

**NA HULU KUPUNA,
AUMAKUA OF THE EARTH
A LIMITED EDITION GICLEE
OF THE ORIGINAL PAINTING BY**

CALLEY O'NEILL
RAMA THE ELEPHANT
WITH JEB BARSH, OREGON ZOO

TITLE BY AMBER CARPENTER-HORSELY & TYLER SLEIGHTHOLM

Pueo -- *Asio flammeus sandwichensis*, Endemic Hawaiian Short-Eared Owl

Community leader and Hawaiian cultural teacher, Kumu Pua Case asked Calley to present the *Pueo* painting to all of the Waimea Middle School 8th grade classes, as AN UNNAMED PIECE in her annual 8th grade experience in naming a work of art. The process teaches the students how to ask revealing and meaningful questions in an interview process. The students learn how to look at a piece of art (or anything) and note the important qualities of the work, discern the meaning behind it, how they feel about it, seek to understand the essence of the work of art, and then name it. Each year every one of the 96 or so 8th graders is required to name the painting, and write a persuasive essay telling the artist why theirs is the best name. It was an exhilarating process for Calley and the students, as many of them had never conceived of an elephant painting on their behalf and on behalf of a healthy future.

Calley read every essay (yes, all 96) and selected two titles and three excellent persuasive essays to become the title and mo'olelo (story). For the combined title: Amber Carpenter-Horsely won for NA HULU KUPUNA (The Feathered Ancestors) and Tyler Sleightholm for AUMAKUA OF THE EARTH. The title and key excerpts from the three winning essays as follows will travel with this painting wherever it goes.

First a few words about the choice of the title and the word *Aumakua*. *Pueo* are one of the most important and beloved *Aumakua* of Native Hawaiians and many local people in Hawai'i. *Au* means far traveling and *makua* means ancestors. *Aumakua* are considered ancestral guardian spirits or deified ancestors, healers, communicators, family guides and protectors. *Aumakua* are honored as part of the family. While often one specific *pueo* or shark, etc. is considered the *aumakua*; the entire species is highly regarded and protected. There is surprisingly little known about the beautiful *pueo*, and less known about its population and current conservation status. The kupuna say that there were huge numbers of *pueo* in the 1800's.

TITLE WINNERS:

Amber Carpenter-Horsely for NA HULU KUPUNA (The Feathered Ancestors)
Tyler Sleightholm for AUMAKUA OF THE EARTH.

ESSAY WINNERS

OUR ACTIONS - THEIR LIVES - TASHA OHTA

Another significant component I noticed was that the owl was staring straight towards you, so I think this painting was made to share a message with everybody who looks at it. Another example of a key component was that this painting was made for the endangered species of the world, and how we have to protect them or they will become extinct and be one from our Earth forever. The artist told us that everything action we do matters.

Our actions and everything we humans do affect the lives of the animals so basically, the lives of the animals depends on all of us. Animals are becoming endangered and even extinct because of our actions, but we can change this outcome by watching what we do. I believe that if the people know that they are doing is affecting all of the animals' lives, maybe to extinction, and then maybe some people might change their ways, which will save some animals' lives.

THE SACRED PUEO - KELII

Many people who are familiar with the ancient Hawaiian culture are disheartened by when they see this painting because the amount of the sacred birds that once flew all over the land is diminishing.

My speculation about this work of art is that everything symbolizes something larger than that of what is presented. I assume that the blue marble in the lower half of the painting represents the planet Earth, how it once was. I think the ancient inscriptions presented on the outward border of the art show the deeper meaning in the art, the side that isn't told in pictures...the meaning hiding in the shadow of the art. Also I think that the pueo represents something that was important to Hawai'i that was lost, something sacred lost in time. I also think that the pueo shows that what humans do can greatly impact an animal's status, and the pueo is a great example of this because its numbers are counting down because of our actions.

THE FLIGHT OF LIFE - HALLON BENEDICT

The forests that were once prosperous are now disappearing. The Amazon was huge but its forests are leaving forever because of illegal logging. 63% of Madagascar is now shrublands, when it was once a large forested island. And there is a major deforestation in Tesso Nilo, Sumatra. We need to stop this, and we need to protect our forests.

Animals all over the world are leaving us forever, and I don't mean one animal at a time. I mean one species at a time. One that left recently was the Zanzibar Leopard in 1996, hunted because locals thought they were evil. Another is the *Po'ouli*, which became extinct in 2004 because of habitat and food loss. We need to protect these animals, because we need them more than they need us.

We need to protect the world and everything in it. What we need to do is bring back the forests for the animals.

From Hawai'i's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy:

SPECIES STATUS: State listed as Endangered on O'ahu, State recognized as Endemic (found only in Hawai'i) at the subspecies level Nature Serve Heritage Rank G5/T2 – Species secure/Subspecies imperiled.

ABUNDANCE: Unknown. Because of relatively little detection, the Hawaiian Forest Bird Survey did not estimate the population size of the *pueo*. *Pueo* were widespread and abundant before the late 1900's, but are thought to be declining rapidly, especially on Oahu.

