



Local News Spiders pose no threat to agriculture

Spiders pose no threat to agriculture

FRIDAY, 21 SEP 2012 03:00AM BY LOUELLA LOSINIO | VARIETY NEWS STAFF HITS: 334



RECENT scientific findings on the explosion of the spider population on Guam should not be a cause of concern for farmers, University of Guam entomologist Dr. Aubrey Moore assured.

According to Moore, there is good evidence that the eight-legged arachnids pose no threat to agriculture and the endemic species of insects on the island, at least for now.

Moore was reacting to the results of a study released by ecologists which concluded that Guam's jungles have as many as 40 times more spiders than are found on nearby islands like Saipan.



According to biologists from Rice University, the University of Washington and the University of Guam, the results are some of the first to examine the indirect impact of the brown tree snake on Guam's ecosystem.

"Actually, because spiders eat insects, we don't consider spiders as pests. We see them as beneficial."

According to Moore, the spiders prey on insects that were part of the diet of the decimated bird population on Guam. He also confirmed that Guam has a bigger spider population in comparison to Saipan and Rota.

"What the spiders are doing is taking over some of the services that some of the birds used to provide. The birds used to eat a lot of insects but they are not around anymore. They are compensating. That's how nature adjusts itself," Moore explained.

Haldre Rogers, a Huxley Fellow in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at Rice University and the lead author of the study, said: "You can't walk through the jungles on Guam without a stick in your hand to knock down the spider webs."

According to the study, "In some places, a dense fabric of webs fills gaps between trees in the jungle canopy."

The brown tree snake, an invasive species introduced to the island in the 1940s, reduced Guam's native bird species. According to the study, "Ten of 12 native bird species had been wiped out, and the last two live only in small areas protected by intense snake-trapping."

Comments

#3 Paul Zerzan 2012-09-21 13:24 Ask the people of Hawaii (and the tourists to Hawaii) if the birds have value! They MOST certainly do. Replacing Hawaii's lost birds with introduced species was the only practical thing to do. Guam should follow Hawaii's example (we can no more return to the pre-snake ecosystem of Guam than we can return to the Age-of-the-Dinosaurs. The world has changed).

#2 JR Sablan 2012-09-21 10:12 Quoting Paul Zerzan: So instead of spending more money on snake "research" and the bad publicity it generates, why don't we bring in new "snake-proof" birds to Guam? Birds from snake areas effectively defend their nests from snakes by jabbing at the snake's eyes with their beaks. Guam's birds didn't so they are now extinct. Hawaii lost all of its birds to Avian Malaria when mosquitoes came to the island 100 years ago. Hawaii is now home to numerous desirable but "non-native" species that were brought in and released. Guam should do the same. The sooner the better.

idiotic comment. ask any one in conservation if there is value in hawaii's non-naive birds...fix the problem, don't cover it up.

#1 Paul Zerzan 2012-09-21 07:30 So instead of spending more money on snake "research" and the bad publicity it generates, why don't we

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Birds from snake areas effectively defend their nests from snakes by jabbing at the snake's eyes with their beaks. Guam's birds didn't so they are now extinct.

Hawaii lost all of its birds to Avian Malaria when mosquitoes came to the island 100 years ago. Hawaii is now home to numerous desirable but "non-native" species that were brought in and released.

Guam should do the same. The sooner the better.

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The Guam Department of Education in collaboration with the schools under their jurisdic...



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