

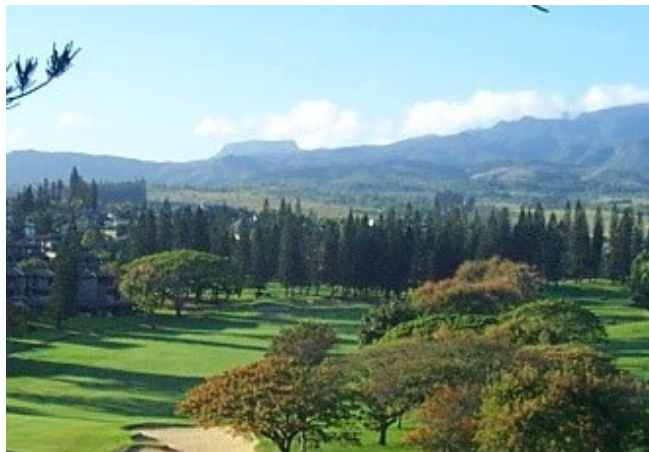
Hāwea Point, Sacred to HewaHewa

By Katherine Kama'ema'e Smith

Unraveling the Name “Hāwea”

Mary Kawena Pukui, one of the most famous Hawaiian linguists and co-author of the renowned *Hawaiian Dictionary*, researched thousands of place names in Hawai'i and concluded that Hāwea Point was named after a famous mythical drum mentioned in ancient Hawaiian chants. When La'amaikahiki sailed to Hawai'i from Tahiti, he brought two giant drums to Wahiawā, O'ahu. One drum was named “Hāwea.” Wahiawā Valley in the center of O'ahu, is the site of Kūkaniloko Heiau, and a stone compass that ancient Hawaiian astronomers used as a star guide and calendar. When a king was born at the birthing stone in this sacred place, high priests sounded Hāwea drum to alert the whole island.

Samuel M. Kamakau states in *Ruling Chiefs of Hawaii*, that Hāwea Point was sacred to Hewahewa, the last Kahuna Nui or highest priest of Kamehameha the Great, but he does not reveal a connection between the point and the sacred drum. Nevertheless, when you hike Hāwea Point, you cannot help but notice two land features that might have led early Hawaiians to connect this place to La'amaikahiki's drum.



Hāwea Point originates from a lava flow that pored from Eke Crater into the Pailolo Channel, and points toward O'ahu.

First, when you look uphill from Hāwea, the flat tabletop of Eke Crater, the volcanic vent that created West Maui and Hāwea Point, looks exactly like a huge drumhead. This land feature no doubt reminded Hawaiians of La'amaikahiki and his drums.

Even more interesting is Hāwea Point's geographical orientation. A line drawn from Eke Crater, passed through the tip of Hāwea Point, and extended northwest, also passes through Wahiawā, O'ahu, where the original Hāwea drum was located. This wahi la'a or sacred place we call Hāwea Point may have been the Maui kings' connection back to their divine Nana'ulu ancestry on O'ahu, and for Maui-born Hewahewa, a spiritual tie to Wahiawā and his line of high priests from Tahiti.

Exploring Hāwea

Hāwea Point is not visible from Lower Honoapi'ilani Road, or Honoapi'ilani Highway, but golfers playing the Bay and Village Golf Courses at Kapalua Resort have several good views of this mystical pali. The best way to see Hāwea up close is to walk the path that begins at the southern end of The Bay Villas and follows south across Hāwea all the way to Kapalua Bay.

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Hāwea beach trail, which connects Kapalua Bay to Oneloa bay gives many opportunities to see reef fish, native Hawaiian plants, green sea turtles, and lava rock formations.

It is not a long walk, but demands some agility and good balance to negotiate some of the rocky areas. Wear shoes, not sandals, and do not attempt to explore Hāwea when seas are greater than three feet.

Special Caution--From March to November, Hāwea is a nesting spot for the Pacific Wedge-Tailed Shearwater *Puffinus pacificus*, which the Hawaiians called 'Ua'ukani. These endangered seabirds live in burrows dug deep in the sandy soil. When you leave the trail or walk through the brush, you may collapse their hidden burrows, crush their eggs, or kill fledgling birds. Please remain on the trail!

