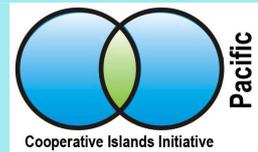


PACIFIC INVASIVES INITIATIVE

The News, April 2007



This summary of recent activities by people and agencies involved in the Pacific Invasives Initiative (PII) is collated and circulated by the PII Coordinating Team. Feedback is welcomed – contact either the people directly involved in projects, or the PII Team PII@auckland.ac.nz. For further information visit our website <http://www.issg.org/cii/PII>.

NZAID review completed

The review of PII by New Zealand's International Aid & Development Agency (NZAID) has finished. Reviewers were very positive in their findings and have recommended that NZAID continue to fund the work that PII is doing. A statement on NZAID's continued support is expected shortly and will be discussed at the PII Steering Group Meeting (July). The reviewers, Ed Peek and Sophie van der Meer, visited four Demonstration Projects and spoke to more than 60 people associated with PII-supported projects and activities. Once again, a big 'Thank you!' to all of you who took the time to meet with the reviewers and pass on your perspectives.

Pohnpei Trial and Demonstration Rat Eradication, and Symposium (submitted by Patterson Shed, CSP Pohnpei)

The Conservation Society of Pohnpei (CSP), in partnership with Island Conservation (IC) and PII, conducted a Trial Rat Eradication and Training Project on 3 small islands in the Madolenihmw Municipality in January and February 2007. This was a first step to addressing issues raised in the Ahnd Atoll Feasibility Study (to eradicate rats and other invasive vertebrates from the National Priority Action Area and Pohnpei's top marine area of biological significance). Results from the research will be available soon.

The project was funded by a grant from the Australian Government's Regional National Heritage Programme (RNHP), and supported by: PII, Pohnpei State Government, Micronesia Conservation Trust (MCT), Micronesians in Island Conservation (MIC), Pacific Invasives Learning Network (PILN), The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and especially the

Pohnpeian land owners who allowed use of several small islands for the project.

The project also involved a significant training component and conservationists from Kosrae, Yap, Guam, New Caledonia, Fiji, Samoa and Tahiti joined the CSP-IC team for the trial eradication. Participants from PII-supported projects included Natasha Doherty and Billy Fuifatu (Aleipatas), Jean-Jerome Cassan (Mt Panie), Anne Gouni (Vahanga), Vilikesa Masibalavu and Elenoa Seniloli (Vatu I Ra) and Joape Kuruyawa (Viwa). At the end of the project, a Symposium on rodent eradication attended by conservation and government agencies from several Micronesian countries provided an opportunity to share information. Andy Roberts (New Zealand Department of Conservation) and Bill Nagle (PII Project Coordinator) led PII's contribution to the Symposium.

The IC team, led by Alex Wegmann, did a great job in getting a project like this together in a very short time and comments from those who participated in the training were very positive.

Pohnpei Eradication and Training – participants' views (submitted by Vilikesa Masibalavu, BLI Fiji)

To add to experience gained during the rat eradication last year on Vatu I Ra, Vilikesa Masibalavu and Elenoa Seniloli from the BirdLife International Fiji Program, were funded by PII to attend the Rat Eradication Training held in Pohnpei in February. The training was funded by RNHP and organized by Island Conservation (IC) and Conservation Society of Pohnpei (CSP) with support from PII.

Ms Seniloli said that the training was timely and important for BirdLife's work since eradications on some important seabird islands in Fiji will be carried out in the next 2 years. "The training really

helped us understand the finer details in carrying out rat eradication and provided answers to some of the questions we had from our first eradication project” said Ms Seniloli.

Mr Masibalavu shared BirdLife Fiji’s experience and lessons learned from the Vatu I Ra eradication at an Invasive Species Symposium for Micronesian conservation and government agencies. Mr Masibalavu said “Perhaps the main message to our friends in the region is that eradication may be a new thing and we need to start small, do the feasibility study and further planning properly and have it peer reviewed, get assistance from people and organisations who have some experience on the job, and most important, involve landowners right from the start.”

Birdlife International commits to invasive species management (submitted by Steve Cranwell, BLI Fiji)

After a successful eradication on Vatu I Ra and with key staff receiving further training from IC on Pohnpei, BirdLife International and its Pacific Partners are planning to eradicate invasive species from a number of islands in French Polynesia, New Caledonia, Palau and Fiji for the benefit of important seabird colonies. Operations will be implemented over the next two years with support from the David & Lucille Packard Foundation.

Community support and development of planning and technical skills throughout the region are central to the programme’s ultimate success and sustainability. To help achieve this, Don Stewart and Steve Cranwell (of BirdLife International’s Pacific Program) discussed with PII ways in which PII’s experience could be best utilised to help achieve these outcomes. Souad Boudjelas (PII Programme Manager) is coordinating this work.

Progress in New Caledonia

Following on from the 2006 Mt Panie symposium, a technical workshop (jointly hosted by Province Nord Government, Association Dayu Biik and Conservation International) was held in

March. PII support for the Mt Panie project over the last four years has been coordinated by Alan Saunders (PII Director) and has included inputs from New Zealand Department of Conservation (NZDOC) staff and professional pig hunters from New Zealand. Two projects are being developed: to develop local capacity to minimise the impacts of feral pigs on peoples gardens on the flanks of Mont Panié, and; to test the efficacy of effectively controlling invasive mammals (initially rats and cats) in forest within the Botanical Reserve.

PII raises awareness

Karen Johns (PII Community Participation Adviser) presented PII’s work to staff and students of the Anthropology Department at the University of Auckland and discussion showed areas of possible connections for future work.

Bill Nagle presented a seminar on PII’s work to Tropical Conservation Biology and Environmental Sciences and Pacific Studies staff and students at the University of Hawai`i at Hilo (UHH). An extended question and answer session showed the importance of community involvement for successful conservation and ended with a plea for close interdisciplinary collaboration between biodiversity and livelihood aspects of conservation in the Pacific.

Bill also gave a lecture on the importance of invasive species management to a Natural Resources Management class at UHH. Thanks to Craig Severance and Sonia Juvik from UHH for arranging the opportunities to spread the invasive species management message.

The PII website is constantly being updated by Steven Bavin (PII Programme Support Officer). Keep an eye on it!

2007 PII Steering Group Meeting

The 2007 PII Steering Group Meeting will be hosted by ISSG at the University of Auckland, New Zealand from Tuesday 3 July to Friday 6 July.