

Suwarrow Blog Nine ? Working through the wasps

Title

The latest blog from wildlife filmmaker Nick Hayward as he joins a team from BirdLife and Te Ipukarea Society (BirdLife in the Cook Islands) eradicating rats from Suwarrow – a seabird mecca in the South Pacific. With the team safely on Suwarrow they get to work preparing for the operation whilst trying to avoid an army of wasps... “Anchorage Island, our home for now, is only 600 meters long and 200 wide. Big enough though when you have to cut through thick tropical vegetation to make tracks for the baiting stations.

Pacific Rat is the target of this expedition. It's an invasive species threatening all the seabirds on Suwarrow. Our mission is to eradicate them all in one go because they are killing extraordinary numbers of birds. This affects not just Suwarrow but the transfer and recruitment of birds from this globally important site to other parts of the Pacific. Tracks and baiting points are spaced every 20m, calculated to be the home range of every rat. However, there's another invasive species that makes the track cutters' lives a misery - wasps. Sia is the lead cutter and has the dubious honour of being “lead wasp victim” with eight stings in one day. Mia comes second with a tally of four. To avoid the wasps' stings, the team wrap their heads and faces with cloth. They look like Bedouin nomads preparing for a sandstorm. All their hard work though, means they've cut over six kilometres of track, with only a small area of the northern part of the island left to finish tomorrow.

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<http://tiny.cc/meyarw> Wild Diaries/WaspsCuttingTrails/2013/05/Blog-9-Wasps.jpg

Wasps are making the track cutting a misery.

Wasps are making the

Pressures from the rats mean that Anchorage Island has few birds left, though the track cutters did spy a Greater Frigatebird nest. What the Island lacks in birds it makes up in marine life. Everywhere you look there's the patrolling fin of a Black-tipped Reef-shark. Schools of parrotfish wave their smaller fins from the shallows. Our cool sea breeze has eased off. Now we are sweating through the night as well as the day. Some of us have taken to sleeping on the beach to keep cool”. Nick Hayward – Rarotonga, Anchorage Island, Suwarrow Atoll, 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 Suwarrow

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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.