



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park

P.O. Box 52
Hawai'i National Park
Hawai'i 96718

Mardie Lane, Park Ranger
808.985.6018

Hawai'i Volcanoes NEWS RELEASE

January 10, 2007

*O kane ia Wai'ololi, o ka wahine ia Wai'olola
Hanau ka Hehe noho i kai
Kia'i ia e ka Nene noho i uka*

Man for the narrow stream, woman for the broad stream
Born the Hehe, living at sea
Guarded by the Nene living on land
From *Kumulipo*, a Hawaiian creation chant



Nene Laying Eggs and Lying Low in Hawai'i Volcanoes

From the coast of Kilauea to the slopes of Mauna Loa, 33 pairs of endangered nene are laying eggs and tending goslings. To help protect the rare birds, Superintendent Cindy Orlando announced that the park will temporarily close areas to give the families a respite from human disturbance.

Opposite their mainland counterparts, Hawai'i's geese begin to breed in the fall, during a time when rain-bearing clouds nourish new plant growth. This allows the goose to fatten-up before nesting and helps ensure that goslings hatch when food is most plentiful.

"Nene don't migrate so they are not in a rush to nest and raise young," said park biologist Kathleen Misajon. Their relatively long breeding season, running from September through May, keeps park staff busy. "I expect there will be another ten to fifteen nesting attempts as the season progresses," added Misajon.

The birds breeding within the park range in age from two to twenty-three. According to Misajon, "It's not that common to see wild nene in their twenties still producing offspring." Last month, she observed the oldest breeder, a 23-year old gander, staunchly guard his nest for thirty days while his 6-year old mate incubated three large eggs.

The pair nested on a near-barren lava flow. However, to survive, goslings require berries, seeds, and grass. Within a day or two of hatching, the parents marched their downy brood more than two miles to an oasis of green vegetation. The goslings toddled over rocks, around earthcracks, through brush and tall grass, and across the park's main road and a major highway.

"This is such an impressive feat," said Misajon. "The route they took would be hard for a person, imagine a tiny three-ounce gosling walking on 2-inch legs." Evading fast-moving cars and ever-present predators—mongooses and feral cats—is also remarkable.

Last year, Hawai'i Volcanoes celebrated the most successful nene breeding season ever. Devoted nene parents raised a total of 40 fledglings (goslings that survive to take flight).

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.



Said Misajon, "The past two years have been very encouraging. We've gone from an average of 15 fledglings a year, to 23 in 2005, and 40 in 2006. This gave the population its first boost since 1995, ending several years of population decline."

For Misajon and her volunteer staff, it was incredibly heartening to follow a good year with an even better one. The flocks of wild geese in and around the park are a testament to their efforts.

And perhaps most telling is that for park visitors and neighbors, sightings of this rare bird are not quite as rare as they used to be.

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.