Hāwea Light

Just south of the Bay Villas, you will see Hāwea Light, the lighthouse of Kapalua Resort. Since 1912, the US Coast Guard has maintained this unmanned navigational aid used for triangulation in the Pailolo Channel. On land, its light is visible at night from certain spots on Honoapiʻilani Highway north of Office Road, and from some common areas of The Bay Villas and The Ironwoods. Near the light is a rectangular stone platform that is a designated archeological site. These boulders may have been the foundation for a fishing temple and lookout, called a ko'a.

Rock Formations

As you proceed south across Hāwea Point, you will see many wonderful rock formations, carved and smoothed by sea and wind:

1. Rock Pools or “kāheka” where Hawaiians collected shellfish and cleaned fish for salting and drying. Stay very still and see if you can “outwait” the black rock crabs that can only be seen when they move.
2. Upright basalt “teeth” caused by erosion of pillow lava formations, where hot lava met the cold ocean water and the crust of the flow curled into the sea.
3. Salt pans or “kāhekaheka” ground into flat rock formations, where Hawaiians evaporated seawater into sea salt, are visible at the end of the walk, on your right as you approach Kapalua Bay beach.

Native Plants

Delicate specimens of rare native Hawaiian plants live along the Hāwea trail. You may

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join Hawaiians in protecting these endangered species and refrain from picking sprigs or stepping on them.

1. 'Ilima papa – a spreading ground cover with light green delicate ovate leaves and small yellow-orange flowers.
2. 'Ākia – a twiggy upright plant with round gray-green leaves and fruit that look like small cherry tomatoes (but are very poisonous – do not eat!)
3. 'Ohai – a short gray-green ground cover with oval leaves stacked on two sides of the stems
4. 'Ākulikuli – the Hawaiian “portulaca”-- A yellow-green succulent that spreads flat on rocks or hardpan and sports tiny pink or white flowers.
5. Naupaka kahakai – shrub with succulent light green 3-4 inch long leaves and white flowers that look as if someone pulled off all the petals on one side.

Reef Fish

Hāwea is a good place to catch reef fish, so you may see persons fishing off the point. If you encounter a fisherman on Hāwea, stay clear, move on quickly, and above all, do not speak. Your presence and idle chatter ruins his chances for a catch and he will immediately pack up and leave.

In Nāmālu Bay, the small cove on the southern end of Hāwea Point, you can see large undisturbed coral heads, “pu‘uko‘a” that are home to reef fish, green turtles, and native Hawaiian seaweeds collectively called “limu”. On a calm day, a quiet time spent looking down into Nāmālu Bay will reward you with glimpses of a Hawaiian reef community in action. Only snorkel or swim here if you are an experienced ocean swimmer.

Here are some common reef fish you might spot:

1. Bright Blue-Green – ‘Uhu parrotfish
2. Solid Black - Humuhumu‘ele‘ele black trigger fish
2. Red – wrass or squirrelfish
3. Bright Yellow - either a flat, round butterfly fish or long skinny trumpet fish
4. Pale translucent with black stripes and never alone, Manini
5. Black and white with a graceful long dorsal fin - Moorish Idol
6. Gray face, triangular black and yellow markings and violet fins -Humuhumunukuapua‘a
7. Polka Dots – on black, Moa or Trunkfish; on tan, Puffer Fish

DT Fleming’s Boat Launch

The last prominent stone feature before you reach Kapalua Bay Beach is an inlet lined with large square stone blocks. The placard explains it was a boat launch designed in the 1950’s by famous planter and manager of Honolua Ranch, D.T. Fleming, but never actually put into use.

The main reaction of most visitors to Hāwea Point is its vastness. Even though large sections of the point are occupied by Kapalua Resort’s building project and a massive private home with gardens, several hours of exploring Hāwea nevertheless leaves more to see next time. I hope these details will enrich your appreciation for this awesome and very precious place.