

PREVENTING EXTINCTIONS

Tuamotu Kingfisher *Todiramphus gambieri*



Tuamotu Kingfisher (© Pete Morris)



Société
d'Ornithologie de
Polynésie

Background

The Tuamotu Kingfisher is confined to the island of Niau in the Tuamotu Archipelago, French Polynesia, where the race *niauensis* was represented by 400-600 birds in 1974, and reported as common in 1990; the nominate *gambieri* having become extinct on Mangareva, Gambier Islands, probably prior to 1922. Surveys in 2003 and 2004 estimated the total population as 39-51 individuals, significantly lower than previously supposed, but surveys in 2006-2008 suggested that the total population had remained relatively stable at around 125 individuals. Competition for food resources with rats may pose a threat to the breeding success of this species. The removal of suitable nesting trees in 1984, following a hurricane in 1983, has reduced the availability of nesting sites. The principal threat to young birds may be predation by feral cats.

Actions being implemented

1. Research is being conducted on the diet of **invasive rats and cats** to test whether they are preying on young kingfishers, or competing with the adults.
2. A **rat control programme** is being set up through work with the local community. This will be targeted in stands of coconut palms in which the species nests.
3. The possibility of **introduction** to another nearby island is being investigated. Kingfishers have been shown to readily adapt when translocated within Niau, and so if a suitable island is identified and sufficient funds raised there is a real hope of establishing a second population of the species.
4. A **Site Support Group** has been recently established in Niau, building capacity so the project relies less on outside involvement. The group has disseminated kingfisher leaflets and posters to the public.

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