Suwarrow Blog Six ? Setting sail

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. Today the team have finally left Rarotonga's main harbour and are heading north hoping to spy Sperm whales. *"We are at sea. Finally, on late Wednesday afternoon the Southern Cross left Rarotonga. The rotund Captain Keith piloted us out of the harbour. His too-small life jacket (not quite able to be zipped at the front) didn't hamper his very nimble leap into the pitching dingy. Graham Wragg will skipper us onwards to Suwarrow. There is a small detour on route; we're towing Martin's runabout the Apii to Aitutaki, an island north of Rarotonga. There are 2000 residents on the island and it's the second most visited place in the Cook Islands. Boat builder Martin has been helping with the renovations on the Southern Cross. Due to family commitments Ina (Grumpy) couldn't join the expedition. So there is a new addition to our crew: Iremia Samuel (Mia). He's only 17 but his father was a ranger on Suwarrow for five years where he spent time as a child, so his local knowledge will be useful. The strong winds meant we were greeted by a lumpy sea which no doubt played a large part in the number of passengers willing to steer the Southern Cross through the night. Either way it was a beautiful night illuminated by a full moon. Between Aitutaki and Suwarrow we will be passing through Sperm Whale territory so we'll be keeping an eye out for those majestic mammals."* Nick Hayward – Rarotonga, Cook Islands, 24th April 2013 . 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.