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. During this latest blog the team are out at sea and dealing with breaking tow-ropes, noisy generators and Cookie-cutter Sharks… *"We are three days at sea with 300 nautical miles more to Suwarrow. After departing Rarotonga we have become becalmed and are slowly motoring onwards. It's becoming hotter as we head north and the crew are sheltering in all the available shade. Towing Mike's boat to Atuitaki didn't pass without incident. The tow-rope parted twice on route, once after dark. Ian and Mike bravely swam out to reattach the tow rope. Fortunately they weren't bitten by Cookie-cutter Sharks. These nocturnal predators rip a small bite sized piece of flesh from their prey. Our power inverter gave up the ghost yesterday, the prime culprit for its demise being the hot water jug. The caretakers have six months' worth of food in their freezer on deck. So now we have the joy of running their generator on deck to add to the fumes and noise of the diesel motor. We are true blue-water sailors as we float on a deep blue sea. The rich blue colour indicates a lack of nutrients in the water so we are sailing through an ocean desert. Seabird sightings have been few and far between mostly Red-footed Booby, an occasional Sooty Tern and a single Tahiti Petrel. We expect to see more as we get closer to the seabird mecca of Suwarrow. Our celestial navigator, Ian Karika, has given lessons in identifying the amazing array of constellations which is an inspiring insight into ancient navigation, and also a welcome alternative to our temperamental autopilot GPS which regularly resets our course to random parts of the Pacific. There's a daily relief from the heat as we stop briefly for a mid ocean swim. The water here is over 5,000 meters deep. It's a humbling experience diving into the deep blue bottomless sea. So far no sightings of the expected Sperm Whales - Captain Graham says they must be in hiding. Everybody is looking forward to our arrival in Suwarrow.*

Harry Papai (National Environment Service, Suwarrow Caretaker) at sunset as he prepares to navigate by the stars in the traditional Polynesian way.

The hardest time in a sailors day is said to be as the sun dips below the horizon. For us tropical mariners are treated to a golden-hued display of colour. The moon soon appears on the horizon and together with the dazzling array of stars filling the tropical night sky provides our celestial map". Nick Hayward – 300 nautical miles south of Suwarrow, 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 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.