

David Boynton (1945–2007) was a leading expert on the natural history of the Hawaiian island of [Kauai](#), especially on the Koke'e Forest and the [Alakai Swamp](#) and its wildlife.



David Boynton

He was called "a voice for the Hawaiian wilderness,"^[1] a "Guardian of the Koke'e Forest,"^[2] and as an educator, "the window through which thousands of Hawai'i students learned about Hawaiian birds, plants, marine creatures, climate and much more."^[1] Boynton photographed a bird now believed extinct, the 'Ō'ō'ā'ā (*Moho braccatus*). He recorded the [mating call](#) of the single male, whose mate presumably did not survive [Hurricane Iwa](#) at the end of 1982.^[3] The bird, probably the last of its species, was tending an empty nest.^{[1][4]}

Boynton used this poignant recording and story to inspire Hawaiian school children in the traditional Hawaiian values of kuleana, malama, kokua, laulima, ho'ihi, lokahi, and pono,^[2] which translate roughly as rights and responsibilities to the land, the appropriateness of serving nature, helping others, cooperation, respect, peace and unity, and duty to do what is right.^[5]

Naturalist and teacher

Early life and education

David Spalding Boynton, born and raised in [Oahu](#), graduated from the [Punahou School](#) in [Honolulu](#) in 1963, where his alumni profile says he "would rather have been in the ocean than in the classroom."^[2] Boynton graduated from the [University of California-Santa Barbara](#) in 1967 and returned to live in Hawaii.^[6]

Career

He was appointed the environmental resource teacher for Kauaʻi School District after 18 years as a teacher at Waimea High School.^[6] In 1992, David was honored by the Koke'e Natural History Museum with the "One Person Can Make a Difference" award.^[6] Boynton was instrumental in the creation, by the state Department of Education, of the Koke'e Discovery Center in 1994, a "groundbreaking"^[1] overnight outdoor education facility and student-teacher resource center for fourth and fifth graders in [Koke'e State Park](#), where he served as Director.^[6] Boynton claimed that Koke'e and surrounding wilderness areas contained many endangered species, over 400 different native plants, and the greatest concentration of 'single-island endemics' anywhere, making it the ideal place to teach about biodiversity, sustainability and environmental stewardship.^[2] The David S. Boynton Educational Grant was established in his memory. Grants, for projects supporting the values Boynton taught, up to a maximum of \$1,500 each are awarded to educators or students. The first grant was awarded in 2009.^[7]

Photography

Boynton was a much-published author or co-author of photographic essays of Hawaii. Among his books are:

- **Na Pali: Images of Kauai's Northwest Shore** (2007)
- **Kauai** (2006)
- **Flowers-Images from Hawaii's Gardens** (with his wife, Sue Boynton) (2006)
- **Kilauea Point and Kauai's National Wildlife Refuges** (2004)
- **Kauai, the Garden Island: A Pictorial History of the Commerce and Work of the People** (with Chris Cook) (1999)
- **The Kaua'i Movie Book** (with Chris Cook) (1996)
- **Kaua'i Days** (2005)
- **Discover Hawaii's Forests** (2000)
- **Capturing Hawaii: Kauai** (1998)
- **Hawaii Humpback** Vol. 1 (1980)
- **Kaua`i: Ancient Place Names and Their Stories** (1998) (with Frederick Wichman)

- **By Wind, By Waves** (with David L. Eyre) (2000)

In addition, his photographs have been reproduced in countless magazines, newspapers, and posters. Boynton assisted in the production of the Emmy award-winning 1991 National Geographic Special documentary film, "Hawaii: Strangers in Paradise."^[4]

Death in 2007

Boynton's body was found in February, 2007 at the foot of a 300-foot cliff on the north face of the remote Miloli'i Valley of the **Na Pali** coast, by all evidence the victim of an accident on the difficult trail. It was reported that Boynton had been alone en route to photograph sea turtles on Miloli'i Beach.^[1] He was familiar with this rugged trail and terrain. He told a journalist in 2006, "There is a fern that grows in thick mats along these ridges, and I know from personal experience that you can try to push your way through this green layer and wind up stepping off into air."^[8]

References

1. TenBruggencate, Jan (February 12, 2007). "[David Boynton was nature buff](#)" . The Honolulu Advertiser. Retrieved 22 January 2010.
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3. "[Kauai Oo Moho braccatus](#)" . Birdlife International. Retrieved 24 January 2010.
4. Coleman, Loren (February 12, 2007). "[Extinct Bird Naturalist Dies in Menehune Valley](#)" . Cryptozoology News. Retrieved 22 January 2010.
5. "[Ulukau Hawaiian Electronic Library](#)" . University of Hawaii Press. Retrieved 22 January 2010.
6. Gregg, Amanda C. (February 12, 2007). "[David Boynton's legacy to live on](#)" . THE GARDEN ISLAND. Retrieved 22 January 2010.
7. "[Stepath receives Boynton grant](#)" . The Garden Island. September 11, 2009. Retrieved 22 January 2010.
8. Sohn, Tim (November 2006). "[A fateful trek into the Hawaiian jungle](#)" . Outside Magazine. Retrieved 22 January 2010.

External links

- [David Boynton Photography](#)

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