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RL:0713

HR 268 and HCR 156
INVADING BROWN TREE SNAKE BE ERADICATED
FROM GUAM BY A QUARANTINE PROGRAM
FOR HAWAII AND U.S. TERRITORIES

Statement for
House Committees on
Agriculture
Planning, Energy, and Environmental Protection
Joint Public Hearing - April 8, 1987

By
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HR 268 and HCR 156 call attention to the potential devastating effect that an accidental introduction of the highly predacious Brown Tree Snake would have on the bird life of Hawaii and requests the development of far more stringent inspection programs by appropriate state and federal agencies to prevent the introduction of these snakes to Hawaii. The resolution also urges the various appropriate agencies to assist in the development of control and eradication methods of the snake in those areas where it is currently found outside its natural range so as to reduce the risk of its introduction to Hawaii.

Our statement on this resolution does not represent an institutional position of the University of Hawaii.

The resolution correctly identifies the highly serious and significant hazard to the avian biota of the Hawaiian islands posed by the potential introduction of the Brown Tree Snake. We would only add that in addition to the obvious visual and psychological effects that would be experienced if the snake were introduced and bird life on the Hawaiian islands were to be decimated, the present natural, biological control of insect populations that is provided by many of our resident bird species, both native and introduced, would cease to exist. In such case, the added chemicals that would be required to control insects would increase secondary costs and

pose environmental risks. Furthermore, certain Hawaiian plants such as Ohia lehua and most Hawaiian lobelias, are either totally or partially dependent on birds for pollination. Thus loss of birds could affect our botanical resources including our native forests.

The resolution calls attention to power outages that have been experienced on Guam due to short circuits caused by these snakes. These costs have been estimated in the millions of dollars on Guam. Given the magnitude of our electrical transmission system in Hawaii we can only guess at the costs that could be incurred as a result of a similar snake infestation in Hawaii.

We understand that on Guam these snakes have been known to enter houses through air conditioners and attack and eat caged birds in the house. Presumably the chicken industry would be one of the first to feel the effects of these snakes.

Because Brown Tree Snakes have been found at least twice on Oahu it is particularly important that efforts be increased to develop eradication techniques in addition to prevention/inspection measures. This will provide a back-up position in the event that inspection efforts fail and will also decrease the risk by reducing the populations at the potential sources.

The Armed Services, and particularly the Navy, have been involved in eradication and control strategies. We suggest that the Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with other agencies previously cited in the resolution including the Department of Land and Natural Resources, approach the Department of Defense for funds to examine the basic biology of the Brown Tree Snake on Guam so as to assist in the developed of better eradication techniques.

We urge adoption of this resolution.



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RL:0713A

SR 82 and SCR 74
REQUESTING THAT THE INVADING BROWN TREE SNAKE BE ERADICATED
FROM GUAM BY A QUARANTINE PROGRAM
FOR HAWAII AND U.S. TERRITORIES

Statement for
Senate Committees on
Planning and Environment
Transportation
Joint Public Hearing - April 13, 1987

The Environmental Center submitted the attached statement on companion resolutions HR 268 and HCR 156 at a joint hearing before the House Committees on Agriculture and Planning, Energy, and Environmental Protection on April 8, 1987. Our previous statement remains applicable to SR 82 and SCR 74. We strongly concur with the intent of the resolution.

Attachment