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Bishop Museum and San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance Partner to Safeguard Hawai‘i’s Endangered Species Through Global Biobanking Network

New partnership for building capacity in Hawai‘i to protect biodiversity and cultural heritage

Honolulu, Hawai‘i — [Bishop Museum](#), the State of Hawai‘i Museum of Natural and Cultural History, in collaboration with San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance (SDZWA), announces a landmark partnership to expand biobanking* capacity in Hawai‘i and across the Pacific to protect the islands’ unique biodiversity and cultural heritage.

*Biobanking is the process of collecting, processing, storing, and distributing biological samples (including living cell lines) and associated data for research purposes, and is a vital tool for biodiversity conservation.

The partnership, [unveiled at the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Abu Dhabi](#), places Hawai‘i at the center of an ambitious global movement to expand biobanking to all endangered species by 2075. The partnership includes three other facilities in Kenya, Vietnam, and Peru, all biodiversity hotspots** — effectively creating a global biobanking network.

**Areas with significant levels of biodiversity threatened with high levels of extinction.

The partnership leverages more than a century of Bishop Museum leadership in Pacific collections, research, and community engagement, along with SDZWA’s pioneering [Frozen Zoo®](#), the world’s most comprehensive wildlife biobank. Together, the institutions will train local conservationists, expand facilities, and safeguard the legacy of Hawai‘i’s most imperiled species, from rare forest birds to the ancient kāhuli (Hawaiian land snails).

“Hawai‘i is home to some of the most endangered species on Earth, many found nowhere else,” said Dr. Norine W. Yeung, Bishop Museum curator of Malacology. “Biobanking represents both a scientific and cultural commitment: it ensures that future generations will not only inherit the legacy of these species but also the ‘ike (knowledge) and mo‘olelo (stories) tied to them.”

With support from SDZWA, Bishop Museum is advancing biobanking initiatives through its [Pacific Center for Molecular Biodiversity](#) (PCMB), soon expanding to include the Waihona Ola Pacific Biobank, which houses

more than 95,000 samples of Pacific biodiversity. This collaboration will further biobanking efforts to include living cell lines, tissues, and reproductive materials, critical tools for future restoration and conservation.

“Protecting biodiversity in Hawai‘i is inseparable from protecting cultural heritage,” said Dr. Kenneth A. Hayes, Bishop Museum director of the Pacific Center for Molecular Biodiversity. “Every species stored in the biobank represents not only an evolutionary lineage millions of years in the making, but also a relationship between people and place that we have a kuleana (responsibility) to safeguard.”

This announcement coincides with the 50th anniversary of SDZWA’s Frozen Zoo®, which has led global innovation in wildlife biobanking since 1975.

“Biobanking efforts provide hope by increasing species’ resiliency, which benefits both people and nature,” said Dr. Nadine Lamberski, Chief Conservation Science and Wildlife Health Officer for San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance. “By linking Hawai‘i’s biobanking initiatives to a global network of distributed repositories, Bishop Museum and SDZWA are ensuring that the Pacific plays a vital role in safeguarding Earth’s living heritage for generations to come.”

About the Waihona Ola Pacific Biobank

Waihona Ola (“repository of life”) is a Bishop Museum-led initiative to safeguard the Pacific’s unique biodiversity through the cryogenic preservation of DNA, tissues, cells, and reproductive materials. With more than 95,000 samples representing species across the Hawaiian Islands and the Pacific, Waihona Ola provides critical resources for conservation, ecological restoration, and cultural perpetuation in the face of unprecedented biodiversity loss.

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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](https://www.bishopmuseum.org/NewsRoom).