

that the household pain reliever was deadly to the brown tree snakes, they've been trying to figure out how to get it to where many of the serpents live in the canopies of the island's forests, according to a report in *Stars & Stripes*. The Tylenol®-loaded mice are attached to two pieces of cardboard joined by paper streamers that snake exterminators hope will catch on tree branches, providing deadly snacks for snakes at those heights, according to the *Stripes* report.

The aerial attack on the tree snakes is designed to augment current trapping systems, which are placed around ports and airports to prevent the snakes from hitching rides to other Pacific islands such as Hawaii and causing the same ecological nightmares they've been responsible for on Guam.

"The brown tree snake traps that you see around Guam are actually the most effective trap for catching snakes in the world," USDA Assistant State Director Dan Vice told *Guam Newswatch*. "Most of the traps that people see however are sitting on a fence or on a port. And they're targeting the few snakes that might get to that fence."

So the mouse bombs have begun falling on the jungle forests, where the USDA says there can be as many as 20 brown tree snakes per acre, one of the highest snake densities recorded anywhere in the world. The USDA says brown tree snakes have wiped out Guam's native populations of forest birds since being accidentally introduced to the island half a century ago, probably after they stowed away on a ship or plane from their native range in Australia, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. And because there are no native predators on Guam, officials say poisoning the snakes is the only way to control the population. The snakes take an economic toll, too, becoming entangled in overhead electrical wires and causing power outages that cost the island millions of dollars in repairs and lost work.

If the current experiment works – scientists will know because they're also packing the dead mice with radio transmitters for the snakes to ingest – death from above will be coming for snakes at the island's Anderson Air Base next year, according to *Guam Newswatch*. Success there could see the program expand island-wide. (Source: *Guam Newswatch.com* 9/7/10)

SeaWorld Receives 40 Oil-impacted Turtles from Audubon Zoo - SeaWorld Orlando's Animal Rescue and Rehabilitation Center is coming to the rescue of 40 New Orleans green sea turtles (*Chelonia mydas*) affected by the Gulf oil spill. Oil was cleaned off of the turtles at Audubon Nature Institute in New Orleans and SeaWorld's experts plan to provide daily care for the turtles before reintroducing them into the wild.

SeaWorld has received 77 Gulf disaster-impacted turtles since June, and the rehabilitation center has worked with state experts to release 62 of them in into Florida's waters. (Source: *ABC ActionNews.com* 9/9/10 By Krystal Roberts)

And in a related story...

Deepwater Doom: Extinction Threat for World's Smallest Sea Horse - The Gulf of Mexico oil spill this year and subsequent cleanup efforts could drive the world's smallest sea horse into extinction, warns the Zoological Society of London and its marine conservation organization Project Seahorse (<http://www.zsl.org/conservation/regions/asia/project-seahorse/>).

The tiny dwarf sea horse (*Hippocampus zosterae*), which grows to a maximum length of 2.5 centimeters, can be found only in the ocean waters off the Gulf Coast.

"All of the sea horse populations in the area will be affected, but the dwarf sea horse is at greatest risk of extinction because much of its habitat has been devastated by the spill," Project Seahorse director Amanda Vincent said. According to Project Seahorse, the dwarf sea horse is particularly vulnerable due to its small size, limited habitat, inability to migrate great distances, and low birth rate. The fish also mate for life, so the loss of even one breeding parent is doubly dangerous to the species' long-term reproductive health. The Deepwater oil spill occurred during the sea horses' primary breeding time.

Another problem is that the dwarf sea horse, unlike its cousin sea horse species, often lives close to

the ocean surface in floating mats of sea grass. Not only did spilled oil accumulate in these mats, BP burned many of them to prevent them from carrying oil onto the shore. According to Project Seahorse's press release, "The burning of the mats has killed many marine animals while depriving others of their habitat and exposing them to further toxicity. Sea grass is vital to the long-term health of coastal ecosystems, sheltering marine animals, acting as fish nurseries, improving water quality and preventing erosion."

Meanwhile, Project Seahorse experts also express fear that the dispersants used to treat the oil spill will add further toxicity to the dwarf sea horse's habitat.

Project Seahorse is calling on BP to use booms and skimming to remove the remaining oil in the Gulf. The method is more labor-intensive, but the group says it will cause less environmental damage to the species in the region.

Dwarf sea horses, also known as "pixies," are pricey acquisitions for aquarium enthusiasts. One site, Seahorse.com, has them listed for \$75 each and warns customers that they are "very delicate" and "for experts only." (Source: *Scientific American.com* 9/8/10 by John Platt)

\$300,000 Needed to Help Save Last of Javan Rhinos - An international partnership is seeking to raise \$300,000 in a race against the clock to ensure the survival of the last estimated 48 Javan rhinoceroses in Indonesia — all found within Ujung Kulon National Park in Banten.

Operation Javan Rhino started on 21 June and is an initiative of the International Rhino Foundation and Indonesian Rhino Foundation (YABI). Its goal is to create 4,000 hectares of expanded habitat to encourage population growth in the national park, a rare patch of wilderness on the western tip of one of the world's most densely populated island. The project is supported by the Ministry of Forestry, which allocated land for it inside the national park.

However, all the improvements needed for the expanded habitat, specifically to help protect the species from the threat of extinction by a single natural disaster or introduced disease, will be shouldered by the nongovernmental organizations.

"Having all the eggs in one basket isn't a good thing for any species," Susie Ellis, executive director of the International Rhino Foundation, told the *Jakarta Globe*.

"With the help of the Rhino Foundation of Indonesia, the Worldwide Fund for Nature, Save the Rhino and the Indonesian government, we have committed to improving the available habitat for Javan rhinos to increase and spread out the population."

Widodo Ramono, executive director of YABI, told the *Globe* that \$650,000 was needed for the two-year project, with \$350,000 so far having been secured from the NGOs' own resources. "This funding is all purely coming from the NGOs; there is no special allocation from the government," he said. "But they have already provided the land and the human resources, so everybody is doing their bit."



(Photo: OracleThinkQuest.com)

Widodo said it would take two years to physically prepare the rhinos' habitat near Mount Honje. The money for the project will be used to improve water and food sources, build guard posts and electric fencing, construct patrol routes and hire rangers to patrol the area.

Additionally, 60 camera traps donated by the Aspinall Foundation in January 2010 will be used to gather data about how many rhinos remain in Ujung Kulon. Adhi Rachmat Hariyadi, site manager for WWF Indonesia's project in the park, said the cameras were crucial to keeping track of the rhino population. "So far, from the videos we have analyzed, we've identified 27 individual rhinos and extrapolated a maximum of 47 animals in the park, which still needs to be confirmed by surveys on the ground," he said. (Source: *JakartaGlobe.com*)



2010. "Conservation/Legislative Update: Deepwater Doom: Extinction Threat for World's Smallest Sea Horse." *Animal keepers' forum* 37(10), 458-459.

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