

Ki'o Wai

Pool

The *ki'o wai* is a deep area in the stream where there is little movement of water. The water surface is usually smooth in these pools since the water is deep and the stream is not flowing as fast.

The native *'o'opu nākea* prefers the peaceful pools to that of the rushing waters. They feed on *limu*, small crustaceans, and worms.

The *'o'opu nākea* is the most common stream goby, and it is the only one of the five species of *'o'opu* that is not endemic to the islands of Hawai'i. At the beginning of the rainy season, the *'o'opu nākea* adults move downstream to spawn near the first riffle in the stream. They lay their egg masses on the rocks in the stream. These "nests" are then guarded by the females, which is unusual for the gobies. Other Hawaiian *'o'opu* (gobies) have males guarding the nests. (Pacific Biosciences Research Center, 2005).

The *'o'opu nākea* life cycle is similar to that of other *'o'opu*. The newly hatched larvae make their way to the ocean where they spend about four to six months of drifting in the ocean currents before returning to freshwater streams. When the larvae come back to the stream, they are less than an inch long and their bodies are nearly clear. These tiny fish work hard to swim upstream. As the *hinana* grow, their translucent bodies turn the color of their parents – a mottled brown and gray. This color helps them to blend in with their environment.

The adult *'o'opu nākea* is the largest of the *'o'opu*. It can grow up to 14 inches long. Its eyes are positioned at the top of its head, which allows it to burrow its body into the stream bed and watch for predators. The *'o'opu nākea* has a fused pelvic fin that acts like a suction cup. The young goby uses its pelvic fin to cling and climb over slippery rocks. *'O'opu nākea* have been sited hanging upside down as they make their way up waterfalls!

