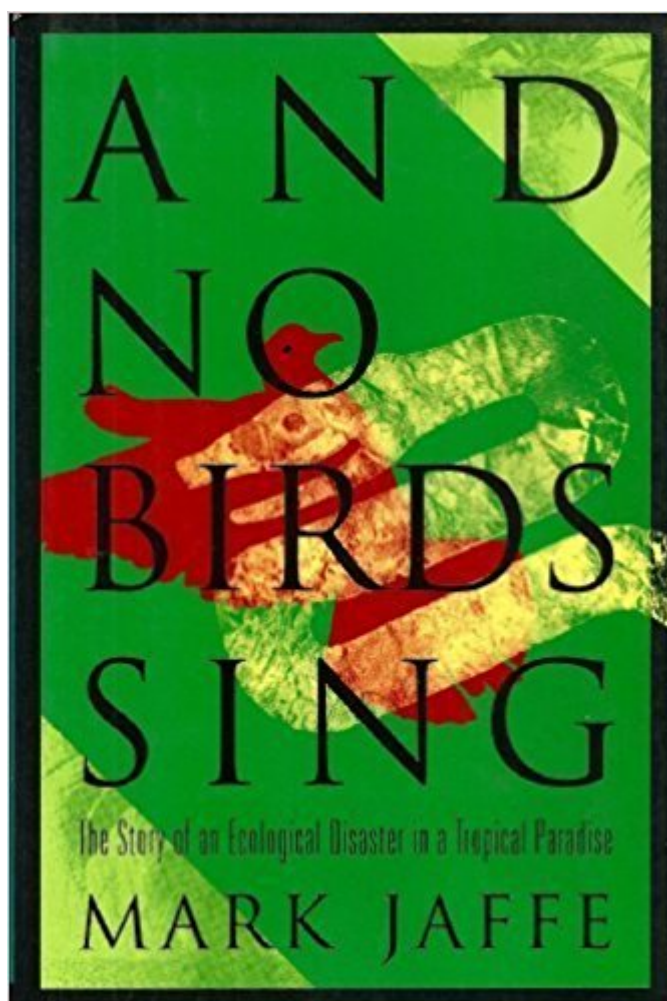


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And No Birds Sing: The Story Of An Ecological Disaster In A Tropical Paradise



Synopsis

A fascinating investigation into the reasons behind the extinction of birds on Guam becomes a cautionary environmental detective story as scientists discover that an imported snake with no natural enemies has decimated the island's birds. 15,000 first printing.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In the 1960s Guam's bird population began to plummet; by the '70s, American zoos had begun a captive breeding program to save some species from extinction. Jaffe, the environmental correspondent for the Philadelphia Inquirer, reported on the program at the Philadelphia Zoo and followed the story to Guam. His is a chilling environmental detective story and an involving tale of scientific fieldwork. During the '80s, biologists Bob Beck and Julie Savidge discovered the cause of the birds' decline--predation by a brown tree snake that had been brought to Guam from the South Pacific after WW II. Snake expert Tom Fritts, arriving in Guam to study this predator, tracked snakes all over the island, finding possibly 12,000 per square mile. In legions the snake, *Boiga irregularis*, caused power outages and attacked people, puppies and just about every form of life. In 1992 Congress passed a bill supporting a project aimed at reviving the bird populations on Guam. Other islands in the Pacific, including Hawaii, have been alerted to the dangers posed by the brown snake. Photos. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Jaffe, the environmental reporter for the Philadelphia Inquirer, has written a gripping ecological

thriller about the sudden and almost complete disappearance of birds on the island of Guam. During the 1960s, game wardens noticed declining bird populations on the island. By the late 1970s many of Guam's forests were eerily silent; bird life had vanished. Scientists soon realized that if this environmental murder mystery wasn't solved, and solved quickly, a true ecological disaster would result. This well-researched and exciting book describes the valiant efforts made to capture and save the remaining birds and to discover the identity of the perpetrator: a tree snake brought to Guam after World War II that without natural predators had achieved a density of perhaps 12,000 snakes per square mile! The intriguing story line and Jaffe's clear prose make concepts such as island biogeography and population genetics palatable to the lay reader. Highly recommended for academic and public libraries.- Lynn C. Badger, Univ. of Florida Lib., GainesvilleCopyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc.

This account of efforts to understand and deal with threatened bird extinctions on Guam is a gem of a book. The paperback's blurbs focused on Jaffe's "ecological detective thriller." But I found most compelling the seamlessness of the book's widely-informed joined elements -- including biographical and political sketches of great pith, accessible population biology, and a good-scientists-versus-stupid-and-finally-thwarted-others story. The ecological culprit was not some natural substance, and not even one of homo sapiens' products (the book's index lists only three references to DDT). Nor was he us. But he was (and is) one of our fellows -- a little predator incredibly well adapted to feeding on birds' eggs. After the paucity and untimeliness of the governmental response to the Guamanian situation had sunk into my consciousness, it seemed ironic that the book ends with the United States Air Force establishing a 50-acre "environmental reclamation experiment" on Guam which Jaffe hopes will provide the setting for much more effective research on the culprit. Like *The Lord of the Flies* ends with her majesty's warship rescuing from themselves the band of island-stranded, warring boys.

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