

The Nature  
Conservancy



# Hawai'i and Palmyra

## *Focus on Forests*

In the Forest is the Source  
For the Love of Birds  
Remembering Don Lichty





Alaka'i wilderness © TNC

Aloha kākou,

Growing up with hula, I learned many chants that shaped my image of a forest, with lush lehua groves and the songs of birds coming through the mist. Those chants taught me that the forest is the source of life and growth, and that my responsibility is to care for it. Recently, I had a dream I was walking through the forest. It was eerily quiet—no breeze rustling the treetops, no chirruping of native birds, no gurgle of streams nor roar of waterfalls. I awoke with a start, which evolved into a steadfast determination that this bleak view will not be the fate of our forests.

Healthy native forests in Hawai'i are steeped in cultural history, provide critical habitat to rare and endangered plants and birds, and are the sole source of our islands' freshwater. They also regulate climate, clean the air we breathe and anchor the soil, reducing the erosion that degrades our coasts and fisheries.

The responsibility and determination we have to our forests is captured in the lines of a traditional chant I regularly offer before entering the forest:

E ho'oulu mai ana o Laka i kōna mau kahu, o mākou nō.  
The forest realm brings growth to its caretakers, it is we indeed.

TNC also is passionate about forests—so much so that for more than 40 years we have forged partnerships that mālama, or care for, more than 2 million acres of forests and watersheds (that's about two times the size of the Grand Canyon), fenced and manage thousands of acres of native forest to protect against destructive hoofed animals, and conducted large-scale removal of invasive species.

In this issue, we focus on all things forest, with a biocultural reflection on the relationship between freshwater and forests, a cover story about our work to preserve the home of endangered forest birds, and an invitation to learn how technology can help safeguard them.

As we enter the second year of the defining decade in terms of staving off the worst climate change impacts, we continue our work to restore the natural ecosystem functions of forests, reefs and island ecosystems that make them more resilient to a changing climate.

And as always, we thank you, our loyal supporters, without whom our work—and our successes—would not be possible.

Mālama a mahalo a nui loa  
(take care and thank you very much),

Ulalia Woodside



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# The Nature Conservancy



Protecting nature. Preserving life.

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The Nature Conservancy Hawai'i and Palmyra chapter is the local affiliate of The Nature Conservancy, an international, non-profit organization based in Arlington, VA.

**The mission of The Nature Conservancy is to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends.**

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Cover: TNC's Renee Miller on Waikamoi boardwalk © Ian Shive



# I ka Wao ke Kumu *In the Forest is the Source*

Waikamoi 'ama'u ferns © Ian Shive

Four hundred years ago, a Hawaiian was working in the verdant lo'i kalo (taro fields) of Ke'anae on Maui's north coast. He looked upward to the cloud-shrouded 'ōhi'a forests above, knowing that the wao akua, the forested realm of the gods, was the source of wealth for the Ko'olau district, his ancestral home. Few ventured there, and only with great need and minimum impact, all ceremonially cleansed before entering. The level of sacredness mandated that kapu (spiritual restriction) be observed, and thus the forest was protected.

In a recent study of our preserve at Waikamoi by the UH Economic Research Organization (UHERO), the conclusions were clear: Keeping the forest healthy and native-dominated offers huge savings in biocultural and water resources that would otherwise be lost to climate change and invasion by non-native invasive species. Conservation lands, typically valued lowest among all land categories, actually hold huge value in the water resources they represent. The Hawaiian saying Hahai nō ka ua i ka ulula'au (The rain surely follows the forest) returns from centuries past, and we are thankful for that ancient wisdom guiding us today.



## *E Komo Mai*

### OUR NEW TERRESTRIAL DIRECTOR

We welcome Alison Cohan as our new Hawai'i Terrestrial Director, transitioning from her role as Maui Nui Terrestrial Director, where she managed Waikamoi Preserve and led innovative projects on Maui, Moloka'i and Lāna'i. An established conservation leader in Hawai'i, she began her



© Alison Cohan/TNC

career in marine research before transitioning to TNC forest preserve management. Alison brings years of experience advancing conservation through solid, productive relationships with partners, stakeholders and funders.

