

Title
The team is edging their way towards their final destination of Rarotonga in their traditional canoe which is at the mercy of the wind. *"Day five on the Vaka (traditional boat) and we are still at sea.*

The prevailing south-easterlies have prevented us from steering directly to Rarotonga so we have been sailing south then tacking to the east.

On the last tack we came within 40 nautical miles to Rarotonga – our destination. Serg, the Tahitian crew leader, claimed to have seen land in the distance, much to everybody else's disbelief.

Our current tack is taking us away from Rarotonga to the north so we are hoping for an easterly wind change that will allow us to sail straight in by tomorrow morning. Currently it appears we are destined to sail backwards and forwards across the sea never quite reaching our destination.

Life on the Vaka is 16 brave souls floating across the Pacific on a wooden platform. Luckily the crew are very cheerful, experienced and many have been Vaka-sailing since the early 1990s having logged months at sea.

On the wooden platform there is a hut containing the captain's bed and a tiny galley (kitchen).

Lorna, the cook, produces amazing meals from the tiny galley. On the other side is the convenience, which is open to the weather but with a fantastic view! It's flushed by a seawater bucket.

We sleep in the canoe's hulls which we enter through a hatch. Crew can often be found down their hatch having a kip. The sleeping quarters remind me of a World War II submarine.



BirdLife's Steve Cranwell taking a well-earned rest.

The blue Pacific hasn't produced many bird sightings, but Red-Tailed Tropicbird, Tahiti Petrel, Sooty Shearwater and a White Bellied Storm Petrel have been spotted". Nick Hayward, Pacific Ocean, slowly getting towards Rarotonga ... Cook Islands.

*** You can follow Nick's posts by subscribing to emails at <http://birdlife-pacific.wildiaries.com/> or through BirdLife's Facebook and Twitter pages. **The BirdLife Invasive Alien Species Programme urgently needs your support to tackle more sites and save more species. To support our work and make a donation today, please go to www.justgiving.com/BirdLife-invasive-species where every penny counts. Thank you.**



The expedition to remove rats from Suvarrow 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 European Community, David and Lucile Packard Foundation, SPREP, GEF and Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund, and forms part of the BirdLife Invasive Alien Species Programme which is tackling this greatest of threats to wildlife around the world. BirdLife wishes to thank the efforts of many who are supporting the programme including Pacific Invasive Initiative, Pacific Invasive Learning Network, New Zealand Department of Conservation the University of the South Pacific, Landcare Research New Zealand, Island Conservation, Wildiaries and Nick Hayward.