HB 2387
MAKING AN APPROPRIATION FOR
THE CONTROL OF BROWN TREE SNAKES

House Committee on Agriculture
Public Hearing - January 29, 1992
8:30 am, Room 1206 SOT

By
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HB 2387 would appropriate funds for the purpose of suppressing, controlling, and eradicating the brown tree snake in Hawaii.

Our testimony on this bill does not represent an institutional position of the University of Hawaii.

Concern over the potential introduction of the brown tree snake into Hawaii is well justified. In testimony on previous legislative action on the subject of the snake, the Environmental Center pointed out a number of ancillary consequences of a successful establishment of this species in our State. Among the items we noted was the observation that many of our resident bird species are directly responsible for natural, biological control if insect populations. Any chemical replacement of these natural controls is likely to increase secondary costs and pose environmental risks. In addition, certain Hawaiian plants such as Ohia lehua and most Hawaiian lobelias are either partially or totally dependent on birds for pollination. Thus, the loss of bird species on a proportional scale to that experienced in Guam could be devastating to our botanical resources, including our native forests.

We further noted that the electrical grid and capacity of Oahu significantly exceeds that of Guam; thus, costs incurred by snake-induced outages would be commensurately more burdensome.
To date, the efforts of the brown tree snake task force have been commendable. However, as the bill correctly notes, other agencies may not be capable of preventing the arrival of this animal locally. Our reviewers note that, once the snake becomes established in Hawaii, not only will there be no simple solution to the infestation, but it will likely be irreversible. Thus, we suggest that the bill be amended by replacing the words "suppressing, controlling and eradicating" with the phrase, "preventing the establishment of," in line 1, page 2.