

Myths of Hawai'i

How Wailuku, Mau'i, "Water-of-killing" got its name

The Battle of the Owls (Pu'eo)

A wahine (woman) of Maui searching for food found an egg filled nest. "Duck eggs!" she cried joyfully, laying the eggs in her gourd and taking them home.

"What have you there?" her husband asked. .."Owl eggs!" he shouted in disgust. 'They are not good to eat. Why did you bring them home?"



From a nearby tree a voice called, "**Those eggs are mine. Oh please give them back!**" There sat a mother owl blinking in the light.

"How do you know these are your eggs?" the man asked, his voice hard. "I came home to my nest and it was empty. I saw this woman carrying eggs and followed her. Oh let me take them back that I may hatch them!"

"How many eggs did you have?" asked the man. "Seven," the owl told him. 'yes, there are seven here," the woman said. 'These eggs must be hers. Let me take them back to her nest. I should not have taken owl eggs."

The husband only laughed a cruel laugh. Picking up one of the eggs he threw it at the wall. 'There is one!" he teased the owl. 'Take it if you like. And here's another!" **One by one he threw every egg against the stones, smashing the shell and staining the stones with yellow.** "Now you have them all!" he laughed and led his wife away.

The mother owl wept, thinking about the baby owls she'd expected to

hatch. She gathered up the bits of shell and flew back to her empty nest. There her mate met her. "Why do you weep?" he asked. "For our eggs," she told him. "Only these bits of shell are left."

"What happened?" "A man did this—a cruel man. One by one he threw our eggs against the stones and smashed them, every one, then laughed and told me I could have them all." Her mate was very angry. "Cruel man!" he shouted. **"We shall punish him!"**

"What can two owls do against a man?" Two owls? Four hundred owls! Four thousand owls! Fly to the west and tell all owls of this cruel deed. I shall fly to Hawai'i. **Let us gather the owls of every island to our aid."**



The owls of every island came. Those of Ni'ihau and Kaua'i met the owls of O'ahu. Flying together in a great flock they joined the owls of Moloka'i, Lana'i and Kaho'olawe. When they were united with flocks from Hawai'i and from Mau'i **their numbers filled the sky and shut out the sun's light.** A fierce battle followed. The cruel man was punished and the battle place still bears the name **Wailuku, Mau'i, Water-of-killing.**

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