



Pa'auilo Mauka Kalopa Community Association

Photo courtesy of Karl Backus

Monthly News & Updates

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July 2022 Newsletter



*A male Jackson's Chameleon in mauka Pa'auilo..
(Credit: R. Bennett)*

Jackson's Chameleons

Are their numbers increasing?

Joe Clarkson,
.PMKCA President

***Mark your calendars:
Annual Picnic Meeting is ON!
Saturday, July 30, 11am in the
Kalopa Park Main Pavilion.***

For many years my wife Karen and I have walked our dogs along Waika'alulu Road and Pa'auilo Mauka Road in Pa'auilo Mauka. Until recently we rarely saw any sign of the presence of Jackson's chameleons, but lately we have seen more and more evidence that the population is growing rapidly in our neighborhood.

In just the past few months we have seen several dead chameleons that had been run over by cars. We have also seen a couple of live chameleons crossing the road during our walks and a live chameleon on the path to our back steps. We also found a dead juvenile chameleon in our front yard where our dogs are confined.

I had known that keeping Jacksons as pets was a fad around here for some time in the 1990's, but I didn't know where they had come from. I found that their original range is south-central Kenya and northern Tanzania. They were introduced to Hawai'i in 1972 and released into the wild so that they could reproduce and establish a population that could be harvested for export as pets to the mainland, an activity that is now illegal.

After finding so many chameleons around the neighborhood, I contacted the Big Island Invasive Species Committee (BIISC.org) to find out more about the impacts of these creatures on the local environment. BIISC responded with the following comment, "Jackson's chameleons are a threat to all of our native and endangered insect species. They can eat a wide range of insects in all shapes and sizes (moths, butterflies, spiders, bees, snails, etc). They are also potential prey for snakes if we ever get any accidentally introduced. As for your local area, I'm not sure what specific native insects live in that area but all insects are at risk of predation where there are chameleons".

BIISC also sent me a few links to information about the impact of chameleons in Hawai'i, one of the two states in the US where they have become established (the other state being California). One report from researchers at the University of Hawai'i voiced concern about the impact of these chameleons after they caught several animals on O'ahu and examined the contents of their stomachs. They found "...the first conclusive evidence of an introduced reptile (*Chamaeleo Jacksonii*) feeding on Hawaiian taxa, including 11 snails in four endemic genera from two families, including four individuals of an endangered species (*Achatinella mustelina*), and native insects in five genera".

The report indicates concern about the evidence that these animals are eating native species and that "a thorough understanding of the impacts of chameleons on Hawaiian fauna will require additional evaluation and sampling, but dissemination of this discovery in a timely fashion is important as it provides new information regarding this threat. Monitoring and collection of chameleons is ongoing, particularly in native Hawaiian forest habitats at mid and upper elevations (600-1,300 m)".

A similar study on Hawai'i Island checked the content of stomachs from animals captured in forests near Volcano and found similar results. No bird eggs were found in either study, but Jacksons in captivity are known to eat small eggs. But even if they do not eat eggs in the wild, their voracious appetite will compete with birds for insects.

Jackson's chameleons live primarily in trees, so it's a little surprising to see them thriving in our neighborhood, which is at least 50% pastureland. We are very near Kalopa Forest reserve, however, so perhaps they are moving from there to our place. Our home is at 701 meters elevation (2,300 feet) and has good rainfall, which is the kind of climate these chameleons really like. Perhaps they can make their way across pastures and find vegetation they like in gulches and scattered tree concentrations. On the other hand, these chameleons move very slowly, so it would take them a long time to go even a few hundred feet.

I also asked BIISC about other issues related to these chameleons. I discovered that Jacksons are long established all over the Big Island. There are no government efforts to eradicate them or reduce their population, but moving them from place to place is discouraged. BIISC does not encourage the removal or killing of any chameleons discovered outdoors by the general public, but they do discourage everyone from breeding them, selling them or releasing them from captivity. Jackson's chameleons are very low on the BIISC priority list, but they are definitely still considered invasive species.

Coming PMKCA Meetings

**Board of Directors Meeting
Thursday, July 14, 2022, 7pm, Location TBD**

Members are welcome to attend or bring a concern to any Board Member.

We continue to work at the Board and committee level on behalf of our communities. If you have any interests or concerns, we encourage you to email any Board member.

PMKCA Annual Picnic Meeting is ON!!!

After missing the last two picnic meetings, we are meeting again in Kalōpā Park, Main Pavilion

Saturday, July 30, 2022, 11am

We will be having a general membership meeting, potluck picnic, and bingo game at Kalōpā State Park main pavilion on July 30th at 11 am. This will be our first meeting at the park since 2019 and we are excited to be able to schedule this event after three long years.

Donations of inexpensive prizes for the bingo game are welcome. PMKCA will provide paper goods and drinks. Just bring your favorite potluck dish.

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### **Seeking a Water, Health & Utilities Committee Chairperson**

The chair of this important committee is currently vacant. We are seeking someone who will pay particular attention to our community's needs for **clean water, effective sanitation, and reliable utilities**. You would keep in touch community residents and county agencies and relay information to the Board for action.

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**Oh, and by the way,
Join PMKCA or Renew Your Membership for 2022!!**

Dues are only \$20 per year and help support so many great community activities.

Click the "Visit our website" link below and choose Membership/Dues. We offer a PayPal option, or mail a check made out to PMKCA to PO Box 408, Pa'auilo, HI 96776. Easy-peasy - and important!

(The July Potluck Picnic meeting is a good opportunity to catch up on your dues!)

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