

Kilauea is a Hawaiian volcano that erupted in 1959, destroying vegetation and animal life over an area of 5 million square meters.

Before the eruption, many organisms lived on the volcano in a rain forest community. The rain forest was dominated by ohia trees and two species of tree ferns. Small trees, tall shrubs, and herbaceous plants (plants lacking woody tissues) were also present.

After the eruption, scientists closely monitored the area to track the recolonization of the devastated habitat. Scientists did not find any organisms living in this area for the first six months following the eruption. The table below shows the changes in one localized area that was covered by a massive amount of lava rock with many cracks and crevices. Despite the colonization of the area by several different types of organisms by year 9, the overall cover of the habitat was so low that the surface still looked barren.

Type of Organism	Percent of Community* 6 Months after Eruption	Percent of Community* 1 Year after Eruption	Percent of Community* 3 Years after Eruption	Percent of Community* 7 Years after Eruption	Percent of Community* 9 Years after Eruption
algae	0	25	40	22	17
mosses	0	50	30	17	17
ferns	0	25	20	17	17
lichens	0	0	10	9	6
seed plants	0	0	0	35	43

*Percent by number of species