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Rare Native Hawaiian Land Snails Rediscovered After Nearly a Century

*Live specimens of **Godwinia caperata** and **Hiona exaequata**
found on Kauaʻi during recent biodiversity surveys.*

Honolulu, Hawaiʻi — [Bishop Museum](#), the State of Hawaiʻi Museum of Natural and Cultural History, announces the rediscovery of two native Hawaiian land snails unseen for nearly a century. Museum researchers, along with partners from the Kauaʻi Forest Bird Recovery Project, found live specimens of *Godwinia caperata* (described in 1852) and *Hiona exaequata* (described in 1846) on Kauaʻi during recent biodiversity surveys (field programs where researchers monitor, measure, and document the variety of living organisms and their ecosystems).

Hawaiʻi's land snails are among the most threatened animals on Earth, with hundreds of species already extinct. In Hawaiian tradition, kāhuli (land snails) are honored in song and stories as voices of the forest. Each surviving species represents millions of years of evolution as well as deep cultural connections.

“This is a rare spark of hope in the fight against extinction,” said Norine Yeung, Ph.D., Bishop Museum curator of Malacology. “These tiny snails remind us that Hawaiʻi's forests still hold hidden treasures.”

Urgent efforts are being made to protect the fragile survivors, with researchers now studying their habitat, ecology, and behavior to guide conservation. A small handful of the snails are being carefully reared at Bishop Museum's Pūpū Ola: Kāhuli Protective Rearing Research Center, along with 42 other land snail species.

“Understanding why these species survived while so many others did not may offer vital lessons for safeguarding Hawaiʻi's biodiversity,” said Dr. Yeung. “As Hawaiʻi's premier natural and cultural history institution, Bishop Museum embraces its kuleana (responsibility) to document, protect, and share our islands' previous biocultural heritage. The rediscovery of *Godwinia caperata* and *Hiona exaequata* is a powerful reminder that hope persists, and that with sustained research, cultural knowledge, and community partnerships, we can still prevent further extinctions.”

The rediscoveries were made possible through years of collaboration between Bishop Museum, state and federal agencies, universities, students, and teachers working together on outreach, education, and capacity

building. Two conservationists, Graham Talaber and Brendan Wang, who had previously attended a snail workshop led by Dr. Yeung, first tipped-off researchers to the possible rediscoveries.

“Finding them again after nearly a century underscores the importance of continued surveys, outreach, partnerships, and training,” said Kenneth Hayes, Ph.D., Bishop Museum curator of Malacology and director of the Museum’s Pacific Center for Molecular Biodiversity. “Without these efforts, these and other species may have remained undetected and unprotected.”

“These snails show us that the story of Hawai‘i’s biodiversity is not finished,” said Dr. Yeung. “But to write the next chapter, we must continue to search, to teach, and to care.”

To learn more about Bishop Museum’s Malacology collection and research, and the Museum’s Pacific Center for Molecular Biodiversity, please visit BishopMuseum.org/Explore.

Attached photos:

- Photo: *Godwinia caperata*. Credit: Samantha Shizuru, Bishop Museum collections manager for the Museum’s Pacific Center for Molecular Biodiversity.



- Photo: *Hiona exaequata*. Credit: Samantha Shizuru, Bishop Museum collections manager for the Museum’s Pacific Center for Molecular Biodiversity.



In 1992, the Hawai‘i State Legislature designated Bishop Museum as The Hawai‘i Biological Survey (HBS), a program tasked with documenting the more than 23,000 species of plants, animals, and other organisms found throughout the Hawaiian archipelago. As a result of this initiative, Hawai‘i was the first and only state in the U.S. with a complete checklist of the approximately 17,000 terrestrial, 500 freshwater, and 5,500 marine species of plants and animals found in our islands. Bishop Museum also conducts extensive expeditions for biodiversity discovery and documentation across the Pacific, a program designated the Pacific Biological Survey (PBS). Together, these strategic initiatives are a cornerstone of the Museum’s biodiversity discovery and documentation efforts.

The data from the HBS and PBS are used by Museum research staff in conjunction with collaborative partners throughout the Pacific to develop analytical tools needed to assess overall status and trends in abundance, health, and distribution of plants and animals, as well as the ecosystems upon which humans rely. Together, these efforts aim to manage and protect the areas of highest biological and cultural significance in the face of threats from climate change and biodiversity loss.

Each of [Bishop Museum’s natural history collections](#) contributes to HBS, providing specimens, expert knowledge, staffing for fieldwork, and management of the collected specimens to preserve the records and diversity effectively. Together, the Museum’s staff conducts a coordinated inventory and monitoring program that provides the data needed to assess the overall status and trends in the abundance, health, and distribution of plants and animals, as well as the ecosystems upon which they depend.

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About Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum, the State of Hawai‘i Museum of Natural and Cultural History:

Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum’s mission is to inspire our community and visitors through the exploration, celebration, and perpetuation of the extraordinary history, culture, and environment of Hawai‘i and the Pacific. The Museum was founded in 1889 by Charles Reed Bishop in memory of his wife Bernice Pauahi Bishop, a royal descendant of King Kamehameha I. Today, the Museum thrives as an educational center for the community and is widely regarded as the world’s premier institution for Hawaiian and Pacific content.

Bishop Museum’s vast collections of more than 25 million objects and specimens represent nine disciplines and include more than 22 million biological specimens, over 2 million cultural objects, 115,000 historical publications, and 1 million photographs, films, works of art, audio recordings, and manuscripts. These collections tell the stories of the cultures and biodiversity of Hawai‘i and the Pacific as well as the proud legacy of scholarly research spanning 130 years.

Bishop Museum proudly serves more than 200,000 visitors each year, including 20,000 children on school visits.

To learn more about the Museum’s research, collections, exhibits, and programs, visit [BishopMuseum.org](https://www.bishopmuseum.org), follow @BishopMuseum on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#), visit Bishop Museum’s [YouTube](#) channel, or call (808) 847-3511. Bishop Museum is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

Bishop Museum is proud to be an Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action Employer, and welcomes applicants from the military, veterans, and those with disabilities. Learn about careers at Bishop Museum at [BishopMuseum.org/Careers](https://www.bishopmuseum.org/Careers) and on its [LinkedIn](#) page.

[Bishop Museum Press](#) is Hawai‘i’s oldest book publisher and one of the first scholarly publishers in the Western Hemisphere, and has published over 1,200 titles and distributed over 1 million books in 72 countries

worldwide.

Past news releases can be viewed and downloaded at BishopMuseum.org/NewsRoom.