

# *Kawainui-Hāmākua Marsh Complex*

## Ramsar Site

Wetlands of International Importance



# Ramsar



## **K**awainui and Hāmākua Marsh Complex

in Kailua, O'ahu was designated a Ramsar site in February 2005. Sacred to Hawaiians, Kawainui Marsh is the largest remaining emergent wetland in Hawai'i and the state's largest ancient freshwater fishpond. Located in the center of the caldera of the Ko'olau shield volcano, the marsh today provides primary habitat for four of Hawai'i's endemic and endangered waterbirds. The marsh stores surface water and provides flood protection for Kailua town.

Hāmākua Marsh is a smaller wetland that is historically connected to the adjacent Kawainui Marsh. It also provides significant habitat for Hawai'i's endangered waterbirds.

Fostering worldwide wetland conservation is the primary goal of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. First signed in 1971, this international treaty promotes conservation activities that also incorporate human use. Participation in the Convention brings nations together to improve wetland management for the benefit of people and wildlife and promote biological diversity.

[www.ramsar.org](http://www.ramsar.org)

[www.ramsarcommittee.us](http://www.ramsarcommittee.us)



# Kawainui - Hāmākua Marsh

The Ramsar designation for the Kawainui and Hāmākua Marsh Complex was accomplished through the efforts of many community groups, especially Hawaii's Thousand Friends, and government agencies, such as U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

- Kawainui-Hāmākua Marsh is the largest existing wetland in Hawai'i, encompassing 850 acres from Maunawili Valley toward Kailua Bay.
- Kawainui was developed as a 450-acre fishpond by the Hawaiians who settled the Kailua *ahupua'a*.
- The Kawainui-Hāmākua Marsh provides habitat for Hawai'i's four endangered waterbirds: *ae'o* (stilt), *'alae ke'oke'o* (coot), *'alae ula* (gallinule), and *koloa* (duck).
- Kawainui is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places due to the many significant cultural sites, including 3 *heiau*.
- The Hawai'i Division of Forestry and Wildlife has designated these wetlands a wildlife sanctuary with habitat restoration projects underway in the marsh complex.



The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance promotes wetland conservation throughout the world. There are more than 1,600 Ramsar sites in over 150 countries, including 22 sites in the U.S. Many of these sites are National Wildlife Refuges (NWR).

1. Izembek NWR, Alaska	1986
2. Forsythe NWR, New Jersey	1986
3. Okefenokee NWR, Georgia & Florida	1986
4. Ash Meadows NWR, Nevada	1986
5. Everglades National Park, Florida	1987
6. Chesapeake Bay Estuarine Complex, Virginia	1987
7. Cheyenne Bottoms, Kansas	1988
8. Cache-Lower White Rivers, Arkansas	1989
9. Horicon Marsh, Wisconsin	1990
10. Catahoula Lake, Louisiana	1991
11. Delaware Bay Estuary, Delaware & New Jersey	1992
12. Pelican Island NWR, Florida	1993
13. Caddo Lake, Texas	1993
14. Connecticut River Estuary, Connecticut	1994
15. Cache River-Cypress Creek Wetlands, Illinois	1994
16. Sand Lake NWR, South Dakota	1998
17. Bolinas Lagoon, California	1998
18. Quivira NWR, Kansas	2002
19. Tomales Bay, California	2002
20. Tijuana River National Estuarine, California	2005
21. Grassland Ecological Area, California	2005
22. Kawainui and Hāmākua Marsh Complex, Hawai'i	2005
23. Francis Beidler Forest, South Carolina	2008
24. Olentangy River Wetland, Ohio	2008
25. Palmyra Atoll NWR	2008