

Hawaii—the Land of Pele, Goddess of Fire

The Big Island of Hawai'i is one of the only places on Earth where new land is forming. Kilauea is erupting continually, and has buried several villages on the south coast of the island. Mauna Loa looms over the southern half of the island, threatening major eruptions. The nearly constant eruptions of several volcanoes offers great opportunities to study the influence of age, lava type, proximity to mature vegetation, and climatic stresses.

On Hawaii, we are reminded forcefully of how pahoehoe (smooth) and a'a (rough) lava alter succession rates. The rough surfaces permit more rapid establishment of vegetation, often ferns, but sometimes large-seeded species. *Metrosideros* is extremely wide-spread as an invader, but often persists in mature vegetation. The pace of succession is slow on the dry leeward side of the island, but rapid on the windward.

In July, 2004, Roger attended the annual meeting of the International Association for Vegetation Science on Hawaii, where he met with many vegetation scientists interested in succession, and was able to go into the field for several days to see, first hand, how Pele has affected the landscape.



24-yr old Pahoehoe lava (Kalapana);



Scorched zone near Kilauea.



a'a lava on Kilauea;



Metrosideros polymorpha



Ecologists on edge of Kilauea;



The end of the day