



## PRESS RELEASE

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### *Mongoose sighted on Kauai*

A mongoose was sighted on February 23, 2004 on the island of Kauai. Mongooses are not known to be present on Kauai and Lanai. The animal was sighted by a former Big Island resident currently living on Kauai, who saw the mongoose crossing the road in East Kauai and quickly reported it to wildlife officials.

The possible presence of mongooses on Kauai has prompted a rapid response effort to trap the pest/s before they multiply and cause serious harm to Kauai's rich seabird and waterbird populations.

It is not the first time that a mongoose was sighted in this area. Previous sightings were followed by trapping by DLNR-Forestry and Kauai Invasive Species Committee personnel, yet no mongooses were captured.

Traps will again be set in the area and checked regularly. The Kauai Invasive Species Committee (KISC) field crew will help DLNR-Forestry by providing the staff to set and check traps in this rapid response effort.

KISC provides rapid response capabilities to help its partner agencies like DLNR and Hawaii Department of Agriculture, who do not have the funding or staff necessary to conduct these operations alone. The mission of KISC is to eliminate or control the invasive plant and animals species in order to preserve Kauai's native biodiversity and minimize adverse ecological, economic and social impacts. For more information on KISC, visit <http://www.hear.org/kisc>

A part of DLNR's supplemental budget request for \$5,000,000 for the initial year of a four-year funding request for the Hawaii Invasive Species Council, and a 1:1 non-state match would (in part) provide funding rapid response efforts statewide.

“This unprecedented budget request would not replace any of the existing state, private, or federal funding, but is intended to complement and expand on existing programs that have suffered decades of no-growth or cutbacks while introductions and spread of invasive pests have increased exponentially,” said Peter Young, DLNR Chairperson and co-chair of the Hawaii Invasive Species Council.

“The state has no formal, funded rapid response programs or capabilities when it comes to invasive species. For example, there were reports of salvinia in Lake Wilson in 1997, yet the problem grew to epic proportions before a response was organized and emergency funding was received,” states Christy Martin of the Coordinating Group on Alien Pest Species. “We cannot afford to lose Kauai’s seabirds to mongoose. Rapid response efforts like those by the Kauai Invasive Species Committee require additional support.”

“We know that prevention is the most cost effective method of protecting Hawaii from invasive pests, but we still need to be able to detect pests early and respond quickly to eradicate a pest before it spreads, and the public can play a major role in early detection, said Michael Buck, DLNR-Forestry Administrator.

The public’s help is requested in reporting mongoose sightings on Kauai to the Kauai Invasive Species Committee at (808) 246-0684, or to the DLNR-Forestry office at (808) 274-3433.

The public can also help by voicing support for the \$5 million supplemental budget request for a comprehensive invasive species program statewide.

Mongoose were introduced to Hawaii in 1883 in an effort to control the growing population of introduced rats that were feeding on sugar cane. Although mongooses occasionally fed on rats, the effect on rat population was minimal. Mongooses instead began feeding on ground nesting seabirds, waterbirds and our state bird, the nene.

Many instances of mongooses preying on eggs, fledglings, and adults of native Hawaiian birds have been recorded. Mongooses have also been documented as predators of sea turtle eggs and hatchlings.

Mongoose are generalist feeders that prey on birds, insects, plants and other small mammals. They are responsible for numerous extinctions of birds, reptiles and amphibians on many islands where they were introduced, including Puerto Rico, Jamaica, and Mauritius.

Mongoose can also carry and spread leptospirosis, a potentially lethal bacteria that can infect humans. For more information on mongooses in Hawaii, visit

<http://www.hawaii.gov/dlnr/Aliens2.html>

<http://www.susanscott.net/Oceanwatch2002/apr19-02.html>

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