

Researchers release results of statewide survey of snail, slug invasions in Hawai'i

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Hawai'i's ongoing problem with invasive species such as snails and slugs, including their serious impact on plant nurseries and other aspects of the local horticultural industry, has been investigated and documented by four University of Hawai'i at Mānoa researchers. It is the first documented baseline compilation of the distributions of all snail and slug species associated with the horticultural industry throughout the Hawaiian Islands.

In an October-December 2008 article in the *International Journal of Pest Management*, snail/slug biologists Robert H. Cowie, Kenneth A. Hayes, Chuong T. Tran and Wallace M. Meyer III of the UH Center for Conservation Research and Training (CCRT) expressed concern about the local horticultural industry's role in inadvertently introducing a number of alien species. CCRT is a research program within the Pacific Biosciences Research Center at UH Mānoa.

Funded by grants from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the survey of 40 nurseries, botanical gardens and other plant-based facilities took place on six of the Hawaiian Islands. It was determined that most of the unwanted species were probably first brought into Oahu, and then spread to the neighbor islands.

"We found alien snails and slugs in all 40 nurseries in our survey," said Cowie, chair of the Ecology, Evolution and Conservation Biology graduate program at UHM. "In total, we found 29 alien species, including five that had never been reported in Hawai'i before. We also

found many species on particular islands on which they had never been reported before, and learned that alien snails were even infesting plants due to be sent to Kahoolawe as part of the restoration effort on that island."

Based on their findings, the researchers suggest the need for a greater awareness of these species within the nursery industry, and among plant quarantine officials and monitoring agencies, such as the state Department of Agriculture and USDA, to prevent further agricultural, horticultural and environmental impacts.

Source: University of Hawaii at Manoa

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