

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 (PII CT). 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>.

In Memoriam:

It is with sadness that PII records the unexpected and tragic loss of Henri Blaffart from Conservation International who was committed to the PII-supported Mont Panie project in New Caledonia. Our condolences are extended to his family, friends and colleagues.

Director's departure

After nearly 6 years with PII and its predecessor, Alan Saunders has decided it is time to move along. He has accepted a position with Landcare Research, helping to advance their international pest management business and will take up the position at the start of July. Alan hopes to continue to work closely with PII – and we look forward to maintaining that connection. Best wishes for the future Alan!

Capacity building activities

Three major workshops (see below) have been held since the February 2008 News. The PII Coordinating Team has been working with Partners, collaborators and others to develop training, based mainly on project management, with a focus on design and monitoring and evaluation.

Phoenix Islands restoration project training workshop: Kiritimati (Kiribati), 16-23 April

PII is working with the Government of Kiribati and the New Zealand Department of Conservation on an eradication project in the Phoenix Islands Protected Area (PIPA), the world's largest marine protected area.

In preparation for the eradication expedition and future biosecurity, Ray Pierce and Derek Brown of Pacific Expeditions ran a workshop for Kiribati Government staff (MELAD (Wildlife Conservation Unit and Quarantine), Customs, Police, Line and Phoenix Island administration). The workshop covered biodiversity values, threats and opportunities; pest eradication methods;

biosecurity needs of the Phoenix Islands; biota monitoring methods.

In the workshop evaluation, all participants agreed that the skills and knowledge gained from the workshop would be useful in their future work. Statements such as; "*Stricter control/inspection at main ports (is needed to reduce biosecurity risks)*." and "... *come again every year to teach us how to protect our island.*" showed the value of a comprehensive approach to capacity building.

The workshop workbook is available on the Phoenix page of the PII website (issg.org/cii/PII/Demonstration%20Projects/Phoenix.htm). (See below for an update on the eradication expedition).

Weed project design and implementation: Palau, 22-30 April

PII recognised the need for effective data management as part of successful project management and initiated planning for this workshop in 2006. Demand for training in data management was identified during a skill-sharing survey undertaken by PII later in 2006. Subsequent discussions with David Moverley (te-ngahere.co.nz/people/er/dmoverley.php) led to planning for a project management workshop.

Cooperation between Bureau of Agriculture, Republic of Palau, Division of Agriculture and Forestry, Yap, Federated States of Micronesia, Office of Environmental Response and Coordination, Republic of Palau, PII, PILN, Palau Automated Land and Resource Information System and The Nature Conservancy resulted in a pilot training workshop, coordinated and facilitated by PII with David Moverley donating his time as technical instructor. "*Thank you!*" to all.

The workshop focused on planning priority weed eradication projects in Palau and Yap; designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating to ensure success of the projects. 'New school' methods were introduced. A rodent eradication project of the Palau Division of Environmental Health in the State of Kayangel was also reviewed. The lessons learned from the workshop will provide a model for other invasive species management projects in the Pacific.

Participant evaluation of the pilot workshop was positive and included statements such as; "*We will apply what we learned starting tomorrow to better evaluate our progress.*" and "*Thankyou for coming*

to Palau and sharing very important information that will help us in eradication processes.”

Reports covering the detail of the workshop, evaluation and recommendations will soon be available on the PII website. Key recommendations include customized training for each agency and that time be spent in “their field” introducing new herbicides and improving decision-making in relation to methods and herbicides to use for different plants in different situations. PII will work with workshop partners to develop the recommendations into action.

Pacific Island rodent eradication training workshop: New Zealand, 19-23 May

PII, BirdLife Pacific and PILN, organised and participated in capacity building events for BirdLife Pacific partners from Fiji, Palau, French Polynesia and New Caledonia. In addition, PILN facilitated the attendance of a member of the Kiritimati Wildlife Conservation Unit, Kiribati.

The events (a 2-day meeting of NZDOC’s Island Eradication Advisory Group (IEAG) with one whole day dedicated to Pacific projects, a 1-day planning workshop, a series of visits to island eradication sites) were designed to enhance knowledge and understanding of island rodent eradications, in particular the planning process.

Each project manager presented his/her project to the IEAG for review. From the feedback received e.g. *“The IEAG is made up of very interesting and experienced people who share their knowledge and allow us to learn a lot from them to fill the gaps in our knowledge”* and *“Most of all my queries were addressed and now I am more confident in addressing these issues”*, this session was invaluable in terms of clarifying and resolving many issues that the managers had and building their confidence. All along, the need for all parties to contribute to the discussion was stressed and, in fact, this did occur.

The 1-day planning session focussed on the Pacific projects as examples and worked through the components of the eradication planning process and how to apply these to their own projects. The value of Pacific participants sharing with each other as well as with specialists, was reflected in the positive feedback from this session - e.g. *“I understand the eradication involves a particular process and it is important to follow it in order to succeed”, “Better idea of the process, the steps and the progression and the planning docs that are products of the process”* and *“When an island is successfully eradicated, there is still a lot of work involved in monitoring, to make sure it remains pest-free. This has to be included in project proposals”*.

Site visits (Kapiti, Matiu Somes, Rangitoto, Motutapu and Ihumoana Islands and Karori Sanctuary) provided the opportunity to; 1) see at

first hand the results of removing predators from islands - in terms of both biodiversity and community wellbeing, 2) relate what has been done in New Zealand to their own projects in terms of scale, complexity and benefits.

The need for on-going biosecurity, surveillance and monitoring was obvious. Words were not needed, the islands spoke for themselves. Each site visit was facilitated by NZDOC personnel who reinforced the earlier IEAG meeting and workshop learning. To quote some of the feedback: *“It mainly helped the understanding of biosecurity and monitoring after the eradication”* and *“It was nice to see some of the issues/challenges (i.e. visitors, boat traffic, landowners and the public outreach) being addressed in each of the islands”*. This exercise was another example of many organisations working together (PII, BirdLife, NZDOC, PILN, Victoria University of Wellington, The University of Auckland) to equip Pacific practitioners with the knowledge and skills required to undertake rodent eradications. This would not have been possible without the close relationship that PII has with NZDOC. PII congratulates NZDOC for the dedication of its staff and the willingness to share knowledge and expertise with other conservation workers.

To Elenoa, Julien and Steve who are soon starting eradications, we say *“Kia kaha!”*

Project progress

Kiribati: The Phoenix Islands eradication team sailed from Apia on 22 May and landed safely on Rawaki on 29 May. So far all is going to plan and we look forward to successful eradications and a safe return. AEE, Project and Operational Plans are on the PII website - (issg.org/cii/PII/Demonstration%20Projects/Phoenix.htm).

PII Steering Group Meeting

The date and place for the 2008 SGM has been tentatively set for October in Fiji. The PII Steering group consists of a representative from each of the 8 PII Partners - BirdLife International (BI), Conservation International (CI), IUCN's Invasive Species Specialist Group (ISSG), IUCN's Oceania Programme, New Zealand's International Aid and Development Agency (NZ Aid), Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC).

PII website

Don't forget to check new additions to the PII website. For contact of a general nature, please email PII@auckland.ac.nz.