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### Hawaiian species go extinct

#### 52 species lost from islands in last 20 years

By Ron Staton, Associated Press

April 24, 2004

HONOLULU — Nearly half of the 114 species that have become extinct in the first 20 years of the federal Endangered Species Act were in Hawaii, according to a new report by an advocacy group.

"The number is shocking and indicates a grave failure in federal management of the nation's most powerful environmental law," said a report by the Center for Biological Diversity. A co-author of the report said that with so many unique species, Hawaii faces the worst problem in the country.

The 52 species lost from the islands include the large Kauai thrush, which once was the most common bird on the island; the Molokai thrush, which was endemic to Molokai, and 11 species of Oahu tree snails.

Only 19 percent of the extinctions involved species on the endangered list, showing that the 1973 law is working — at least for species that make the list, said Kieran Suckling, the center's executive director and a co-author of the report.

"But species known to be endangered were stuck in bureaucratic delay and went extinct before they had a chance to be listed," Suckling said. "That should never have happened."

Nearly all the species could have been saved if the Endangered Species Act had been properly managed, fully funded and "shielded from political pressure," he said. "Instead they were sacrificed to bureaucratic inertia, political meddling, and lack of leadership."

The report lays much of the blame on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

"Listing delays and extinctions have plagued the Fish and Wildlife Service for 30 years, but the Bush administration has pushed the crisis to an unprecedented level," said Brian Nowicki, another co-author of the report.

The Bush administration has placed an average of only nine species on the list per year, while the Clinton administration averaged 65 listings per year, Nowicki said.

The Fish and Wildlife Service denied "the inflammatory claim" and challenged the accuracy of the report. It said recovery of species is a long process and noted that when the act was passed in 1973 some species already were beyond recovery. The agency also noted that fish and wildlife habitat has been declining for decades because of urbanization.

Hawaii is unique because state law requires that every species placed on the list is automatically added to a state list, said Michael Buck, administrator of the Forestry and Wildlife division of the state Department of Land and Natural Resources, which works in partnership with the Fish and Wildlife Service.

He acknowledged, however, that "just getting something on the list does not save endangered species." The No. 1 issue for Hawaii, Buck said, is "coming up with resources and public support."

California was the next highest state in the report with 11 extinctions. Guam had eight, while Alabama and Texas each had seven.

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Fifteen of Hawaii's extinct species were terrestrial snails, 13 each were flowering plants and insects, eight were birds and three were moths.

Birds accounted for all but two of the extinctions on the U.S. territory of Guam, where the bird population already had been devastated by the brown tree snake and other predators.

The four-angled pelea, a flowering plant endemic to Kauai, is an example of a species being lost by inaction, Suckling said.

The Fish and Wildlife Service became aware it was endangered in 1975 when the Smithsonian petitioned to have it listed, he said. The following year, the agency said it would propose adding it to the list, but when nothing happened, the Smithsonian re-petitioned in 1978, he said.

In 1980, the Fish and Wildlife Service agreed the plant was endangered but put it on the candidate list, Suckling said. In 1994, the agency listed it as endangered, but it had become extinct in 1991, he said.

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