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Thursday, November 8, 2012

The Water that Connect Us

Liz

Aloha!

I know it's a little late in the semester for a blog post about summer travels, but as the nights get colder and I realize just how many more layers I'm putting on for my ten minute walk to class, I'm really missing Hawai'i.

Adam and I were lucky enough to join a UD environmental biology professor, PK, his wife, and 18 other students on the 3 week Hawai'i Marine Biology class. Needless to say, it was an AMAZING experience. We toured three islands, saw tons of incredible wildlife, fish, and learned about how the islands of Hawai'i were formed. Lava from deep sea volcanoes, guys. It's legit.

It was a whirlwind of adventure, snorkeling, cliff jumping, fish identifying, waterfalls, Hawai'i Undersea Research Lab submarines, the Gemini Observatory, luaus, manta rays, visiting the beaches where LOST and Baywatch were filmed, volcano and mountain climbing, and, well, just about everything. I could go on and on for days about all of the amazing things we got to see and do.

If anyone loves the great state of Ohio, it's me, but if I had the chance to go back to Hawai'i, I'd take it in a heartbeat. It is one of the most beautiful, biologically diverse places I've ever been - just being there fills me with a sense of adventure.

I went into this 3 week course, thinking, "This is so far from the rivers at home. Islands, oceans, mountains, volcanoes... it's going to be nothing like Dayton." I couldn't have been more wrong.

While on the island of Oahu, we visited the University of Hawai'i Institute of Marine Biology. Here we got to see a false killer whale named Keana, who had cone-shaped teeth and could do plenty of tricks, and a little family of Atlantic bottlenose dolphins. Atlantic bottlenose dolphins are the only dolphins ever kept in "captivity" (I put captivity in quotes because it has such a negative connotation - the animals are kept very happy and well-treated) because they don't travel as far as Pacific bottlenose dolphins. Dolphins are like the dogs of the ocean - always curious and happy to see you! Anyway, that's beside the point.

While we were on a tour of the facilities at the Institute, our guide began talking about the native Hawaiian people and how they divided up their lands - by WATERSHED. It was kind of weird because I happened to be wearing my Rivers Institute dry-fit that day. Our guide explained that the different communities of Hawaiians would mark the different watersheds by putting a pig's head on a stick, a gift to the other Hawaiians for the fair delineation of the lands. It's for that reason that the watersheds gained the Hawai'ian name, Ahupua'a. (Pua'a is Hawaiian for pig.) The ahupua'a ran from the mountains to the ocean, and included everything from the waterfalls to the rivers and streams to the coral reef fed by the streams and rivers. The ancient Hawaiians used this system of land division with a sense of spirituality and

interconnection of the land and water. There was a sense of balance and interrelation between beings, the elements, and the landscape. I found it interesting that this is the ideology that many environmental and conservation-minded people are turning back to, and one that I think the Dayton area is embracing extremely well. We are so blessed to live in a region where there is a known respect for our rivers. It is so comforting to me to know that our waters, no matter where they are, are known and respected by many people who know and appreciate their value.

Here are some pictures from the trip, and links to more information about ahupua'a!



The Four Waters of Maui at Iao Needle



Mountain stream at Iao Needle, Maui



Iao Stream Flood Control Project - This project diverts the stream from the wet side of the island to the dry side, where the resorts are. This confuses some of the snails and fish that live in the streams but also migrate to the ocean.



Huge rainbow at Volcanoes National Park, Big Island.



Haleakala Crater, Maui.



BJ, one of the Atlantic bottlenose dolphins at HIMB, Oahu.



Rainbow Falls, Hilo, Big Island.



Stewards at the ocean!

<http://hawp.org/>

<http://www.hawaiihistory.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=ig.page&CategoryID=299>

<http://www.hawaiiwatershedatlas.com/index.html>