SPECIES INFORMATION: The *pueo*, or Hawaiian short-eared owl, is an endemic subspecies of the nearly pandemic short-eared owl (*Asio flammeus*; Family: Strigidae). The species is thought to have colonized the Hawaiian Islands sometime after the arrival of Polynesians. Unlike most owls, *pueo* are most active during the day (diurnal) in the forests and grasslands, and are commonly seen hovering or soaring over open areas. Like short-eared owls in continental environments, those in Hawai'i primarily consume small mammals. Their relatively recent establishment on Hawai'i may have been tied to the rats (*Rattus exulans*) that Polynesians brought to the islands. Little is known about the breeding biology of *pueo*, but nests have been found throughout the year. Males perform aerial displays known as a sky dancing display to prospective females. Nests are constructed by females and are comprised of simple scrapes in the ground lined with grasses and feather down. Females also perform all incubating and brooding. Males feed females and defend nests. Chicks hatch asynchronously and are fed by the female with food delivered by male. Young may fledge from nest on foot before they are able to fly and depend on their parents for approximately two months.

DISTRIBUTION: *Pueo* are found on all the main Hawaiian Islands from sea level to 2,450 meters (8,000 feet).

LOCATION AND CONDITION OF KEY HABITAT: *Pueo* occupy a variety of habitats, including wet and dry forests, but are most common in open habitats such as grasslands, shrublands, and montane parklands, including urban areas and those actively managed for conservation. Because of a lack of historical population data and the species' current, broad habitat use, key habitat variables are difficult to determine. *Pueo* occur in many areas that are managed by the State of Hawai'i or Federal agencies.

THREATS: *Pueo* are likely susceptible to the same factors that threaten other native Hawaiian birds, including: loss and degradation of habitat, predation by introduced mammals, and disease. However, their persistence in lowland, non-native and rangeland habitats suggests that they may be less vulnerable to extinction than other native birds, especially because they may be resistant to avian malaria (*Plasmodium relictum*) and avian pox (*Poxvirus avium*). Despite this, for *pueo* populations, the following are of particular concern:

- ☐ "Sick owl syndrome". Mortality on Kaua'i has been attributed to this syndrome, which may be related to pesticide poisoning or food shortages. (Calley's note: Apparently ingesting rodents that have eaten rodenticides causes many *pueo* deaths.)
- ☐ Contaminants or toxins. Because *pueo* are top predators, fat-soluble contaminants may accumulate in prey species; may be related to "sick owl syndrome"

- Predation. Because *pueo* nest on the ground, their eggs and young are vulnerable to predation by rats (*Rattus* spp.), cats (*Felis silvestris*), and the small Indian mongoose (*Herpestes auro-punctatus*).
- Habitat loss. May be particularly important to O'ahu *pueo* populations.
- Human interaction. Hunting behavior and habitat use predispose *pueo* to vehicular collisions, which have been documented on Lana'i and the island of Hawai'i.

CONSERVATION ACTIONS: *Pueo* likely have benefited from management activities designed to conserve other endangered birds. They also may benefit from game bird management; high densities of *pueo* occur on lands where game birds also are common. In addition to these efforts, future management specific to the *pueo* may include the following:

- Determine population trends, especially on islands where "sick owl syndrome" has been documented.
- Public outreach and education.
- Continue protection and management of wildlife sanctuaries and refuges.

MONITORING: Regular island-wide population surveys are necessary to determine population trends for this species. This information is needed to assess the efficacy of habitat management efforts.

RESEARCH PRIORITIES: Research priorities specific to *pueo* include the following:

- Analysis of population trends and changes in habitat occupancy, especially on O'ahu.
- Determine the cause of "sick owl syndrome" and its potential effect on populations.
- Quantify the number of vehicular collisions and determine the level of threat to populations.

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Calley O'Neill is a renowned artist, muralist and visionary designer in Hawai'i. After graduating Summa cum laude from Pratt Institute, NY in 1974, Calley focused on drawing endangered species for many years, returning for her Master's Degree in Social Ecology at Goddard College, VT (1974). In 2006, after twenty years of Hawaiian cultural murals and paintings, Calley met RAMA, the famous 26-year-old bull Asian elephant artist at the Oregon Zoo and Jeb Barsh, the innovative keeper who trained Rama to paint. Upon first contact, Calley knew she had to work with them. Calley mixes the paint and prepares the canvas with volunteer assistants. Rama paints the beautiful, powerful abstract backgrounds and Calley paints the endangered wildlife and borders.

Jeb describes his work with RAMA: *I search for purpose for Rama and he absorbs this in a transfer of energy, which then explodes onto the canvas, the production - a dance. I take his enthusiasm and aim it with great care toward the issues of his species. It inspires those watching every time and remains a mystery for me. We are human and elephant engaged together in a joyous transfer that has produced a most unexpected beauty in a unique body of work. From the brink of extinction, he joins trunk to hand to canvas to you to inspire all children to act upon their innate instinct to nurture each other and all the creatures of this planet.*

The first of its kind, RAMA, AMBASSADOR FOR THE ENDANGERED ONES is a traveling exhibition dedicated to the preservation of endangered species and the restoration of their habitats through the integration of art, ecology and heart awakening. (2011)