

## Hiking Journal

### *Ka`aha to Pepeiao*

*December 27-29, 2006*

*By Jerry Hannigan*

On the drive out to Hilina Pali overlook, my wife and I saw two nene and were able to photograph them from the car. It was a good start to the trip. When we started our hike at Hilina Pali, the temp was in the low 70's. Hiking down the Hilina Pali trail from the top of the ridge was 2 miles of a steep descent with many switchbacks. The trail down was rocky with lots of loose rock which increased the difficulty of the hike. I was glad I was going down and not up. After descending to the plain, the temp rose probably 10 degrees. The rest of the hike to Ka'aha was flat with a descent at the end down to the shelter and coastline.



We did not stay in the shelter but pitched our tent by the lagoon. Swimming in the lagoon after a hot hike was very refreshing. We had a full moon that night and the temp dropped considerably after sundown so the sleeping was perfect.

The next day we hiked the Ka'aha Trail to Pepeiao Cabin. This trail traverses a lava field which meant there was no discernible trail. We had to follow the rock cairns which made the going slow. We started the hike early in the morning to avoid the midday heat. The trail follows the coast for about 3 miles then turns inland with an ascent to the Pepeiao Cabin. Where the trail makes the turn inland, there is a wonderful view of the coastline. The trail crosses the plain and then ascents up the ridge about 3 miles to the cabin. The trail here was not as steep as the trail we had hiked down the day before. We arrived at the cabin in early afternoon and set up camp. It was sunny and breezy and a bit cooler than on the coast. We did not stay in the cabin (it was musty) but set up our tent behind the cabin. There were water tanks at both campsites. The view from the cabin was excellent and the weather was perfect.



The next morning we got up and hiked out the Ka'u Desert Trail back to Hilina Pali which is about 5 miles. This trail transverses the ridgeline with a slight

gain in elevation. There was more vegetation on this trail with numerous trees and places where the trail was obscured by tall grass. It was cooler hiking on the ridge and the weather was again perfect. This was our first trip to Hawaii and we found the trip to be wonderful.

