BirdLife launches invasive species video - Saving Suwarrow's Seabirds

Title
At BirdLife's World Congress in June, we launched our newest global conservation programme. The BirdLife Invasive Alien Species Programme will work around the globe to tackle one of the greatest of threats to our natural world.

Today we're launching a new video by award-winning filmmaker Nick Hayward showcasing just what it takes to eliminate rats in restoring a remote atoll in the South Pacific… Invasive alien species are animals and plants that have been introduced into a natural environment where they are not normally found. In the last 500 years, species like rats and cats have driven over 70 bird species to extinction.

"To tackle this major threat to birds and nature we recently launched the BirdLife Invasive Alien Species Programme", said Donald Stewart – BirdLife Pacific Director. From local to global, the new programme will develop and share our expertise to tackle invasive alien species whilst also calling for more effective policies and support for their delivery.

> *"Experience has shown benefits to birds, biodiversity and local economies are substantial where invasive threats are managed", noted Don.*

"Across sites of importance for endangered native wildlife the BirdLife Partnership will intensify this effort through the eradication or control of exotic species, and implementation of locally-led biosecurity measures to ensure these threats don't return".

On the ground, BirdLife Pacific, and the BirdLife Partner in the Cook Islands Te Ipukarea Society, recently completed an expedition to eradicate rats from Suwarrow Atoll. "Suwarrow is one of increasingly few sites where seabirds occur largely undisturbed", said Steve Cranwell - BirdLife Pacific Seabird Manager. "The significance of which is reflected in the proportions of birds present including nine percent of the world's population of Lesser Frigatebird, three percent of the world's Red-Tailed Tropicbird and in excess of a hundred thousand Sooty Tern".

Sadly, the growing rat population and their spread across the Atoll, threatened the breeding seabirds. In order to conserve this globally important seabird site, BirdLife International and Te Ipukarea Society recently spent a month on the atoll in a carefully planned bid to remove the rats. Joining the team was wildlife documentary filmmaker Nick Hayward – with the support of Wildiaries - seeking to produce a film about the operation. N

ick won a place on the trip following a worldwide search by BirdLife for an experienced wildlife filmmaker, and posted regular blog updates from the field via satellite phone. Nick's now finished his video that provides a brief insight into what it takes to complete such an operation. Many months in the planning the team travelled the 930 km from Rarotonga to Suwarrow by sea. Twice. And dealt with challenges associated with unpredictable weather, swarms of wasps, and abundant coconut crab in a bid to banish invasive rats from Suwarrow. It will be some time until we know for sure if their efforts have been successful, but early signs look positive. In the meantime we have the pleasure of showcasing the video entitled 'Saving Suwarrow's Seabirds'.

I would like to support the BirdLife Invasive Alien Species Programme.

The expedition to remove rats from Suwarrow National Park is a joint project between BirdLife International, Te Ipukarea Society (BirdLife Partner in the Cook Islands) and the Cook Island National Environment Service. The project is being kindly supported by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund, European Community, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, SPREP, the Global Environment Facility, the Pacific Invasives Initiative, New Zealand Department of Conservation, Wildiaries, and Nick Hayward and forms part of the BirdLife Invasive Alien Species Programme which is tackling this greatest of threats to wildlife around the world.