"I am humbled and honored to be granted the opportunity to serve as TNC's Terrestrial Director," Alison says. "I look forward to collaborating and innovating with staff and partners to advance the important work of preserving Hawai'i's native landscapes and precious resources."

### OUR DIRECTOR OF CONSERVATION

Join us in welcoming Trevor Taylor, who has joined our executive team as Director of Conservation. Trevor brings more than 30 years of experience managing natural resources and stewardship programs in Oregon, where he built meaningful partnerships with tribes, federal and state agencies, nonprofit



© Sean Marrs

organizations, universities, local communities and other stakeholders to care for natural areas and resources. His experience in managing multiple, diverse and geographically dispersed teams, as well as a deep understanding of conservation management, a passion for nature and people, and his love for Hawai'i will help increase the impact of our work across Hawai'i and Palmyra Atoll.

"I'm thrilled and honored to join TNC and look forward to working in collaboration with staff and partners in our efforts to care for the special lands and waters of Hawai'i and Palmyra," says Trevor.

# For the Love of Birds

by Madeline Luft

In the high-elevation forests of east Maui, there are few things as special as hearing the kiwikiu's bright song fill the forest. These olive-green and yellow large-billed honeycreepers form pair bonds that last for life, flitting through the branches of 'ōhi'a and koa trees in search of the insects and larvae that make up their diet. However, the kiwikiu's song is vanishing. With fewer than 160 individuals remaining, the kiwikiu are one of the world's most endangered birds.

Wandering through the lush greenery to the songs of native forest birds and insects, it's awe-inspiring to consider how Hawai'i's native forests evolved over

millions of years to become one of the most remarkable and biodiverse places on Earth. These forests also supply our state with fresh water, protect our beaches and coral reefs from destructive runoff and sediment, and are a vital link to the survival of Hawaiian cultural practices.

"When you visit the Bishop Museum and see the feathered cloaks and helmets, the Hawaiian appreciation and understanding of the native forest and its birds become clear," says Sam 'Ōhu Gon, Senior Scientist and Cultural Advisor for TNC Hawai'i and Palmyra. "There is no denying that birds have played a huge role in Hawaiian culture."

TNC's history in Hawai'i is rooted in native forest bird protection. We first focused on identifying areas with healthy habitat to protect endangered native forest birds, and began working with partners and landowners to purchase and preserve these landscapes. For example, TNC purchased Maulua, 3,300 acres on the windward slope of Mauna Kea on Hawai'i Island, to protect the Hawaiian hawk and Hawai'i creepers. Almost immediately after its purchase, Maulua became the first U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service wildlife refuge devoted to forest birds. Twenty years later, it is still part of Hakalau National Wildlife Refuge, now expanded to 5,200 acres, and remains one of the few places outside TNC preserves where birds like the 'ākepa, 'akiapōlā'au and 'i'iwi thrive.

Our first major initiative was the Endangered Hawai'i Forest Bird Campaign, which raised \$3 million to create new preserves to protect bird species, including Waikamoi on Maui. This vast koa-'ōhi'a forest is the last stronghold for 63 species of rare plants and six species of endangered and threatened birds. TNC has led regular volunteer working days into Waikamoi Preserve, providing opportunities to glimpse rare birds and plants. Gon believes experiencing the beauty of these birds up close is critical to their protection.

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'Ama'u ferns in Waikamoi Preserve © TNC



'Io (Hawaiian hawk)  
© Robert Shallenberger



Kiwikiu (Maui parrotbill) in Waikamoi Preserve © Mike Neal



Hāpu'u tree ferns in Kona Hema Preserve © Grady Timmons

"When you can take a relatively easy walk to see an endangered forest bird, this reforges the relationship between people and nature, which is going to be even more important in future conservation efforts," he says.

TNC work in Hawai'i has since evolved from species-specific conservation to focusing on ecosystems and large functional landscapes across multiple land ownership boundaries to protect Hawai'i's spectacular diversity of life.

