

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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MONA ISLAND REPTILES PROPOSED AS THREATENED

Three species of reptiles, known to occur only on tiny Mona Island, Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, have been proposed for listing as threatened species Keith M. Schreiner, Associate Director of the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, announced today.

The proposal, published in the May 26, 1977, Federal Register, also includes a determination of critical habitat for the species. Interested persons have until August 24, 1977, to comment on the proposal.

Development could destroy key areas, such as sandy beaches, which are required for nesting and feeding of the native reptiles, particularly the Mona ground iguana. In addition, the large iguana and Mona boa could become subject to harassment because of their size; most of the large Caribbean iguanas and boas have been extensively hunted throughout the Caribbean Islands and this has contributed to their serious decline.

The native Mona reptiles are subject to an additional threat to their continued survival--the introduced mammals, chiefly pigs, rats, cats, and goats, that destroy vegetation as well as eggs, young, and occasionally, adults, of the Mona reptiles. Unless these predators and competitors are controlled, the unique Mona reptiles may continue to decline even without major new development.

In addition to the three reptiles recently proposed, two other endangered animals, the hawksbill sea turtle and the yellow-shouldered blackbird, occur on Mona or use its beaches extensively. By proposing the Mona boa, the Mona ground iguana, and the Mona blind snake as "threatened," the Service seeks to recognize the unique character and fragile nature of the fauna of Mona.

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