

ANCHIALINE PONDS



Anchialine pools occur world wide, but the largest concentration of these pools can be found here in Hawai'i on the Kona Coast. 600 of the state's 700 anchialine pools are here on the coast. The ponds contain some of the rarest aquatic animals on the planet.

At Kohanaiki there are more than 200 ponds, ranging in size from a man's fist to large swimming pools. Most of them are located just inland from the shore and were vital resources for ancient Hawaiians. Water from these ponds were used by the inhabitants for cooking, drinking, bathing and raising fish and 'Opae Ula, a native red shrimp.

Today many of the anchialine pools have been restored to pristine conditions and native plants, marine life and water birds are thriving. The term "anchialine" in Greek means "near the sea". They have no surface connection to the sea. The brackish water is a mixture of underground sea water and freshwater. Runoff enters the pools through subterranean cracks and fissures. The pools typically exhibit tidal fluctuations, with some pools becoming completely dry at low tide.

An anchialine pool is basically any natural, geological formation that reaches or exposes the underlying water table. Some of the larger ponds are simply depressions in lava fields, close to the sea. All anchialine ponds have two components: the part that you can see, the epigeal habitat, and the part that is underground, the hypogeal. Habitat.

'Opae Ula and 'Opae Hiki, (*Halocardina Rubra*) are a tiny shrimp. They are the signature states species of our ponds. The tiny shrimp, reaching a maximum length of about a ½ inch, occur in a range of colors, mainly red or pink. 'Opae Ula are endemic to Hawai'i. They are found only here and nowhere else in the world.

'Opae Ula were traditionally used as bait to catch Opelu. They live from 1 to 20 plus years. Also living around the ponds are the Familiar Blue Damselfly. Many bird species call our ponds home. Please pay attention to all signs and barrier fences protecting birds, nests and eggs.