



SUMMER 2023 EDITION

UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII AT HILO  
TROPICAL CONSERVATION BIOLOGY  
& ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE



# A Sun-sational Summer !

*TCBES Semesterly Newsletter*



*TCBES fall 2023 cohort and faculty cut down non native plants with Kumuola Marine Science Education Center at Waiāhole and Kapalaho loko i'a —located within the 'ili kūpono of Honohononui, the ahupua'a of Waiākea, and the moku of Hilo.*

## *E Komo Mai*

WELCOME BACK TCBES STUDENTS, STAFF,  
FACULTY, AND A BIG WELCOME TO THE NEW  
2023 COHORT. HAVE A GREAT SEMESTER!

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- Alumni, new and graduating students
- Faculty awards and recognition
- Graduate students present at conferences
- Faculty research featured in the news and *Nature*



# ALUMNI, NEW, AND GRADUATING STUDENTS

## **New students for Fall 2023**

Antonio Alvarez  
Gabriela Benito  
Nathaniel Breindel  
Kelli Elliott  
Nikki Henry  
Mina Jensen  
Annie Larson  
Elizabeth Lough  
Lauren Moe  
Ian O'Hollaren  
Ariel Patterson  
Tuimalata Puletiuatoa  
Lauren Smith  
Andrew Tabaque  
Randall Thomas  
River Thomas  
Christine Tominiko  
Mishell Vasquez Morales

***Congratulations**  
**to our summer**  
**graduate!***

**Alex Spangler**

“Sea to Digital Reality:  
Analysis of Underwater  
Photogrammetry Platforms  
& Augmented Reality”  
Advisor: John Burns



*TCBES fall 2023 cohort learning the mo'olelo, stories, of Hilo at Moku Ola, Coconut Island, with Malu Dudoit, a lecturer for the College of Hawaiian Language.*

## **What have our alumni been up to?**

**Avalon Paradea** was awarded a Rappa Summer Fellowship with the Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program based at UH Mānoa under the mentorship of Dr. Beth Lenz, Assistant Director for Diversity and Community Engagement. Their project is titled “Engaging Sci-Art to Enhance Inclusion, Accessibility, and Sustainability in Coastal Communities”.



*John Graves*

**John Graves** was awarded the Grau Fellowship through the Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program with the Division of Aquatic Resources in O'ahu, will be working in partnership with local communities and DAR staff to gain experience in designing island-based management strategies and community-based monitoring plans.

**Whitney Aragaki** was selected to be a part of the inaugural cohort of the Obama Foundation Leaders of USA Program. Read more [here](#).



*Whitney Aragaki*



*Angela Beck (left) and Forrest Peterson (middle) married on June 2, 2023 and TCBES alumna Sydney Gamiao (right) officiated the wedding ceremony.*

**Angela Beck & Forrest Peterson**, both alumni from the 2013 cohort, got married June 2, 2023 at Camp Pālehua on O'ahu. Ho'omaika'i!

# STUDENT & FACULTY Highlights

## 2023 Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching goes to...

Nicholas Krueger, an instructor of agriculture at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo, received the 2023 Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching. Read more [here](#).



Wayne Higaki (left), Nick Krueger (middle), Bonnie Irwin (right).

## UH Hilo hosts two conferences on sustainability

Angela Fa'anunu helped organize sustainability conferences: one in Kona on circular economies (July 17-19), and one in Hilo on Indigenous Hawaiian and Pacific Island perspectives on sustainability (July 19-20). To learn more about these conferences, read [here](#).

## UH Hilo faculty member's flora research featured in *Nature*



Jonathan Price

Jonathan Price is part of an international research team that collected plant-trait data from the island of Tenerife (Canary Islands, Spain) to compare against a global data set of plant form and function. He is one of the co-authors of a paper published in *Nature* titled, "[Assembly of functional diversity in an oceanic island flora](#)". Read more about it [here](#).

## UH Hilo researchers represented in global ranking.

Matt Platz (Chemistry), Becky Ostertag (Biology), and Shihwu Sung (CAFNR) are recognized in global ranking as top scientists in their fields. Read more [here](#).

## New Dean of College of Natural Health and Sciences

Simon Kattenhorn from the University of Alaska Anchorage will be the new permanent dean at University of Hawai'i at Hilo's College of Natural Health and Sciences. Read more [here](#).

## TCBES student and others remove 86K pounds of marine debris from Papahānaumokuākea

Ka'ehukai Grant Goin and a team from Hawai'i-based non-profit organization Papahānaumokuākea Marine Debris Project (PMDP) removed over 86,000 pounds of ghost nets, plastics, and other debris from the ocean. Read more [here](#).



Debris collection from a marine expedition by PMDP.

## Two TCBES students and faculty present their research at a conference hosted in Aotearoa New Zealand

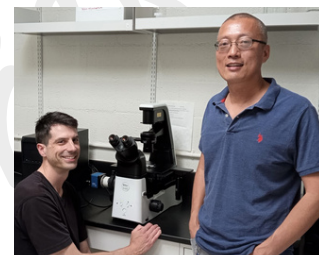


Nai'a Odachi (left) and Olivia Jarvis (right)

Olivia Jarvis, Nai'a Odachi, and Ryan Perroy presented their research at the 4th International Congress on Biological Invasions hosted in Ōtautahi Christchurch, Aotearoa New Zealand, May 1-4, 2023. Read more [here](#).

## UH Hilo biochemist Li Tao finds new cellular clue for cancer treatment

Associate Professor of Biology Li Tao and postdoc Brandt Warecki discover a motor complex implicated in cell division that has great promise for anti-cancer drug designs. Read more [here](#).



Brandt Warecki (left) and Li Tao (right)



Rebecca Ward

## New publication

Alumni, Rebecca Ward, and faculty, Matt Knope, Steve Colbert, and Tracy Wiegner, publish a paper titled "Spatial variation and antecedent sea surface temperature conditions influence Hawaiian intertidal community structure" Read it [here](#).



# More TCBES news

## Award winner at Hawai'i Conservation Conference

Nai'a Odachi wins Outstanding Graduate Student Oral Presentation for her talk titled, "Hawai'i Forest Monitoring Efforts and Mortality Patterns Associated with Rapid 'Ōhi'a Death," Read more [here](#).



Nai'a Odachi

## Faculty research makes the news

Tracy Wiegner's research on sewage pollution and sea level rise in Hawai'i is picked up by The Associated Press and Hawai'i Tribune Herald. Read the article [here](#).



Tracy Wiegner

## UH Hilo geology students take field trip to California

Steve Lundblad leads geology field trip to California to apply mapping skills learned in the classroom at Death Valley, Mohave Desert, and Sierra Nevada. Read more [here](#).



Students and Professor of Geology Steve Lundblad (back left) stand next to a Joshua Tree

## TCBES Faculty received tenure and promotions

Francis Dumanig, Armando Garcia-Ortega, and Heather Kaluna are UH Hilo 2023 tenure and promotion recipients. Read more [here](#).



Francis Dumanig



Armando Garcia-Ortega



Heather Kaluna

## TCBES student is awarded The American Association of University Women scholarship

Sofia Ferriera was one of three recipients of The American Association of University Women scholarship for the 2023-24 academic year. Read about it [here](#).



Sofia Ferriera

## Construction has begun for new USGS research facility on UH Hilo campus.

A new USGS research facility on campus that will monitor volcanoes and support conservation science. Read about it [here](#).

*Kaiameaola Club meets every Thursday at 2pm in the grad lounge (W-16)*

## TCBES Seminars

VISIT OUR WEBSITE TO VIEW UPCOMING SEMINARS [HERE](#)

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