

Restoring Pacific paradise

In total, 51% of all threatened birds are being driven towards extinction by invasive alien species. The problem is especially acute on oceanic islands where 75% of threatened birds are affected. In an effort to address this serious threat, the Pacific Partnership of BirdLife International has received renewed support from the David & Lucile Packard Foundation to protect globally important seabird colonies by eradicating invasive alien species. "The Pacific region supports a high proportion of the world's seabirds, but the devastating impacts of introduced mammalian predators - particularly rats and cats - on breeding islands is resulting in numerous colonies becoming extirpated, and many marine birds being pushed towards extinction", said Steve Cranwell - BirdLife Pacific Seabird Programme Manager. Since 2006 the BirdLife Pacific Partnership has implemented a programme of work identifying priority islands for restoration and removing introduced alien predators. To date, 120 islands have been surveyed, and 30 islands have been treated in French Polynesia, Palau, New Caledonia and Fiji - benefiting many Globally Threatened seabirds, and other wildlife, including the Critically Endangered Fiji Crested Iguana. In building on this the BirdLife Pacific Partnership is preparing to eradicate rats and other alien predators from the largest islands treated to date including Vahanga (390ha) in French Polynesia and Suvarrow (170 ha) in the Cook Islands. In addition, treated sites will be monitored to assess outcomes, share lessons, and ensure biosecurity. Novel and cost-effective methods will be trialed to enhance seabird responses at secured sites. "In total this new grant will lead to the restoration of breeding habitats for 29 seabird species - including one Critically Endangered, three Endangered, two Vulnerable and two Near Threatened species", added Steve. BirdLife Partners involved in this grant are Te Ipukerea Society (Cook Islands), Palau Conservation Society, NatureFiji-MareqetiViti, and Société d'Ornithologie de Polynésie (French Polynesia). "The David & Lucile Packard Foundation have been with the BirdLife Partnership since the commencement of the island restoration programme, and it is this continued support that has enabled these achievements and ultimately for the Partnership to make a difference for conservation and communities across the region", concluded Steve. BirdLife International also thanks the UK Darwin Initiative, Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF), Aage V. Jensen Foundation and European Community for their generous support towards the Island Restoration Programme. CEPF unites six global leaders who are committed to enabling non-governmental and private sector organizations to help protect vital ecosystems: L'Agence Française de Développement; Conservation International; The Global Environmental Facility; The Government of Japan, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation; The World Bank.

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