Despite our ongoing efforts to preserve habitat and remove threats for native forest birds, they now face additional risk. Mosquito-borne diseases have devastating impacts on people and nature—and we see this worsening with climate change. Birds previously found sanctuary in their high-elevation habitats, where temperatures were too cool for mosquitoes. As the climate in Hawai'i warms, however, mosquitoes are expanding their range. While birds used to find refuge from mosquitoes at high elevations, the insects have crossed that threshold and now threaten birds more than 5,000 feet above sea level. As mosquitoes encroach on these higher-elevation habitats, they are decimating bird species and threatening extinction where there is not enough high-elevation habitat without mosquitoes. While some non-native birds develop resis-

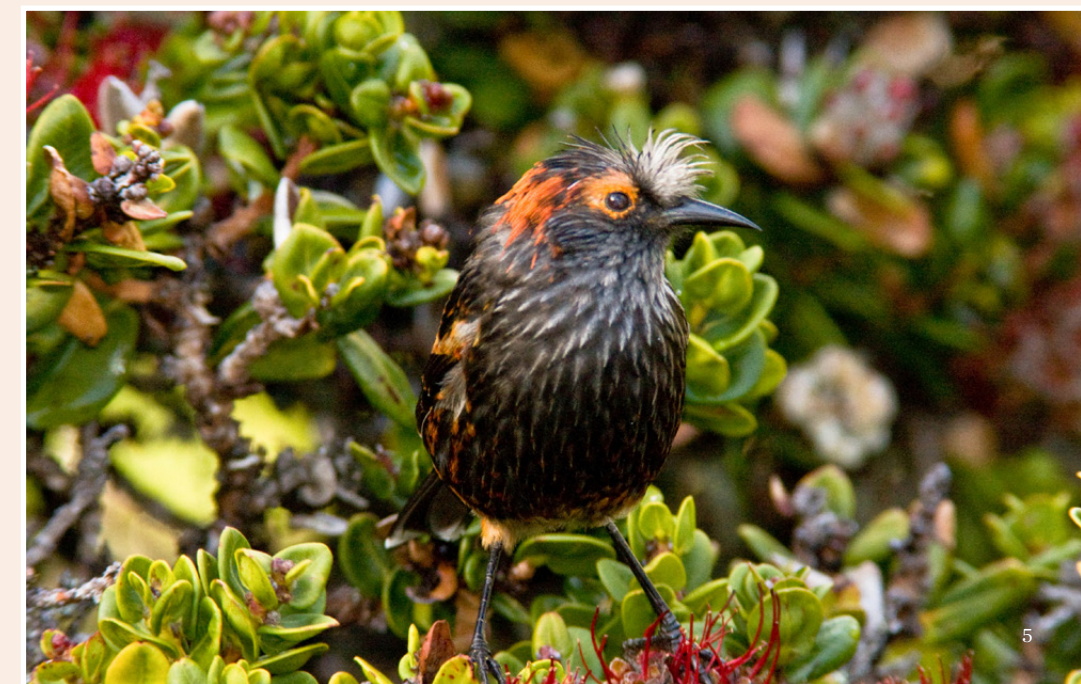
tance, rare and endangered birds don't have the luxury of a large enough population, or enough time, to build resistance and recover. On lower-elevation islands, such as O'ahu, where the highest elevation is 4,025 feet, rare and endangered birds have even fewer mosquito-free, safe habitat areas.

Climate change isn't a distant threat—it's happening now. Scientists estimate that the next 10 years will be the defining decade for our climate future. To match the urgency of this crisis, we are drawing on our decades of experience and global expertise to deploy solutions that maximize nature's

ability to fight climate change while bolstering resilience for our precious ecosystems. This includes joining forces with partners on methods to suppress mosquito-borne diseases.

"We're collaborating with partners on innovative solutions to combat disease that threatens to drive many native Hawaiian honeycreepers to extinction," says Alison Cohan, TNC's Hawai'i Terrestrial Director. "By applying our conservation experience, scientific knowledge and technical expertise to their protection, we hope to prolong the survival of Hawai'i's forest birds." If successful, we can enjoy the kiwikiu's melody for years to come.

