

Introduction

The stated purpose of the Symposium on the Biology of Hawaiian Streams and Estuaries is to provide “an overview of current knowledge about the animals and plants that live in the islands’ fresh and brackish waters and [to] indicate key areas for future research”. In the mid-1980s, this task could have been accomplished easily because so few studies had been published on the biology of Hawaiian streams. At that time, biologists working in Hawaiian streams and estuaries were limited mostly to Bob Kinzie and his graduate students at the University of Hawai‘i, Bob Nishimoto and a few colleagues in the Division of Aquatic Resources, and Mike Fitzsimons and his graduate students from Louisiana State University. Our work was founded on the pioneering studies by Kenji Ego of the (then) Hawai‘i Fish and Game, John Maciolek of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and Amadeo Timbol as a student at the University of Hawai‘i and later as a faculty member at Kaua‘i Community College.

However, two decades later there are by our rough count some 128 persons who have been active in biological studies of Hawaiian streams and estuaries or are doing relevant work on other high islands of the tropics. The symposium budget limited us to inviting only about 30 speakers to the conference in Hilo but many others expressed a desire to participate. It was encouraging to learn of the unanticipated interest in the symposium, but it was disappointing that we were not able to accommodate more speakers. In addition, we were joined by about 175 other individuals from campuses of the University of Hawai‘i, county and state agencies, public and private schools, and other people, including those of Hawaiian ancestry, who are concerned with assuring the responsible use of flowing fresh waters in the islands.

Feedback from participants at the conference has been favorable and complimentary and, for this reason, we are additionally grateful to Peter Young, Chairperson of the Board of Land & Natural Resources and the Commission on Water Resource Management, and to Francis Oishi, Acting Administrator of the Division of Aquatic Resources, for giving us the opportunity to hold the conference. Their support and participation was central to the success of the meetings. The superb organizational skills of Gerri Kahili in the Hilo office of the Division of Aquatic Resources easily dispensed with any problems related to the logistics for the meetings. Gerri’s work, which began months before the conference convened, was facilitated by Katharine Hind in the Division’s Honolulu office, and, during the conference, Gerri received capable assistance from Van Dacanay, Laura Livnat, Wade Ishikawa, Andy Kahili, and Charlotte Fitzsimons.

This volume, developed from manuscripts prepared by conference participants, does not attempt to summarize all known information about the animals and plants that live in Hawaii’s stream/estuarine ecosystems—now preferably and more accurately referred to as *ahupua‘a*. Instead, it offers a broad range of topics that provide detailed insight into the variety and pervasiveness of scientific interest in the islands’ fresh and brackish water environments.

When preparing for the last session of the conference during which areas for future study were to be identified, Mark McRae, Lori Benson McRae, Glenn Higashi, Bob Nishimoto, Ron Englund, and Mike Fitzsimons compiled a very long and (we thought) exhaustive list of ideas to prompt perhaps a few other suggestions from the audience. It is significant that the group enduring right to the end of the conference provided no less than 36 additional topics relevant to the management and preservation of Hawaii’s streams and estuaries.

It is very easy to single out a single person who, far more than anyone else, has been responsible for making it possible to advance the knowledge of streams and estuaries in Hawai‘i. During his tenure as Administrator of the Division of Aquatic Resources, William S. Devick’s unflagging support and encouragement were the mainstays of survey and research efforts. Any successes in implementing science-based management and conservation of Hawaiian streams and estuaries were Bill’s successes, and future successes are clearly the charge of those who follow him in office.

As we reflect on the papers presented at the conference and consider the manuscripts contributed for this volume, we are aware of the profound responsibility shared by researchers, local universities, state and federal agencies, and indeed anyone whose actions influence water-use decisions in the State of Hawai‘i. For purely selfish reasons, the people of Hawai‘i owe it to themselves to demand the very best science-based husbandry of the State’s aquatic resources. We all also have a clear obligation to manage, conserve, and preserve these resources for the young people of Hawai‘i while providing a model for people of all ages living among other islands of the tropical Pacific. Anyone attending the conference could not escape this conclusion after seeing and hearing the boys and girls of *Kanu ‘o ka ‘Āina* Public Charter School as they opened the symposium, set the tone for the entire conference, and made it readily apparent that the stewardship of Hawaiian *ahupua‘a* is unmistakably their *kuleana*. However, until they reach the “full age of majority”, the mandate to conserve ‘*o‘opu*, ‘*ōpae*, *hīhīwai*, *āholehole*, and all the other indigenous animals and plants living in Hawaiian streams and estuaries must reside with the rest of us. It would be unconscionable to fail them.

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