

**Biological Control of the Cycad  
Aulacaspis Scale, *Aulacaspis  
yasumatsui***

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## 1 Abstract - Cave

## 2 Introduction - Cave

## 3 Economic impact of CAS - Cave and Wright

## 4 Ecological impact of CAS - Moore

Ecological impact of CAS invasions varies greatly with location, largely due to differences in characteristics of host plant populations, climate, and presence of natural enemies. When CAS arrived in Florida (1995) and Hawaii (1998), it became a pest of ornamental cycads which could be protected using a combination of pesticide applications and biological control. However, when CAS arrived in Guam (2003), it rapidly spread from *Cycas revoluta* and *Cycas micronesica* planted as ornamentals to the wild *Cycas micronesica* population, causing an uncontrolled island-wide outbreak.

***C. micronesica* taxonomy** *Cycas micronesica* K. D. Hill 1994 is endemic to Micronesia currently growing on Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, the Yap Islands, and the Palau Islands. Prior to its description of a new species (Hill 1994), it was identified as *C. rumphii* or *C. circinalis*.

**Pre-invasion status of *C. micronesica*** Based on an island-wide census of Guam's trees performed by the U. S. Forest Service in 2002, a year before arrival of CAS, *C. micronesica* was the most abundant tree in Guam's forests Donnegon et al. 2004. *C. micronesica* is endemic to Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Yap and Palau where it evolved tolerance to local abiotic threats such as typhoons and draught.

In 2006, *C. micronesica* was placed on the Red List of Threatened Species and in 2015 this plant was added to the US Endangered and Threatened Species List.

### **First detection and invasive pathway for arrival of *A. yasumatsui* on**

**Guam** Arrival on of CAS on Guam was predicted: on February 13 2000 T. E. Marler published an article in the Gardening section of the Pacific Daily News entitled *Looking out for scale insects* (Haynes and T. E. Marler 2005). Alarmed by establishment of CAS in Hawaii, Marler warned of pending arrival on Guam and pleaded for a ban cycad imports to the island.

CAS was first detected in the Tumon Beach hotel area of Guam near the end of 2003 on *C. micronesica* and *C. revoluta* growing as ornamental plants at two hotels. In those days, almost every hotel had cycad displays near their entrances.

The invasion pathway which was travelled by CAS on its way to Guam is unknown. It is likely that this pest arrived via importation of infested cycads from Hawaii, Florida or elsewhere. However, there are is no evidence that this occurred: there are no records of legal cycad importation to Guam in the two years prior to detection of CAS on the island (R. Campbell, Guam Plant Inspection Facility, personal communication).

An intriguing alternative is that CAS arrived on Guam as crawlers. For several years prior to arrival, there was an active infestation of CAS on *C. revoluta* growing in an outdoor garden at the Honolulu International Airport located within a few hundred meters of where passengers boarded a daily 7.5 hour flight to Guam. Possibly, crawlers were carried on clothing of passengers visiting this garden or airborne scale crawlers may have been blown into cargo holds, wheel wells, or other spaces on Guam-bound aircraft. The location of initial CAS detection sites in Tumon Bay is only about 1 km downwind of the Guam International Airport.

**Trajectory of the Guam CAS infestation and impact on the *C. micronesica* population** The Guam CAS outbreak was severe and rapid (Table 1) and it has been well documented by Marler and others. Within 12 years, *C. micronesica* went from being the most abundant tree in Guam's forests to being listed as a under the U.S. Endangered Species act. There is a consensus among biologists working on this problem that CAS is the major driver of this catastrophe, although other recently arrived invasive species and even some native species are also involved (Moore et al. 2013).

Prior to introduction of *Rhyzobius lophanthae* as a biological control agent in 2005, untreated, CAS-infested *C. micronesica* typically died within a year. Several overlapping generations of CAS totally encrusted all leaves within a few months. Plant mortality was caused by a combination of nutrient removal by CAS sap feeding plus blockage of photosynthesis. Muniappan et al. 2012 suggest that toxic effects of CAS saliva may also be involved in cycad mortality.

Table 1: Timeline for the Guam CAS infestation.

2000	T. E. Marler predicts of arrival of CAS on Guam in a Pacific Daily News article (Haynes and T. E. Marler <a href="#">2005</a> ) in response to detection of this pest in Florida during 1996 (Howard et al. <a href="#">1999</a> ) and Hawaii during 1998 (Heu, Chun, and Nagamine <a href="#">2003</a> )
2002	An initial US Forest Service survey indicates that <i>C. micronesica</i> is Guam’s most abundant tree (with stem diameter greater than 5 inches) and estimates a population size of 1,571,556 (Donnegon et al. <a href="#">2004</a> )
2003	CAS first detected on ornamental <i>Cycas revoluta</i> and <i>C. micronesica</i> at hotels in Tumon Bay
2006	<i>C. micronesica</i> added to the IUCN Red List of Endangered and Threatened Species
2013	A second US Forest Service survey ranks <i>C. micronesica</i> , misidentified in the report as <i>C. circinalis</i> , is Guam’s xxrd most abundant tree (with stem diameter greater than 5 inches) and estimates a population size of n,nnn,nnn (Lazaro et al. <a href="#">2020</a> )
2015	<i>C. micronesica</i> listed as a threatened species under the US Endangered Species Act (United States Government <a href="#">2015</a> )

**Current status of the Guam *C. micronesica* population** 96% mortality (T. E. Marler and Krishnapillai [2020](#))

### **Impact of CAS on the Guam *C. micronesica* population**

**Impact of CAS on *C. micronesica* individuals** Increased threat of island endemic tree’s extirpation via invasion-induced decline of intrinsic resistance to recurring tropical cyclones

Impacts to plants infested with CAS linger after the scale insects have been killed by insecticides or biocontrol agents. Scale covers block photosynthesis (Tang et al. [2005](#)).

