

The Challenges of Charismatic Invasive Species

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Invasive species are one of the leading threats to biodiversity, cause billions of dollars annually in losses and management expenses, and threaten human health and safety. Control of invasive populations requires comprehensive management strategies for population maintenance or attempted eradication. This daunting task for natural resource managers is further complicated when the invasive species is charismatic and admired by the local community. In this talk, I will discuss my research of the ecology and management of populations of two charismatic invasive species – rhesus macaques (*Macaca mulatta*) in central Florida and rose-ringed parakeets (*Psittacula krameri*) on the island of Kaua'i.

Rhesus macaques were introduced to central Florida in the 1930s. My colleagues and I documented this population to be threatening native bird populations, carrying a potentially lethal zoonotic virus, and rapidly growing in population size. Yet, efforts to reduce the population size have been consistently halted by public sentiment. As this population continues to grow, managers must navigate which population management strategies are sustainable, both ecologically and socially.

Rose-ringed parakeets were introduced to the island of Kaua'i in the 1960s. While the population remained relatively small for several decades, it is now estimated in excess of 10,000 individuals and growing at a rate of ~20% annually. These birds are causing extensive agricultural losses by foraging on fruit and seed crops. They congregate nightly to roost in urban areas, where the excessive noise and droppings are damaging the tourism industry. Wildlife managers have been removing large number of rose-ringed parakeets from agricultural areas, yet the population continues to grow and expand. My colleagues and I are now testing methods to reduce the population size of rose-ringed parakeets, including evaluating whether lethal control of this beautiful bird is feasible in urban areas.