



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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FERAL PIGS AND GOATS TAKE PLACE OF WILDLIFE ON CARIBBEAN ISLAND

Several thousand feral goats and pigs -- the wild descendants of animals that were abandoned when old plantations failed -- are to be the subjects of a wildlife management program now inaugurated on Mona Island, 45 miles West of Puerto Rico in the Caribbean Sea, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service reported today.

Like some other Caribbean Islands, small bean-shaped Mona Island has very little natural wildlife. Nearby Puerto Rico has practically no animals which the people can hunt. To supply hunting for Puerto Ricans, the wild pigs and goats of Mona Island are henceforth to be termed "wildlife" and managed just the way deer and other game animals are managed in mainland forests. The feral pigs and goats seem very well adapted to the six miles by five, semi-arid island.

Mona Island has a climate and vegetation very similar to Arizona's. The southeastern corner has a low coastal plain covered with bean-bearing trees similar to the acacia. It is in this portion that most of the wild pigs live. The rest of Mona Island rises abruptly from the sea to form a plateau about 100 feet above sea level. This plateau, with its brush and cactus, supports most of the island's goats.

The limestone rock of the island is honeycombed with one of the most extensive cave systems in the world. It is possible to go from one end of the island to the other through these caves. Some of the caves are filled with bat guano and goat droppings. The goats come down into the caves for protection from the weather, to get drinks from puddles that form under dripping stalactites, and to have their kids.

The Mona Island "wildlife" project is made possible with the aid of Federal funds under the Pittman-Robertson wildlife restoration act. From Congressional appropriations for Federal Aid to Wildlife Restoration, \$7,500 was apportioned this year to Puerto Rico to use in such P-R projects. Other species selected for study and management on Mona Island include the white-crowned pigeon and the rare rock iguana -- a large edible lizard ranging from 18 to 50 inches in length.

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