Biodiversity survey of Tokelau

Title Sun hats, sunscreen and long sleeved shirts were a necessity in a biodiversity survey recently conducted by Mere Valu ? Conservation Officer from the BirdLife Fiji Programme - alongside a team of scientists from the Pacific region in two atolls in Tokelau. ?This survey was important to determine the biodiversity of the Tokelau Islands and assess the impacts of invasive species?, said Mere. The Tokelau Islands, in the South Pacific, is comprised of three main atolls; Atafu, Nukunonu and Fakaofo. These atolls have historically been known to support breeding populations of migrating seabirds. Being geographically isolated, Samoa is the only port of entry to Tokelau and it takes three days on a ferry to reach the furthest atoll. This survey was a feasibility study to determine restoration opportunities and provide recommendations to improve current biosecurity and surveillance in the Tokelau Islands. Restoration is an important process in maintaining species population in a particular area. This is equally important for the three atolls as they are threatened by the invasives in particular the Yellow Crazy Ants. ?Twenty species of indigenous birds were recorded from Tokelau in September ? October 2011?, said Mere. Breeding seabird species included Red-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon rubricauda*, Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata*, Red footed booby *Sula sula*, White Terns *Gygis alba*, Black Noddy *Anous minutus* and Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus*.

Black Noddy were among the breeding seabird recorded during the Tokelau Islands biodiversity survey.

Other notable species were the Grey Reef Heron *Egretta sacra*, Pacific Golden Plover Pluvialis fulva, Wandering Tattler *Heteroscelus incanus,* Bristle-Thighed Curlew *Numenius tahitiensis* (Vulnerable), Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* and the Pacific Pigeon *Ducula pacifica*. Reptiles recorded included the Threatened Green Turtle, Snake-eyed Skink, Blue-tailed Skink, Black Skink, and House Geckos. The Tokelau Government is looking at implementing stricter biosecurity protocols at the main port in Apia to control pest movements from Samoa. The local government comprised of village elders or *Taupulega* on the three atolls are eager to put in place measures to prevent the spread of invasives into other uninhabited motus. **Subscribe to The BirdLife Pacific Quarterly E-Newsletter**