our goal is to raise the profile of the 'alae 'ula as a culturally important and iconic species of Hawai'i. People are often unable to name the bird even where it is easy to see! We hope to also inspire people to take action to protect these waterbirds and the habitats they rely on.

The Campaign So Far

Community Engagement:

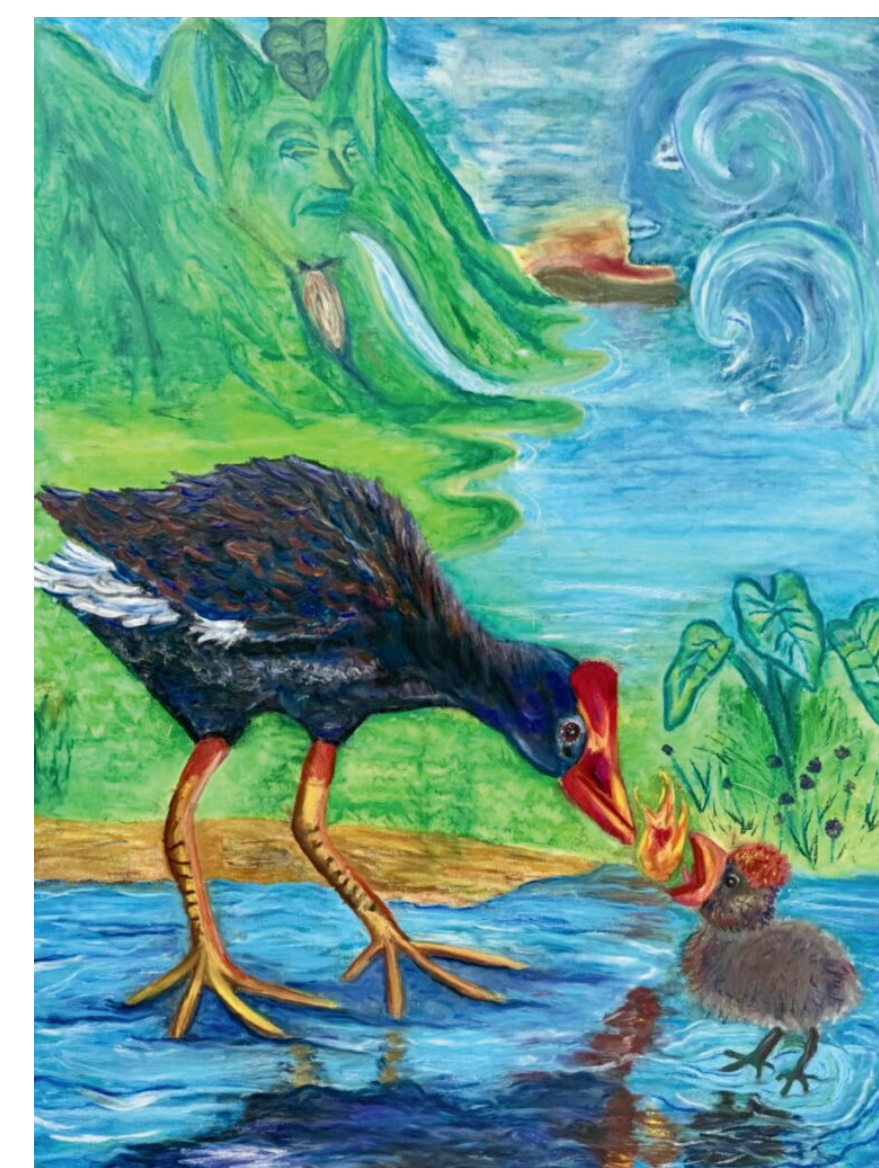
- Speech at Governor's Proclamation for DOFAW's Year of Our Coastal Kuleana campaign
- Proclamation and certificate from County of Kaua'i
- Campaign launch events on Kaua'i (300+ people) and O'ahu (85+ people)
- 6 community events on Kaua'i (925+ people)
- 2 community events on O'ahu (150+ people)
- 130 pieces of art created by local students

Traditional Media:

- 4 TV interviews, 2 radio interviews and 1 PSA
- 1 front page story in the Garden Island Newspaper

Digital Media:

- Campaign webpage: bit.ly/alae-ula
- 24 Pacific Birds Instagram posts viewed 43k times



Art by 'alae 'ula art contest winners Kai Culnane (left) and Alywen Fife (right)



Conservation Challenges

The 'alae 'ula faces multiple challenges. Wetlands and lo'i have been lost from the landscape due to agriculture, development, and invasive plants — a problem which climate change will exacerbate. Threats from predators are not being adequately addressed. And humans pose additional risks and disturbances to 'alae 'ula, including collisions with vehicles and golf carts and the impacts of feeding the birds.

But we know what to do! The 'alae 'ula needs high-quality wetlands and lo'i plus predator control. Together, we can make that happen!



Our Approach

Returning the 'alae 'ula to a state of abundance will require partnerships and community-based solutions.

Success would look like:

- Reintroducing people to the 'alae 'ula, so it becomes as familiar as the Kiwi in New Zealand
- Communicating the need for high-quality, predator-free wetland and lo'i habitat
- Stimulating cooperation and collaboration among conservation partners to address threats to habitat
- Ongoing planning for reintroduction to a third island and raising general support for this measure

Join Our Campaign!

We have more events coming this year:

- "712 Students for 'Alae 'Ula" event on Kaua'i
- In-class lessons at 5+ schools
- Community events on O'ahu and Kaua'i, including volunteer opportunities with Friends of Kaua'i National Wildlife Refuges and Livable Maunaloa Hui
- Native Hawaiian birds art show at Kukui Grove

This is a great start, but we are not there yet. Join our campaign to celebrate the 'alae 'ula!



Celebrate the 'Alae 'Ula Campaign Website



Read the Strategic Plan for Hawai'i Wetlands



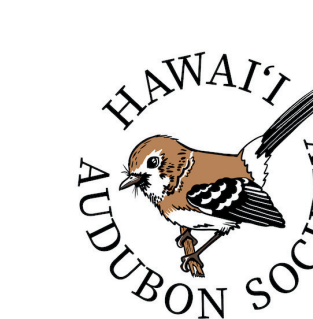
Donate to the Hawai'i Audubon Society



Sign Up for the Pacific Birds Newsletter



Follow Our Campaign on Social Media



Campaign partners include American Bird Conservancy, Archipelago Research and Conservation, Friends of Kaua'i National Wildlife Refuges, Hawai'i Division of Forestry and Wildlife, Healthy Climate Communities, HK Experience, Island School, Kaua'i Endangered Seabird Recovery Project, Kawaikini Immersion School, Kukui Grove, Lydgate Farms, Machine Machine, Mānā Plains Nēnē Project, NOAA, 'Ōhi'a Love, Pacific Missile Range Facility, Save Our Shearwaters, Vortex Optics, and Waimea Valley.