



Hawai`i Volcanoes Institute 2009

*Hiking the Park's  
Subalpine and Alpine  
Zones with Tim Tunison*

March 21 (Saturday) 9 AM – 5 PM

Spend a day walking and learning in a little visited part of the park's wilderness. Take a surprisingly easy, mostly cross country, five mile loop to the west and up the mountain from the end of the Mauna Loa Road into the almost all native subalpine and alpine zones of the park. The outdoor classroom begins with a walk contouring to the west in Kīpuka Kulalio, a vegetated older pāhoehoe flow. Climb very gradually on sparsely vegetated, young `ā`ā flow by following the construction and maintenance trail for many miles along historic rock wall. Hike more steeply uphill along the west edge of another older, vegetated pāhoehoe flow in Kīpuka Maunaiu. After reaching the top of this kīpuka at around 7,500 foot elevation, then contour back to the east across a patchwork of very old red pāhoehoe to the upper reaches of Kīpuka Kulalio and the Mauna Loa Trail. Descend down the trail to the trailhead and parking.

This hike brakes frequently for plants, birds, insects, geology, and archeology. A primary focus of the course will be the identification and natural history of high elevation plants and the ecology of the subalpine and alpine zones. This part of the park is now free of the damaging impacts of introduced goats, sheep, and pigs, and very few invasive plants are present. A highlight of the walk will be healthy populations of hundreds of silverswords planted by the park in the last 10 years.

Also, high above the mosquito and avian malaria zone, this route offers some of the best bird watching in the park, including sightings of `Apapane, `Amakihi, `I`iwi when the koa and māmane are in flower, and normally forest dwelling `Ōma`o, perching on rocks and feeding on the fruits of native shrubs. Hawaiian petrels nest along part of the route in easily recognizable underground burrows. This is not nesting season so it should be okay to get a close up view of one of these nesting sites. The sparseness of vegetation provokes questions about geology. You almost always see native yellow faced bees. And that long rock wall in the middle of nowhere: who and why did they build it?

***Your Leader:***

Tim Tunison worked for 23 years as a botanist/vegetation management specialist and Chief of Resource Management at Hawaii Volcanoes National Park. Since retirement three years ago has been teaching courses in native plant identification and plant propagation/restoration through the Volcano Art Center. This is one of his favorite hikes in the park.

***Seminar agenda:***

- 9:00 AM - meet at staging area, Visitors Center, HVNP
- 9:15 - carpool or take van up to trailhead at end of Mauna Loa Road
- 10:00 - begin hiking along historic stone wall in Kīpuka Kulalio
- 11:00-11:30: - lunch at contact between Kulalio pāhoehoe and Keamoku `ā`ā
- 11:30-1:30 - hike across Keamoku flows and up to top of Kīpuka Mauaniu
- 1:30-3:30 - contour back to Mauna Loa Trail
- 3:30-4:30 - hike down Mauna Loa Trail to trail head
- 4:30-5:00 - return to park Visitor Center via Mauna Loa Road.

***Who should attend?:***

Local residents and island visitors with curiosity and fit enough to walk slowly five miles cross-country.

***Level of difficulty:***

This is a **moderate to rigorous**, mostly cross-country hike, with about 1,000 foot elevation gain. Most of the hike is on pāhoehoe. The portions on `ā`ā are almost all on primitive trail

***What to bring?:***

Participants bring binoculars, rain gear, walking stick, sunscreen, hat, camera and **lunch**. Wear layers for changing temperatures. Closed walking shoes or boots required.



***What is provided?***

A 40 page handout, prepared by the instructor, is planned for the course, highlighting common and interesting species and natural history facts. Presenter will provide a CD with digital file of handout. All original work. (Rights to this material remain with Tim Tunison.)

***Transportation:***

Transportation from the Park's Visitor Center to the trailhead will be by voluntary carpooling.

***Tuition:*** Friends' members - \$50 Non-members - \$65

***Timeline for payment/cancellation:***

Reservations and payments are due on March 7, two weeks before the hike date. Note that your reservation is confirmed when the payment reaches the Friends' office. For such events we wait until the day before to decide whether conditions are favorable. This hike cannot be done in heavy rain or persistent vog. If the Friends' cancel a full refund will be given. If you must cancel, the deadline for a refund is March 7.

***To register:***

Call the Friends' office at (808) 985-7373. The office is staffed part-time, so leave a message and your call will be returned. Or e-mail your enrollment information to [ainahou2@aol.com](mailto:ainahou2@aol.com)