Plants which have recovered from CAS infestation are structurally weak-end and are susceptible to typhoon damage (T. Marler [2013](#)).

Plants which have recovered from CAS infestation are less able to reproduce (T. Marler and Terry [2021](#)), (T. Marler and Terry [2021](#)),

Saliva toxicity (Muniappan et al. [2012](#)).

Seeds from infested plants are deficient in nonstructural carbohydrates (T. E. Marler and Cruz [2019](#)) and germination rates are much lower 43% to 7%.

**Cascading impacts of CAS** Effects on soil T. E. Marler and Calonje [2020](#)  
Haynes and T. E. Marler [2005](#)

## 5 Natural enemies of CAS - Cave

## 6 Classical biological control

### 6.1 Florida - Cave

### 6.2 Hawaii - Wright

### 6.3 Guam - Moore

#### 6.3.1 *Rhyzobius lophanthae*

About 100 adults of *Rhyzobius lophanthae* were field collected on Maui and imported to Guam during November 2004. This coccinellid was originally introduced to California from Australia in 1892 and to Hawaii from California in 1894. It was observed feeding voraciously on CAS shortly after arrival of this new pest in Hawaii.

*R. lophanthae* was previously introduced to Guam on two separate occasions under various synonyms: *R. satelles* Blackburn, *Lindorus lophanthae* (Blaisdell), and *R. pulchellus* Montrouzier (Nafus and Schreiner [1989](#)). In 1925 and 1926 *Rhyzobius satelles* was imported to Guam from California to control the coconut scale, *Aspidiotus destructor* Signoret. However, attempts at field establishment failed.

Nafus and Schreiner 1989 also reported:

In 1971, *Rhyzobius satelles* Blackburn (as *R. pulchellus* Montrouzier) was introduced to Guam from New Caledonia to aid in the control of coconut scales and citrus scales. A single specimen of *R. satelles* was recovered in 1978, indicating establishment. The beetle, however, is very uncommon; an intensive survey of coconut insects in 1984 yielded no specimens.

The beetles from Maui were reared on scale-infested *C. micronesica* cuttings placed in a large screened camping tent set up in a laboratory. Adult offspring were collected for field release by aspirating them from the walls of the tent into plastic vials. Field releases were initiated on February 16 2005 at the Guam National Wildlife Refuge at Ritidian Point. The beetles established readily. By July 7 2005 high densities on adults were observed on cycads anywhere within a 1 km radius of the release site. Establishment and dispersion of the beetles were monitored using yellow sticky traps deployed between June 2005 and May 2006. Unexpectedly, we were also able to monitor CAS crawlers and adult males using these traps (Fig. 1) (Moore 2017). Following establishment of *R. lophanthae* at Ritidian Point, laboratory-reared and field-collected beetles were released at about 30 other sites throughout Guam.



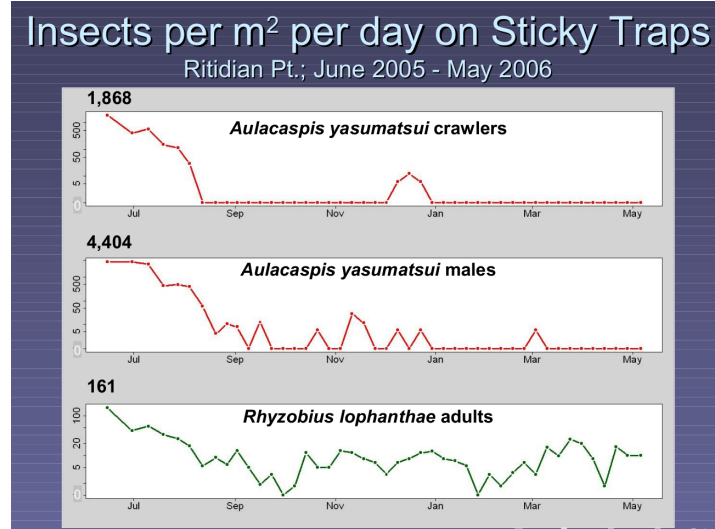


Figure 1: Note that the y axes are logarithmic and are scaled independently.

By about 2010, *R. lophanthae* larvae or adults could be found on almost every CAS-infested cycad on Guam, preventing CAS from killing mature cycads. By 2010, about 90% of wild cycads had been killed on Guam (REF). Unfortunately, the *C. micronesica* population is not recovering because almost all seeds and seedlings are being killed by CAS and other causes (REF). T. Marler, Miller, and Moore [2013](#) showed that *R. lophanthae* predation of CAS is significantly reduced close to the ground and suggest that this may partially account for failure of the beetle to protect CAS seedlings. They also suggested:

The causes of reduced scale predation by *R. lophanthae* near the ground are unknown, but a parasitoid biological control agent may not exhibit these same limitations. Furthermore, because a parasitoid would be much smaller than *R. lophanthae*, it would likely be better able to access scale infestations within cracks and crevices on *C. micronesica* and *C. revoluta* trees.

#### **6.3.2 *Coccobius fulvus***

#### **6.3.3 *Aphytis lignanensis***

#### **6.3.4 *Arrhenophagus***

Ask Mark, Janis about Bernarr's report on fortuitous introduction of CAS parasitoids.

Ask Reddy about his report.

Ask Arnold Harra.

### **6.4 Elsewhere - Cave**

## **7 Prospects for future action - Cave, Wright, and Moore**

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