



Lord Howe Island to become rat-free

Title

BirdLife Australia (BirdLife Partner) is delighted by the recent announcement made by Federal Environment Minister Tony Burke and NSW Environment Minister Robyn Parker to commit \$9 million to eradicate rodents from Lord Howe Island. Lord Howe Island, a World Heritage Area and a globally significant Important Bird Area, is home to 182 bird species, three of which are endemic - making it one of Australia's most important seabird islands.

However since settlement, nine of Lord Howe Island's endemic birds have become extinct due to rats and other human-related pressures, and today at least 13 different birds on Lord Howe Island are still threatened by rodents, including the Nationally Vulnerable White-bellied Storm-Petrel and Lord Howe Woodhen. Rats have also been implicated in the decline and extinction of 13 invertebrate and two plant species. The Lord Howe Group is the only breeding site in Australasia for the White-bellied Storm-Petrel, and one of only two Australasian breeding sites where the Kermadec Petrel breeds; due to predation by rodents, neither species still breeds on the main island, and they now only nest on Balls Pyramid, a small, rat-free island offshore from Lord Howe Island. Last year BirdLife Australia committed to a campaign to secure funding for the eradication of rodents from Lord Howe Island.

Our State of Australia's Birds 2010 highlighted the eradication of rodents from Lord Howe Island as a key priority, and our Head of Conservation, Samantha Vine, wrote to all relevant parliamentarians, calling for the eradication plan to be funded under the 'Caring for our Country' program. We asked our supporters to do the same. Thanks to the effort of everyone who did their bit, we will soon see the largest eradication operation to be attempted on an inhabited island. It will have enduring conservation benefits for biodiversity globally: at least 13 bird species, 49 floral species, 12 ecological communities, and plenty more will benefit. The reduction in predation and resource competition will also increase the resilience of all species on Lord Howe Island to the impacts of climate change. Exciting news indeed.