

**Joint Statement of**  
**Defenders of Wildlife, Great Lakes United, Humane Society International,**  
**The Humane Society of the United States, International Fund for Animal Welfare,**  
**National Audubon Society, National Environmental Coalition on Invasive Species,**  
**Natural Areas Association, National Wildlife Refuge Association,**  
**The Nature Conservancy, and Union of Concerned Scientists**

**For the**  
**Subcommittee on Insular Affairs, Oceans and Wildlife**  
**House Natural Resources Committee**  
**April 23, 2009**

**In Support of H.R. 669, the Nonnative Wildlife Invasion Prevention Act**

Our organizations, representing millions of constituents across the country, come together in support of H.R. 669, the Nonnative Wildlife Invasion Prevention Act. We applaud Congresswoman Madeleine Bordallo for her leadership in introducing this bill, and express our appreciation to the 25 current co-sponsors.

H.R. 669 is urgently needed because hundreds of millions of nonnative wild animals are imported and traded in the United States every year, with little oversight, despite potential harm to the economy, the environment, public health and safety, and animal welfare. Under the current Lacey Act process, a species can be declared “injurious,” which prohibits imports and interstate commerce, but this process typically takes years and occurs after substantial damage has been done. Once a nonnative species has become established, removing the animals is extremely costly and may be impossible, and the methods used may be inhumane.

H.R. 669 takes a proactive approach to address these concerns. It will establish a process for evaluating nonnative wildlife species based on scientific information, with public input, to determine if they should be approved or not approved for importation and interstate commerce. This process would take several years to implement, during which time there would be no restrictions on trade, and all stakeholders would have the opportunity to participate in the process.

The legislation addresses the trade in wildlife. Domesticated animals, such as cats, dogs, rabbits, goldfish, horses, and other species added by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service would be exempt from the evaluation process. As a result of these exceptions, much of the pet trade will be unaffected by the bill. For clarity, we recommend adding domesticated hamsters, gerbils, guinea pigs, ferrets, and other domesticated species common in the pet trade to the list of exempt species in the bill to remove any doubt about whether they would be added later. We emphasize that the list of exempted species does not mean that all non-exempt species will be prohibited under H.R. 669. The non-exempt species will be assessed for risk, and species that are found not to be risky based on the Fish and Wildlife Service’s evaluation will be approved for importation.

H.R. 669 also includes a grandfather provision so that people will know that they can keep their pets, even if the species later gets classified as not approved for importation.

While there will be costs to implement H.R. 669, the costs of not acting would be substantially greater, as cash-strapped communities and natural area managers would have to spend millions of dollars to attempt to control introduced species. If the United States had H.R. 669 in place previously, damaging and costly invasions such as Burmese pythons, red lionfish, northern snakehead fish, and the Gambian rats that caused the 2003 multistate monkeypox outbreak could have been prevented.

Our respective organizations may offer further comments and suggestions. We welcome the opportunity to work with the Subcommittee to improve the bill and move it to passage.

*For more information, please contact: Peter T. Jenkins, Director of International Conservation,  
Defenders of Wildlife, 202-682-9400 or [pjenkins@defenders.org](mailto:pjenkins@defenders.org)*