'Ākohekohe (crested honeycreeper) in Waikamoi Preserve © Mike Neal





Akeke'e (Hawaiian honeycreeper)  
found only on Kaua'i  
© Jim Denny

## Can Technology Help Save Forest Birds?

Flashes of red in the canopy of Hawaiian forests reveal shy native birds. The pilina, or biocultural relationship, of these birds to the forest was recognized by ancient Hawaiians. They celebrated the birds' ecological significance as pollinators and seed dispersers ensuring forest health. Native forests are uniquely suited to capture fresh-water and replenish the islands' drinking water. The birds' survival is at risk due to a warming climate that allows mosquitoes—carrying avian malaria that kills native birds—to gain a foothold.

TNC, together with Verily Life Sciences, is exploring how technology can change this trajectory. We invite you to join us for a discussion between TNC Senior Scientist Dr. Alex Wegmann and Verily Life Sciences Head of Debug Linus Upson as they share how this partnership may help prevent the extinction of Hawai'i's forest birds. Hold the date: Tuesday, May 10, from 2 to 3 p.m. HST.

## Team Profiles



**LARA SIU** has guided our Legacy Club and Silversword Society with grace and aloha for 15 years and will now connect with more supporters as our Associate Director of Philanthropy. Born and raised in Honolulu, Lara brings her passion for Hawai'i to everything she does. She looks forward to working with our donors to make meaningful major gifts for nature by helping them explore smarter, more tax-efficient ways of accomplishing their charitable giving.



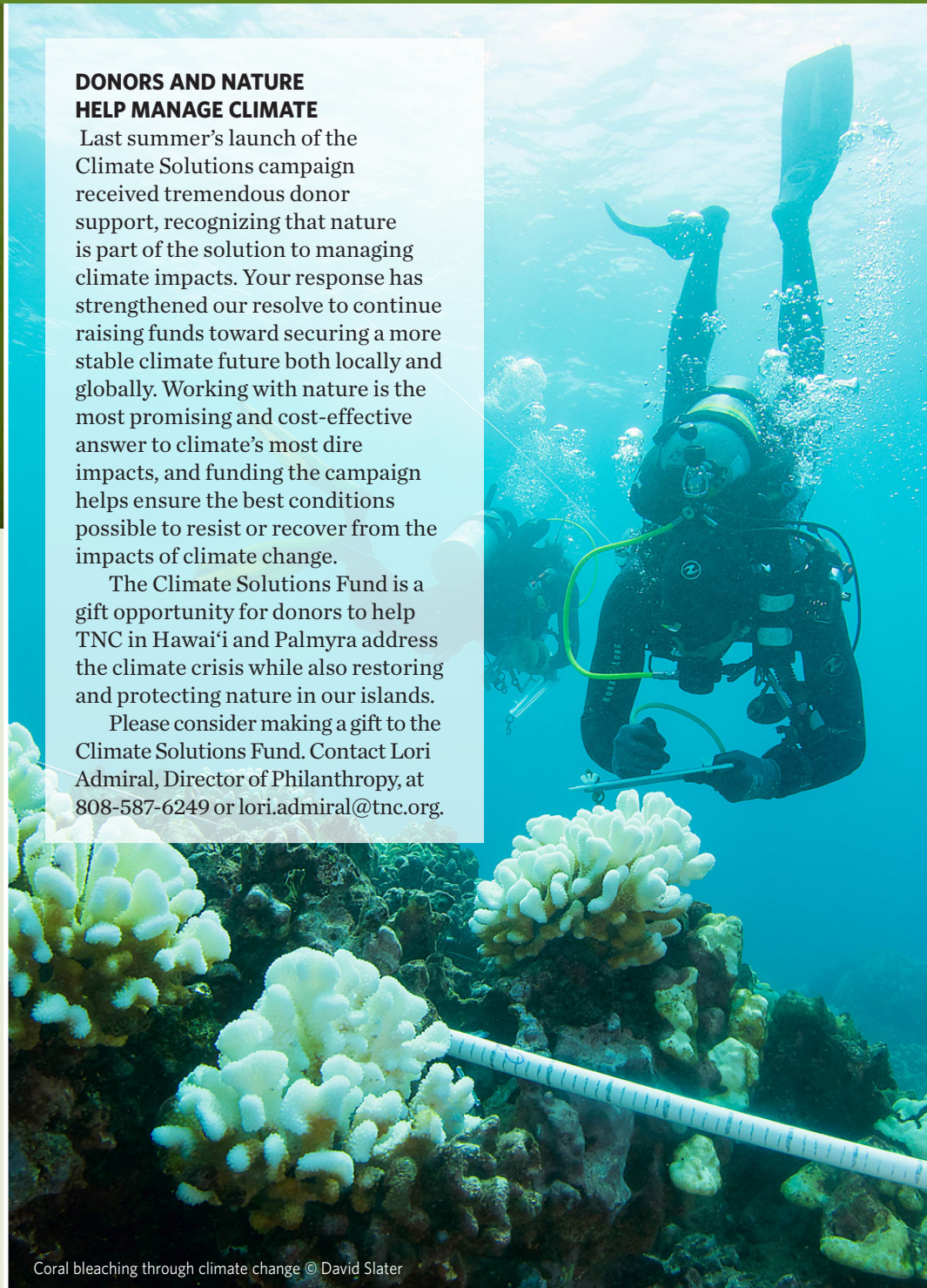
**TAMI HAGEN**  
E komo mai to Tami Hagen, our new Donor Relations Manager. Bringing seven years' experience in philanthropy and a previous career in social work, Tami sees this position as coming full circle in her life's goals. A childhood fascination for Jacques Cousteau's work opened the door to understanding that people are linked to the natural world. She is excited to meet our donors and help them discover their connection with nature through TNC.

