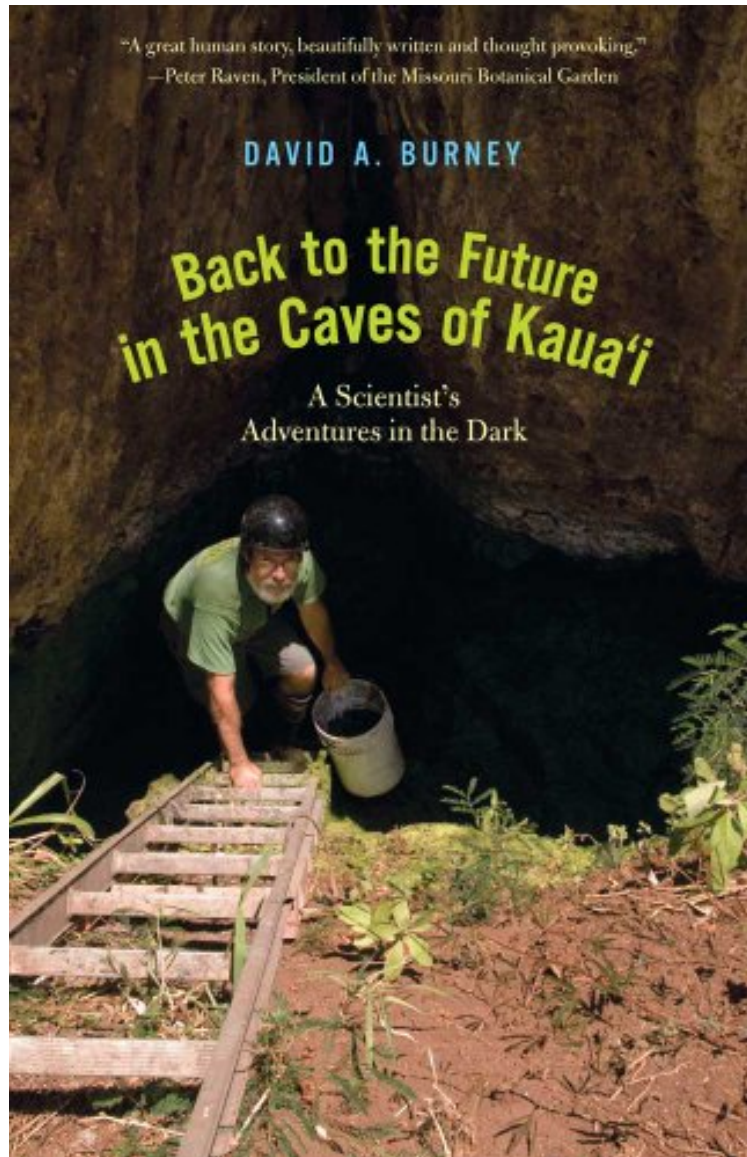


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Back to the Future in the Caves of Kaua'i: A Scientist's Adventures in the Dark

David A. Burney

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David A. Burney : Back to the Future in the Caves of Kaua'i: A Scientist's Adventures in the Dark before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Back to the Future in the Caves of Kaua'i: A Scientist's Adventures in the Dark:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. paleobotany in HawaiiBy William MixonBack to the Future in the

Caves of Kaua'i: A Scientist's Adventures in the Dark. David A. Burney. Yale University Press, New Haven; 2011. 6 by 9 inches, xv+198 pages. Hardbound ISBN 978-0-300-15094-0, \$28; softbound ISBN 978-0-300-17209-6, \$18. In pursuit of his interest in paleoecology, or the study of how the arrival of humans has changed ecosystems worldwide, the author began an investigation in Makauwahi Cave on the southeastern coast of the Hawaiian island of Kaua'i. A solution cave in eolianite limestone that also spent some time as a sea cave, it now consists mainly of a large, open collapse sinkhole. Excavation and coring of the deposits on the floor of the sink have disclosed a lot of information about the changes in the island's flora and fauna since the arrival of Polynesians about a thousand years ago and then Europeans in 1788. Before its discovery by man, the only mammal on the island was a bat. A large fraction of the plants and animals on the Hawaiian islands were unable to cope with the the Polynesian's rats, dogs, and pigs and the European's goats, not to mention many invasive plants introduced accidentally or on purpose. Many have gone extinct, and hundreds of officially endangered species hang on only in remote and inaccessible areas. More recently, the author and his wife have spearheaded restoration of the ancient ecology in the sinkhole and some of the surrounding area. The Makauwahi Cave Reserve is now a popular attraction due to the thriving native plants. The book is in a popular style, but has many references to the scientific literature. Very readable, if not exactly cavey in the usual sense. (Review was originally written for cavers.) 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. I haven't read this book yet but I'm glad to support a good cause. By B.C. We did a tour while in Hawaii to the cave and it was so interesting! I haven't read this book yet but I'm glad to support a good cause. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A worthy project. By bibliophile. Dr. David Burney weaves an incredible tale of Hawaiian natural history in this book, written in a popular style. It is a tale of former abundance and subsequent extinctions and change. The story is one of great loss, but, it is also a tale of discovery and hope. Dr. Burney and his wife, Lida, are restoring bits of the Kauai lowland habitat that we have remaining. The book is a detective novel and scientific treatment rolled into one. The future of the site is the real treasure and the work of the on-going restoration deserves a wider audience. This book will help in this effort.

For two decades, paleoecologist David Burney and his wife, Lida Pigott Burney, have led an excavation of Makauwahi Cave on the island of Kauai, uncovering the fascinating variety of plants and animals that have inhabited Hawaii throughout its history. From the unique perspective of paleoecology—the study of ancient environments—Burney has focused his investigations on the dramatic ecological changes that began after the arrival of humans one thousand years ago, detailing not only the environmental degradation they introduced but also asking how and why this destruction occurred and, most significantly, what might happen in the future. Using Kauai as an ecological prototype and drawing on the authors' adventures in Madagascar, Mauritius, and other exciting locales, Burney examines highly pertinent theories about current threats to endangered species, restoration of ecosystems, and how people can work together to repair environmental damage elsewhere on the planet. Intriguing illustrations, including a reconstruction of the ancient ecological landscape of Kauai by the artist Julian Hume, offer an engaging window into the ecological marvels of another time. A fascinating adventure story of one man's life in paleoecology, *Back to the Future in the Caves of Kauai* reveals the excitement and occasional frustrations of a career spent exploring what the past can tell us about the future.

This book offers an interesting narrative of one man's professional and personal journey to uncover something of Hawaii's distant past and find a way to help secure its ecological future. D.A. Brass, Choice