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Proceedings of the Vertebrate Pest Conference

Title

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Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2795h29d>

Journal

Proceedings of the Vertebrate Pest Conference, 26(26)

ISSN

0507-6773

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Publication Date

2014

DOI

10.5070/V426110614

Opening Remarks – Twenty-Sixth Vertebrate Pest Conference

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Proc. 26th Vertebr. Pest Conf. (R. M. Timm and J. M. O'Brien, Eds.)

Published at Univ. of Calif., Davis. 2014. p. 1.

Aloha. As Chairperson of the Vertebrate Pest Council, I am pleased to welcome you to Hawaii, to the Hilton Waikoloa Village, and to the 26th Vertebrate Pest Conference. I know you will have a great time, learn a lot, and interact with acquaintances both old and new.

Traditionally this Conference has been held in California, but the Council after some deliberation decided to break tradition and hold this the 26th Conference in Hawaii. The problems experienced with invasive vertebrates here made Hawaii the ideal location to focus on these issues. In that regard, be sure to check your program for the three special symposia – Invasive Vertebrates, Invasive Rodents, and Feral Cats. I am sure you will find them interesting.

Yesterday we started the Conference with a great field trip (if you missed it, I'm sorry). We explored the effects of Mouflon sheep on Palila, a honeycreeper; invasive rodent impacts on island ecosystems; the role of feral pigs increasing mosquito populations, avian pox and malaria; and endangered birds. The return trip to Waikoloa Village took longer than expected due to rain – but we were on the east side of the island, so that *is* normal. As a bonus though, we had warm malassadas (Portuguese donuts) to tide us over on our trip back!

We have 117 papers to be presented, the most ever for our Conference. In addition, there are 6 commercial displays and 20 posters. More than 240 individuals have pre-registered, coming from 15 countries – Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Puerto Rico, Reunion, Saudi Arabia, United Kingdom, and the United States. This is truly an international conference.

As always, a lot of effort goes into organizing this Conference. At this time, I would like to recognize the members of the Organizing Committee members for their tremendous work. They are: John Eisemann, *Program Chair*; Ambur Shrum and Bob Timm, *Registration*, Kathy Fagerstone, *Field Trip*; Roger Baldwin, *Commercial Displays*; Rex Baker, *Continuing Education*; Dirk Van Vuren, *Publicity*; Charlie Crabb, *Local Arrangements and Sponsors*; Stella McMillan, *Posters and Student Scholarships*, and Bob Timm, *Proceedings*. There are of course many more people who make this Conference possible, but in the interest of time, I would like to say Mahalo (thank you) to all of you.

If you have time before and or after the Conference, we hope you will take the opportunity to explore the island. You will not be disappointed. Again, welcome to the Conference.

Mahalo.