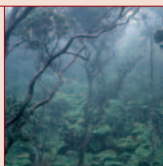


# Center for State of the Parks



## HAWAII VOLCANOES NATIONAL PARK

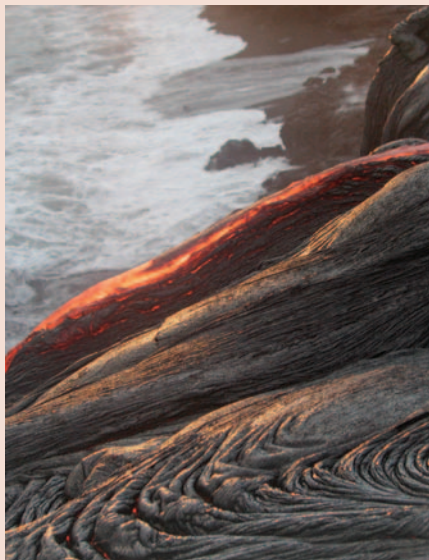
### SNAPSHOT

The Hawaiian island chain, the most geographically remote in the world, is located in the Pacific Ocean, 2,390 miles west of California. It comprises eight main islands and more than 100 minor islands, islets, and atolls.

Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park is situated on the island of Hawai'i. Established in 1916, the park was initially created for the study and protection of the impressive volcanic features of Mauna Loa and Kīlauea.

Mauna Loa is the largest freestanding mountain in the world and last erupted in 1984. Kīlauea is one of the most active volcanoes in the world and has been erupting since 1983. Hundreds of lava tubes, steam vents, sea arches, cracks, and caves are found in the park, as well as active craters and calderas, most of which are accessible by trails that offer stunning views. Each year, more than 1.6 million people visit the 333,000-acre park to experience the volcanoes and the park's other natural and cultural features.

Designated as both an International Biosphere Reserve and a World Heritage Site, Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park preserves the intimate connection between the natural history of the region and Native Hawaiian culture and life.



DAVE BOYLE

Red-hot lava glows in the fading light of dusk and reaches the sea with a hiss of steam.

### THREATS

- The park's 2004 business plan cites a park-wide shortfall of about 63 full-time equivalent employees. Existing staff positions remain vacant because there are no funds to hire people to fill them. New staff positions are also needed to boost natural resources and cultural resources management programs as well as visitor services and law enforcement. Funding shortfalls also prevent the park from accomplishing needed science and resource management activities, such as restoring threatened and endangered species, combating invasive species, and furthering

cultural resource management programs.

- Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park provides habitat for 54 federally listed endangered, threatened, and candidate endangered species. With the exception of the park's four flagship species (hawksbill turtle, Hawaiian petrel, Hawaiian goose, and Mauna Loa silversword), monitoring to evaluate the status of all rare and listed species is needed but currently not occurring due to funding limitations. The park has among the highest number of threatened and endangered species in the National Park System largely because of the damage caused by non-native species. The park has developed strategies such as fencing and weed control to manage non-native species, but funds are needed to continue these efforts and to expand them to other areas of the park.
- Volcanic smog, or "vog," which forms when volcanic gases react with moisture, sunlight, and oxygen, can irritate the human respiratory system and obscure scenic vistas. On some occasions, portions of the park are closed to protect visitor health.
- Education and interpretation are key tools that help the park achieve its mission of protecting resources. But in 2006, 1,200 students were denied the opportunity to participate in educational programs at the park because the park lacked the staff needed to accommodate them. In addition, the number of educational



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programs provided by the park has decreased by 45 percent in the last decade, and it is only with the help of volunteers that current levels are maintained.

- Because of the seismic activity in the park, historic structures—and the park's entire infrastructure—require upgrades to meet current building codes for structures in earthquake zones.
- Archaeological surveys are needed to accurately assess sites and their artifacts, many of which are at risk of being destroyed by lava flows and ash. Because of budget shortfalls and limited staff availability, only 3 to 5 percent of the park has been surveyed. The park is working to address gaps in its archaeology program.
- Caves, which are found throughout the park and may contain archaeological artifacts, should be mapped, inventoried, and monitored. The park has accomplished some of this work, but as of 2008, no more funding is available to continue monitoring caves or to complete further inventories.

#### WHAT'S BEING DONE

- **Invasive species management is ongoing.** Management of invasive species is the park's highest natural resource priority. In 2006, staff repaired and upgraded more than six miles of fence to keep non-native feral ungulates out of sensitive areas, constructed four miles of new boundary fence, and removed several highly invasive plant species from about 41,000 acres.
- **Native plant restoration continues.** In 2006, park staff, school groups, and community volunteers planted more than 10,000 individual native plants and 3 million seeds in restoration sites located in areas previously damaged by grazing and fires.
- **Rare species recovery is ongoing.** Special programs like the hawksbill turtle recovery program build support for park habitat restoration and rare species recovery efforts. Like many of the rare species recovery efforts in the park, the hawksbill program is supported largely by volunteers. It is a model for restoration and volunteer programs within the Park Service. In 2007, the park won Hawai'i's Living Reef Award for this program.
- **Partnerships provide support for conservation.** The park collaborates with various state, federal, and nonprofit agencies to address habitat fragmentation, habitat degradation, and uncontrolled non-native species invasion on lands surrounding the park. The park is a founding member of the Three Mountain Alliance, the largest cooperative land management effort in the state of Hawai'i.
- **Storage for museum paintings improved.** The park boasts an extensive collection of historic paintings. A new rolling shelf system allows paintings to be hung individually in storage, replacing a potentially damaging system of stacking.
- **Ethnography program continues to thrive.** One of the park's strengths is its ethnography program and its solid relationship with kūpuna (Hawaiian elders) groups. This relationship, which has developed over the last ten years, has helped to incorporate more Native Hawaiian voices and perspectives into all significant park programs and projects.
- **Park programs inspire resource stewardship.** Educational and interpretive programs inspire visitors and local residents to become stewards of the park and help participants understand the universal values the park represents (e.g., human connections to the environment). The park

also hosts regular service days during which volunteers pull weeds, plant trees, and provide other assistance caring for park resources.

#### ABOUT NPCA AND THE CENTER FOR STATE OF THE PARKS

Since 1919, the National Parks Conservation Association has been the leading voice of the American people in protecting and enhancing our National Park System. NPCA, its members, and partners work together to protect the park system and preserve our nation's natural, historical, and cultural heritage for generations to come.

NPCA initiated the State of the Parks® program in 2000 to assess the condition of natural and cultural resources in the parks. The goal is to provide information that will help policymakers, the public, and the National Park Service improve resource conditions in national parks, celebrate successes as models for other parks, and ensure a lasting legacy for future generations.

#### CONTACT US

For a copy of NPCA's full report on Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park, to get copies of reports on other parks, or for more information about the Center for State of the Parks, visit [www.npca.org/stateoftheparks](http://www.npca.org/stateoftheparks) or contact Dr. James Nations, vice president for the Center for State of the Parks, at [jnations@npca.org](mailto:jnations@npca.org).

For more information on Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park, contact Kari Kiser of NPCA's Pacific Regional Office, at 415.989.9921, or visit the park online at [www.nps.gov/havo](http://www.nps.gov/havo). For media inquiries, please contact Lindsay Bartsh, NPCA media relations manager, at 415.989.9921 or [lbartsh@npca.org](mailto:lbartsh@npca.org). To learn more about what the public and our elected officials can do to help improve the health of this park, visit [www.npca.org/take\\_action](http://www.npca.org/take_action).