### DONORS AND NATURE HELP MANAGE CLIMATE

Last summer's launch of the Climate Solutions campaign received tremendous donor support, recognizing that nature is part of the solution to managing climate impacts. Your response has strengthened our resolve to continue raising funds toward securing a more stable climate future both locally and globally. Working with nature is the most promising and cost-effective answer to climate's most dire impacts, and funding the campaign helps ensure the best conditions possible to resist or recover from the impacts of climate change.

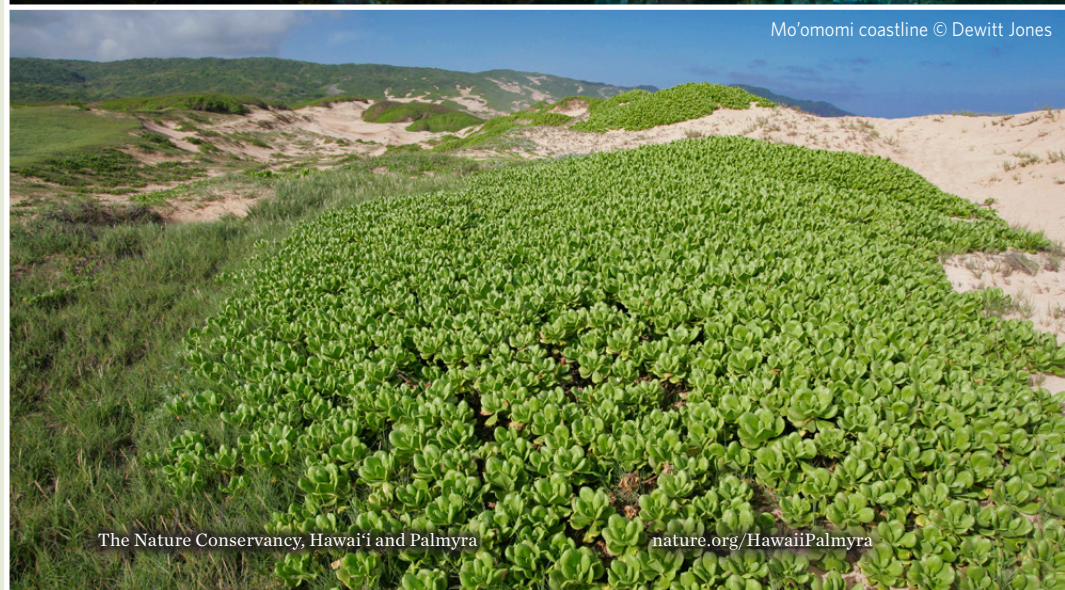
The Climate Solutions Fund is a gift opportunity for donors to help TNC in Hawai'i and Palmyra address the climate crisis while also restoring and protecting nature in our islands.

