

FOREWORD

In the late 1950's, when this writer first plunged into Hawaiian wildlife management, life was so simple. "Ecosystems" were discussed mostly by professors of biology at the University of Hawai'i. Occasionally, a visiting scientist would pursue his specialty in our forests and prepare a paper on the importance of protecting the "unique Hawaiian biota." Few listened. Government agencies were primarily concerned with watershed protection to assure irrigation for agriculture, and with promoting commercial forestry, developing large State parks, and preventing the extinction of large, obvious endangered species (the nene). Citizen perception of natural resource management was that it should lead to consumption or use. Zoologists, botanists, malacologists, entomologists, and wildlife biologists, for the most part, were seen as oddball specialists with selfish professional motives.

Today, the word "ecology" is on the lips of average citizens, reporters, transients, and politicians. (In the 1960's, a local Honolulu candidate for office paraded a sign by the side of the road touting his primary qualification as an "ecologist".) Specialists in the fields of mammalogy, water resources, arachnidology, ornithology, and terrestrial ecosystems now abound in our institutions. Environmental protection as a concept permeates our Constitution, statutes, ordinances, rules, regulations, and policies. Citizen societies for the preservation of the treasures of nature have proliferated, and their representatives crowd the legislative hearing rooms. Natural scientists are honored by appointment to advisory boards and are inundated with Environmental Impact Statements to review. Things have become very complex.

With an enormous increase in our fund of information about native ecosystems, the lists of endangered species have grown longer, and a developer can barely move without stirring up a bee's nest of protest. New

demands are being made upon the land, battering against the walls of preservation zoning. Ordinary people are beginning to see their lives affected by insect infestations, contaminated water supplies, and crowded wilderness areas. The first terrestrial ecosystem recognized by the State government in the form of a regulation to protect it was the Alaka'i Wilderness Preserve on Kaua'i in 1964. Since then, the Natural Area Reserve System has gobbled up the best parts of several State forest reserves. Other pieces of relatively native biotic complexes have been declared wildlife or plant sanctuaries, Nature Conservancy preserves, and expansions of National Parks.

Confrontations (not yet violent) have developed between academia, managers, administrators, and special interest groups over the use (or non-use) of our wild lands. Each group tends to perceive things in a vacuum of idealism or inertia. Strange as it may seem, however, a hunter can find common ground with a vertebrate zoologist, given a proper forum and time to communicate. (I have actually seen it happen!) That is why symposiums such as this one on "Hawai'i's Terrestrial Ecosystems: Preservation and Management" are so important. This is especially so if invited guests and speakers include bureaucrats, middle-level managers, educators, and interested citizens, and the forum allows time for discussion. For too long biologists have talked only to their own professional kin about the problems affecting our native biota. Government representatives are often too busy with budgets, legislative testimonies, and staff meetings to attend symposiums which expound upon the plight of our beasties and hibiscadelphuses.

A new trend in scientific gatherings has emerged in recent years. Heretofore, most "papers" were couched in classical formats, drawing weighty conclusions based on the formula of: data = hypothesis = experiment = theory = principle. Now the question is being added, "So what?" "Recommendations for management" now often appear in discussions at the end of journal articles.

The present Symposium not only revealed some of Mother Nature's most intimate secrets, but included discussions on what's wrong with her garden and pets, and suggested all of us get our act together to help her out. The sessions included consideration of conservation strategies, recovery potential, preserve design, management-research coordination, agency roles, legalities, incentives, cooperative planning, and costs. Tools of terrestrial ecosystem preservation were laid on the table as well. Look for repeated recommendations on restricting alien importations, and on

active management (as well as preservation), biological control, research, and public education. Administrators and managers had their day in court and provided insights into the realities of politics, budgets, priorities, and legal constraints.

This book should be read with a sense of wonder that a common ground was found upon which no blood was spilled. It bodes well for the practical solution of our most acute terrestrial ecosystem problems.

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