

Cane toads: an unnatural history

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Cane Toads is about how cane toads were introduced to Australia from Hawaii and the effect they have left on the area, including the people that live there. Back in the 1930s sugar cane farmers had a problem with cane grubs and an option presented to them was to bring over cane toads to get rid of the cane grubs. Ultimately this did not work, and cane toads became an invasive species in Australia and their population is still growing. A theme that was presented was how the toads affect the people a lot. All throughout the documentary there were many differing points of views on the toads, some positive and others negative. The documentary starts off with people talking about the toads and what they think of them. “ When I’m driving a car, I have no hesitation of running over them whatsoever”, is one of the first things said in the documentary but it’s followed up by an old lady talking about how she thinks of them as friends. It’s interesting to see the relationships that develop between humans and animals given the circumstances. Another case given in this documentary was that a man had let his cat out in his backyard and it killed a cane toad and then the man sees that the animal was in clear discomfort. He states that twenty minutes later the cat died in his arm because of the toad poisoning. Ever since then he was out to get the toads. This was very prominent theme seen throughout the entire documentary.

The entire documentary focused on the effect that the cane toads had on the human population. It goes to show the power that animals have when it comes to human sociology. There were a variety of views that were presented all throughout the documentary. One thing that really stood out to me was the fact that there was a proposed cane toad statue. A town had

proposed to make a statue of a cane toad which never came to be. Stuff like this can be seen everywhere. For example, in my home state New York the deer population is growing rapidly and there are many opposing views on what should be done. Some people want hunting season for deer to be longer, but others wish to keep the population the way it is and let them live in peace. Another example in Boston. Wild turkeys are making their way back into neighborhoods. Some people love that there are wild turkeys coming back but others see them as a danger. The same can be said with the toads, many people believed they would be the solution to their problem but unfortunately that turned out to be very wrong. Now you have some people like one of the old men who sits in his backyard with his light on which attracts flies which in turn attract toads. He loves the toads and likes to see them just doing their own thing. Then there are other people like the man whose cat died from one of the toads. He brings up a story of when he once saw a toad after the incident and he stabbed it in the back with a pick which immediately killed the toad. Some people see them as friends or a staple of where they are from, meanwhile others don't mind just running them over when they are on the side of the road. This goes to show the power that animals have over human sociology.

This documentary was made in 1988 that's 30 years ago, by now the toad population must have expanded to even more parts of Australia. Seeing how much more the toad population has grown (or decreased) would be something interesting to see. As a believer in biological control verses chemical use, this film gave me much to think about. I would have liked to hear more from the filmmakers about various species being relocated from

other areas and the effects. The film left me questioning man's hand in the environment and the effects.