Please consider making a gift to the Climate Solutions Fund. Contact Lori Admiral, Director of Philanthropy, at 808-587-6249 or [lori.admiral@tnc.org](mailto:lori.admiral@tnc.org).



Coral bleaching through climate change © David Slater

Mo'omomi coastline © Dewitt Jones



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Don and Pam Lichty  
at TNC's Zapata Ranch;  
image courtesy of Pam Lichty.

## Don Lichty's Passion for Nature

A majestic cottonwood tree in New Mexico will forever link Pam and Don Lichty to TNC. Their home, built there in the late 1970s, is now the site of the Lichty Ecological Research Center, a TNC preserve where Don's ashes were scattered recently. Pam and Don began their connection to TNC there in the early '80s when, along with some friends, they became involved with TNC at the start of the New Mexico chapter that led to preserving the Gila River as one of the last free-flowing rivers in the United States.

Pam explains, "Don was passionate about TNC and stayed connected to TNC friends and projects no matter his location; the continuance of the work was important to him." Terry Sullivan, Executive Director of the New Mexico chapter, recalls, "Don was always interested in updates on the Gila River project and because of his caring and support, this area will continue to connect people of the community to this amazing place."

The Lichtys moved to Hawai'i in 1985 and became involved in TNC Hawai'i's conservation projects across the islands, hiking many of the preserves. They visited the native coastal ecosystem of Mo'omomi on Moloka'i, the last stronghold of native coastal plants and animals, and learned about the Kona Hema preserve kīpuka—a refuge for plants and animals in an older land area surrounded by younger lava flows—on Hawai'i Island.

Together Pam and Don were avid supporters of projects close to home, and also on issues where they felt an urgency

to act, such as climate change. Their giving has connected them to TNC projects and staff in New Mexico, Hawai'i, Alaska and Australia, in part because of the tie that these locations have to indigenous cultures and communities, and because TNC is working to conserve both. With Don's passing, his passion for nature and community involvement will live on through their family foundation.

While their philanthropic support encompasses a variety of causes, they appreciate TNC's niche in the environmental arena and the preservation of wild places. "There are many threats facing the world right now—water issues, drought and subsequent wildfires—that have proven devastating to the environment and communities," says Pam. "And while it may seem clichéd, the hope lies in the children and the many people and organizations who are committed and informed; they will lead us forward. That gives me hope."

With more than 40 years of supporting The Nature Conservancy together, Pam reflects, "The draw of an organization lies not only in the work that is being done but also the like-mindedness of its people. I look forward to my ongoing relationships with TNC and its people."

Lori Admiral, TNC Director of Philanthropy, agrees. "In everything we do at TNC, both locally and globally, the magic that enables us to make a difference is the people who care: our dedicated staff and our generous donors. Together we can find the solutions to protect both people and nature for future generations."



Hiker on boardwalk trail in Kamakou Preserve, Moloka'i © TNC

## Your Legacy for Nature

To make a gift of any kind to The Nature Conservancy is an act of generosity. To make a long-term gift—one derived from the work of a lifetime—is a commitment beyond measure. Mahalo to our Legacy Club members for including TNC in their will, trust, retirement plan or other estate plans. Your vision and generosity will help us safeguard Hawai'i's lands and waters for years to come.

If you would like to join the Legacy Club, please contact us to share your wishes for your legacy gift. As a Legacy Club member, you will receive special updates and invitations to events and field trips. We will also plant a rare native loulu palm in your honor in Kona Hema Preserve on Hawai'i Island.

Contact: Lara Siu at (808) 587-6235 or [lsiu@tnc.org](mailto:lsiu@tnc.org).