

Haleakala Rabbits Declared Eradicated (For Now)

As of May 1991, the rabbit outbreak at Haleakala NP (see *Park Science* 11(1):21) is believed to be under control. A total of 97 rabbits were removed between August 1990 and March 1991, primarily by snaring. The population is believed to have originated in October 1989 with the release of six pet rabbits. It was discovered in July 1990, at which time it occupied 60 acres. I would state the lessons learned from this experience as follows:

1. There is an abundance of pet rabbits on the island of Maui. Many pet owners are irresponsible (and break the law), based on the dozens of reported instances of loose rabbits during the past year. Much potential exists for recurring outbreaks of rabbits on Maui unless preventive steps are taken.

2. Rabbits usually occupy small home ranges and are very likely to escape detection in the early stages of population buildup.

3. Haleakala NP has apparently succeeded in eradicating this rabbit infestation. Factors contributing to this success included: (a) an unambiguous mandate

from the park superintendent, a strong commitment by many individuals, and exceptional cooperation among park personnel to prevent permanent establishment of rabbits; (b) availability of personnel experienced in snaring and other feral animal control and monitoring techniques; (c) a group of domestic rabbits that were, at least initially, more naive and vulnerable to a control program than their wild counterparts (evidenced by lack of diurnal tendencies and significant burrowing); (d) the flexibility of the park to act promptly with considerable attention to detail (high density of snaring network, rigorous monitoring, careful media relations) and to expedite environmental impact assessments.

4. Snaring was the most effective control method, largely because the rabbits followed discrete (also discreet) paths amongst the dense shrub/grass vegetation. Snaring became much less efficient as rabbit density became sparse and individual rabbits became snare shy. If snaring had not worked there were no other obviously good options for control.

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