

Suwarrow Blogger ?

Introducing Nick Hayward

Title

An introduction to award-winning wildlife filmmaker Nick Hayward who is part of a team from BirdLife and Te Ipukarea Society (BirdLife in the Cook Islands) who are about to spend a month eradicating rats from one of the remotest atolls in the South Pacific. Nick Hayward distinctly remembers the moment. A teenage epiphany about his future life's work struck when he caught a glimpse of the first documentary ever made on sub-Antarctic South Georgia Island. The screen filled with images of millions of Fur Seals, squadrons of King Penguins, albatross, whales and Elephant Seals. He was intrigued, too, by the documentary makers themselves, two intrepid Englishwomen Cindy Buxton and Annie Price, who lived in small hut on the island for months. It was just the impetus required to set the Melbourne-born cameraman off on a career's worth of "madcap schemes", as he calls wildlife filming making. Eleven years after Nick's South Georgian 'moment' he arrived on the island to stay in exactly the same hut in St Andrew's Bay as Buxton and Price had done. For six weeks he filmed the island's extraordinary natural assets, in awe of his new neighbours, the million-strong new generation of fur seals and 130,000 King penguins, abundant albatross and Elephant Seals. "It was incredible to be there. It just caps everything of major significance – I remember at the time thinking that I'll never see anything to top this again," Nick says. It's quite a call from a man who's day job includes attending a pagan worm festival on a far flung Indonesian island, a midnight leap into a crocodile-frequented swamp and getting the run-around from a very miffed Tasmanian Devil. He was lucky enough to compare notes with Cindy Buxton, the original filmmaker on South Georgia, and his inspiration. They share a love for remote island chains, which Nick is once again indulging. He has just joined a BirdLife and Te Ipukarea Society (BirdLife in the Cook Islands) expedition to film the eradication of rats from Suwarrow Atoll, 930km from Rarotonga, the Cook Island's capital. "I've always loved to contribute to conservation, and I feel this is a way to do it... and It is funny where you find yourself," he says. Nick and the rat hunters will travel back to Rarotonga in a traditional voyaging canoe called a vaka. Nick's journey to the mysterious Pacific outpost (where \$5 million worth of conquistador treasure was found) means taking a break from filming Wildiaries and Tourism Australia's National Landscapes Nature Series. A feature length film's worth of interviews with passionate wildlife lovers and beautifully shot sequences of Australia's most iconic species are highlights of the series, a testament to Nick award-winning skills. A testament, too, to the value of knowing where you want to go early on. As a teenager Nick also wrote to David Attenborough, the world's best known natural history filmmaker, who wrote one back in 1985. It was a kind and humble letter explaining why he couldn't invite the 17 year-old to join him because he was a freelancer and employed no one. The second letter Attenborough wrote to Nick was in 1998, a letter of gratitude for indeed joining him for an

extraordinary film shoot they did together. Nick's sequence with lyrebirds was voted the United Kingdom's 'most favourite Attenborough moment'. "I'm completely obsessed by lyrebirds, and I'm not the only one. They are mesmerizing," he says. For Attenborough, they have the "most elaborate, complex and beautiful songs in the world." Despite his penchant for very remote archipelagos, Nick says his favourite place on the planet is much closer to home (and also the natural stage for the lyrical Superb Lyrebird). "The Dandenong Ranges are amazing. I love it because it's right on Melbourne's doorstep and I love that it's a refuge for lyrebirds, a wet primordial place and home of incredible animals that completely draws you in". "There is such a great sense of mystery there, yet it takes 40 minutes to get back to the inner city". "It's a lesson too - you don't have to go to the ends of the earth to find amazing things," he says. 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.** [JG_donate_visa_button](#)

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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.