

Name: Claire Kervran

Internship Position: Intern with Hawaii Wildlife Fund

Dates: April 1st- June 1st

Working with Hawaii Wildlife Fund for the past few months has been one of the best opportunities that I have been privileged to receive throughout my time in university. When I first moved to Maui and heard about this organization I was incredibly interested to learn more about what they do. I am currently finishing my degree in environmental policy and GIS and have taken an interest in oceanography as well as native resource rights and policies. I had heard that Hannah Bernard worked to protect and study the native Hawaiian Green Sea Turtles as well as other educational and sustainable farming projects and was eager to get involved and learn about their efforts!

I began my internship at the beginning of April and got to experience almost all of the different projects that the Hawaii Wildlife Fund leads. The first few days I worked at the local beach, Hookipa and participated in Honu Watch with another volunteer. While working at Hookipa I received a full couple days of training, in which the other volunteer instructed me on what it was that we were to do as well as having me read about the turtles. The pair of us worked to educate visitors and beach users about the Green Sea Turtles that bask on this beach by providing information on their behaviors and by suggesting that people give the turtles a fair distance so that they are not disturbed. Throughout my time working on the beach I was able to learn a lot about the turtles and even start to recognize a lot of them. By teaching other people about the turtles I was able to further my own understanding of them and was happy to learn more and share that with others. It was wonderful to be a part of this effort and learn how important these animals are to the local people and preserve this essential part of the native ecosystem.

After the first couple weeks working at Hookipa, Hannah took me out on HWF's boat to go to the shore of Lanai and do a snorkel survey to count how many Green Hawaiian Sea Turtles and Hawksbill turtles we saw. This was an amazing experience to get to go towards another island and be a part of a survey to keep track of turtle sightings. I ended up doing this excursion several times and seeing many different parts of the coast of Lanai as well as seeing many different corals, turtles, and swimming next to dolphins! These trips were definitely a highlight of the internship and gave me a chance to see the turtles in the water.

Another project that I worked on with Hannah included a trip out to a Taro farm on the West side of Maui where we learned how to farm Taro as well as several other native practices. This was of huge interest to me not only because the valley was absolutely beautiful, but my main interest at home was in sustainable agriculture and I was able to learn about the sustainable native Hawaiian Taro and fish farming practices.

Hannah and I also worked to use marine debris that the Hawaii Wildlife Fund had collected on other occasions to make centerpieces for a benefit event in Lahaina. This was a great opportunity to look at all of the plastic garbage that the organization had found on the beaches and get to share this with other people. I got

to see a side of the island that I hadn't seen before and got to learn more about the Taro farming, as we used these for our centerpieces as well.

At the end of the internship I honestly can't look back and choose one single favorite event because every day and every project was so unique and such an incredible opportunity. I was able to really connect with a lot of people on the island and learn so much about the native culture. When I moved here I never knew that I would be blessed with such an incredible opportunity, but working with the Hawaii Wildlife Fund has given me an amazing perspective on where I want to take my studies. Getting to be out in the field on a daily basis and work with locals to promote sustainability has been my dream job since I started my studies and this position fulfilled all of those desires. I can't think of a better way to have been opened to the Hawaiian culture here on Maui and get involved in sustaining it. Thank you Hawaii Wildlife Fund for this amazing once in a lifetime experience! Mahalo!