

Kaua‘i National Wildlife Refuge Complex

Hulē‘ia National Wildlife Refuge



Hulē‘ia National Wildlife Refuge, located near the city of Līhu‘e on the Island of Kaua‘i, was established in 1973 to recover threatened and endangered species, including the koloa or Hawaiian duck (*Anas wyvilliana*), the ‘alae ke‘oke‘o or Hawaiian coot (*Fulica alai*), the ‘alae ‘ula or Hawaiian moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus sandvicensis*), and the ae‘o or Hawaiian stilt (*Himantopus mexicanus*) and the nēnē or Hawaiian goose (*Branta sandvicensis*). The 241-acre Refuge was purchased from the Grove Farm Corporation with Land and Water Conservation Funds. The Refuge is located within a State Historic and Conservation District.

The goals of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service at Hulē‘ia are to:

- 1) Protect and enhance Hawaiian endangered waterbird populations and provide high quality nesting and feeding habitat;
- 2) Protect and enhance the native plant community and riverine ecosystem; and
- 3) To provide opportunities for environmental education and interpretation and wildlife observation.



The Hulē‘ia National Wildlife Refuge is located in a relatively flat valley along the Hulē‘ia River that is bordered by steep wooded hillsides. Elevations range from near sea level to approximately 20 feet at the upstream boundary of the Refuge. Formerly, the valley was used for wetland agriculture, including taro and rice production, and as irrigated pasture.

The Refuge consists of intensively managed wetlands that mimic the unique natural Hawaiian wetland systems, which provide all the necessary life history requirements for endangered bird species. In addition to the five endangered birds for which the refuge is primarily managed to protect, 31 other bird species (18 of which are introduced) are found at the Refuge.

Management practices include management of invasive plant and animal species and construction and maintenance of protected wetlands in the lowland areas bordering the Hulē‘ia River. Controlling alien plant species is a challenge in Hawai‘i’s wetland areas, and frequent maintenance is required to perpetuate the naturalized wetland areas preferred by the water birds.

Although Hulē‘ia National Wildlife Refuge is closed to the public to protect its endangered residents, the State of Hawai‘i’s Historic Menehune Fish Pond overlook provides views of the Refuge, and a commercial kayak tour company has a special use permit to operate through an upland portion of the Refuge.

