

Conserving native island wildlife, such as tree snails, is an important conservation priority in the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy for the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

From Vision to On-the-Ground Action

The comprehensive wildlife conservation strategy for the Northern Mariana Islands uses an “islands framework.” Each of the islands represents its own ecosystem, with its own capacity to support native wildlife, based on its size, the extent and condition of native forest cover, impacts of human population in both the marine and terrestrial environments, frequency of natural disasters (typhoons and volcanic eruptions), and the presence of feral animals. Conservation actions were developed that could be applied to individual island ecosystems to further the conservation of species of special conservation need.

Protecting Imperiled Land, Water, and Wildlife

Conserving Native Tree Snails on Sarigan Island

Conserving native island wildlife, such as tree snails, is an important conservation priority in the Comprehensive Wildlife

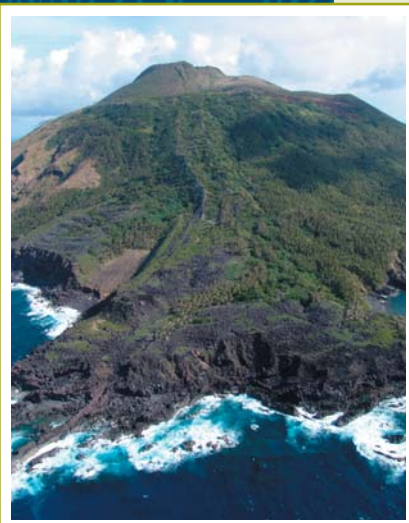
Conservation Strategy of the Northern Mariana Islands. Humped tree snails were abundant on the island of Sarigan in 1992. Sarigan has been negatively impacted from feral goats and pigs consuming understory vegetation, threatening forest regeneration. In response, all feral animals were removed in the late 1990s and the forest has since begun to recover. The conservation strategy prioritized determining whether healthy Humped tree snail populations still exist. A State Wildlife Grants funded expedition in 2006 revealed that native forests on Sarigan support the healthiest tree snail populations known in the Mariana

Islands. Humped tree snails were found in the highest densities known for the species. In addition, seven new species of ground-dwelling snails were discovered on Sarigan, making a diverse array of 22 snail species. With the island of Sarigan rapidly recovering from the effects of feral animal browsing, it is imperative that conservation measures be taken to prevent the introduction of snail predators, such as non-native flatworms. Such efforts will conserve Sarigan’s diverse wildlife and vital natural areas for future generations.

Gathering Information to Take Action

Searching for Unique Tree Snails on Aguiguan Island

Land snails in tropical Pacific islands are extremely diverse and many are found nowhere else, but they are rapidly disappearing. The Northern Marianas’ conservation strategy prioritized visiting Aguiguan Island to determine whether Langford’s and humped tree snails still exist on the island. Previous surveys in the early 1990s had found the humped



Sarigan Island/Curt Kessler

tree snail throughout the Mariana Islands, while the Langford's tree snail was known to live exclusively on the tiny, remote island of Aguiguan. With State Wildlife Grants funding, a University of Guam researcher surveyed the island in 2006, but found no living Langford's tree snails and found evidence that the tree snails had died long before. A non-native, predatory flatworm is likely the cause for the disappearance of this tree snail, underscoring the need to prevent non-native, invasive wildlife from pushing out native wildlife.

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Humped tree snail/Gayle Martin, CNMI Division of Fish and Wildlife

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Aguiguan Island/Fred Amidon