

## Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

<b>Project Ref. No.</b>	17-026
<b>Project Title</b>	Restoration of Priority Pacific Island Ecosystems for People and Biodiversity
<b>Country(ies)</b>	Fiji & Palau
<b>UK Organisation</b>	BirdLife International
<b>Collaborator(s)</b>	Palau Conservation Society (PCS), BirdLife International Fiji Programme (BFP), Palau Ministry of Resources and Development, Dept of Health, Environmental Quality Protection Board, Kayangel State Govt, Traditional Chiefs, and Kayangel community, Govt of Fiji Dept of Environment, Local communities Fiji (Ringgold, Vatu-i-ra, and Mabualau Islands), Pacific Invasives Initiative, Pacific Invasives Learning Network
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<b>Report date</b>	<i>October 2009</i>
<b>Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4)</b>	1
<b>Project website</b>	<a href="http://www.birdlife.org/regional/pacific/pacific_in_action/current_projects.html#h">http://www.birdlife.org/regional/pacific/pacific_in_action/current_projects.html#h</a>

**1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – September) against the agreed baseline timetable for the project (if your project has started less than 6 months ago, please report on the period since start up).**

**Activity 1.1 & 3.1 – Establish project steering committees;** The PSC has not yet been formally established in Palau. Discussions with project partners (5) have confirmed their representation on the SC, in addition to which the National Invasives Steering Committee (NISC), Koror State Rangers, and Palau International Coral Reef Centre (PICRC) have expressed support. The first meeting is scheduled for mid November. The Fiji PSC convened in August, and representation presently includes the Departments of Environment and Forestry, University of the South Pacific, and the National Trust of Fiji. This group will maintain a strategic role for the project which is also supported operationally by a network of other NGOs, landowners (where possible), and government officials engaged in PA management.

**Activity 1.2 & 3.3 – Consultations & Community groups;** In Palau consultations have primarily been with State officials. The Kayangel Governor agreeing to co-host the project facilitating political protocols and support, and the Department of Environment (DOE), and Bureau of Agriculture (and Quarantine) (BOA) making resources available for the eradication and protection planning process including dedicating a fulltime staff member and pledging the availability of others. Events have prevented meetings with the Kayangel community but informal discussions have provided delegates with an indication of the proposed process. Tropical storms and unanticipated commitments have prevented access to the island in recent weeks but opportunities to meet with the islands traditional leaders continue to be pursued. These discussions will establish the foundation for engaging the wider community in the project. In Fiji introductory meetings have been held with the five project island landowning clans who have established local contact groups to facilitate activities and communicate information to the wider community. Two addresses have also been made to local chiefs and regional provincial authorities informing them of the projects objectives and process which, they've supported through the designation of liaison contacts.

**Activity 1.3 – Operational planning;** research of eradication techniques have identified a range of options which will be selected from in light of community support and confirmation of the susceptibility of non-target species. Details of the baiting procedures and biosecurity are still to be described having been constrained by staff turnover, preparing these plans will be a focus for the next two quarters.

**Activity 1.4 – Mitigation trials;** progress on these has also been delayed. Literature research and advice sought from Megapode experts have provided information on diet and foraging behaviours but further work is needed in designing the trial. This will be finalised and implemented over the next quarter.

**Activity 2.1 & 2.2 – Arrange training and capacity building exchanges;** training needs have been identified for Palau and Fiji these spanning technical aspects of managing invasive alien species and protected areas and are also aimed at building this capacity among as many of the project partners as possible. Immediate needs have been provided for in Fiji with four staff trained in the participatory learning and action planning (PLA) process which will facilitate community based management planning and protected area agreements. Site based learning is a significant need in Palau and opportunities to develop experience in eradication, biosecurity and monitoring practices have been identified in conjunction with other Pacific organisations engaged in eradication. These opportunities will be coordinated by the Project Leader. Fundraising and marketing training was completed for both the Fiji and Palau projects in association with the Pacific Partnership meeting (PPM) held in October.

**Activity 2.3 – training in IAS management;** a review and information exchange on biosecurity, monitoring, and eradication techniques was conducted in association with the PPM. This provided PCS with details and technical information for the planning process and identified the availability of regional expertise to support this.

**Activity 3.2 – PA and management planning training;** protected area and management planning resources have been made available to both projects but, a means of providing formal training has not yet been identified. In conjunction with national partners possible opportunities are being investigated with the intention that at least the management planning will take place within the next six months.

**Activity 3.6 – Identify sources of sustainable livelihoods;** having been trained in procedures on how to engage communities in the collection of social and economic information project staff have begun running a series of workshops for each of the five landowning communities in Fiji. Workshops provide information on the biological importance and threats to islands included in the project, and identifies the community needs and motivations for these sites. Analysis of this will guide the establishment of protected areas in part through the facilitation of complimentary activities (with the support of other stakeholders) and development of supporting management plans. This process will continue to be developed through a series of engagements following completion of PLAs for the four remaining communities in the third quarter.

**Activity 3.9 – Masters study;** BirdLife facilitated the collection of field data in support of a dissertation examining the contribution of conservation programmes to the livelihoods of subsistence communities. However, the student subsequently opted to develop an alternative focus which unfortunately is of little relevance to the current project. The dissertation has been submitted.

**Activity 4.1 – Launch project;** The project was formally launched in Fiji, through an event profiling previous Darwin projects in Fiji, their synergies and the partnerships supporting them. Attended by the conservation community, and government officials the evening also sought to build additional partnerships in support of the current project. The launch had good exposure with Fiji television media filming the event for a local current affairs programme and press interviews covering topics associated with the programme.

