

Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

(due 31 October 2011)

Project Ref No	17-026
Project Title	Restoration of Priority Pacific Island Ecosystems for People and Biodiversity
Country(ies)	Fiji & Palau
UK Organisation	BirdLife International
Collaborator(s)	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
Project Leader	<i>Steve Cranwell</i>
Report date	<i>November 2010</i>
Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4)	3
Project website	http://www.birdlife.org/regional/pacific/pacific_in_action/current_projects.html#h

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).

Eradication of rodents and feral cats from Kayangel Atoll & government and civil society stakeholders in Palau have the capacity to perpetuate and manage restored island ecosystems

The Palau project has experienced a number of complications and delays in the implementation of project activities for much of the project, in the last six months however, the Palau Conservation Society (PCS) was able to make significant progress and achieved numerous objectives, and as a result the work plan is now back on track. Achievements for the period April to September 2011, were most notably completion of the operational plan including contributions from the Project Steering Committee and local stakeholders; conducting a second round of biological monitoring to strengthen existing baseline data; the sourcing and purchase of all eradication materials; completion of the island baiting track network and other pre-operational preparations, and implementation of the rodent and cat eradication operations. The biosecurity plan for Kayangel has also been drafted and priority biosecurity activities have been implemented (such as education and outreach and inspections of incoming boats).

PCS have with Kayangel's leaders established a community group to examine larger resource use issues and the group is working on a management plan for the entire state (marine and terrestrial). Within the scope of the Management plan Kayangel's leadership and community are examining Protected Area needs and options and PCS have helped Kayangel submit a successful application to join Palau's Protected Areas Network. The Kayangel State has already been appropriated funds through the National FY2012 budget to support conservation work in the state. In addition, PCS staff participated in a capacity building exchange in support of the management planning process in Fiji during this period. There has also been ongoing planning and preparation for a Coconut Oil Mill which will be an important livelihood activity in the state. Community members have already reported increased agricultural yields as a result of the eradication operation. Outreach and education have been ongoing, and the community has been briefed along the way, project reports have been shared widely and included in local

and international newsletters. Raw video is being put together for a documentary showcasing the project and operation. The main activities to be completed in the final quarter for PCS are re-evaluation of the projects social and biological indicators, strengthening the biosecurity capacity, and compilation of the draft management plan.

Sustainable management of restored island ecosystems is improved through enhanced protection status of islands

In Fiji management plans for two sites (Vatuiria and RingGolds) have been drafted and tabled at the respective Nakorotubu and Laucala District council meetings. Both Councils have endorsed the Management options proposed and the landowning clans from the four villages have implemented actions highlighted in the plans. These include supporting *Qoliqoli* (marine taboo areas) and traditional taboos on over harvesting and use of natural resources for the eight Important Bird Area (IBA) islands. In addition to traditional protection consultations also continue with provincial and national government officials in securing national protection status for these IBAs.

The development of livelihoods as a mechanism for supporting the sustainable use of the Islands natural resources has had good success with the RingGold Island communities. The development of handicraft skills by this project has been further supported by the Ministry of Women and Culture who have channeled additional assistance increasing productivity. As a result women particularly from Laucala (in the RingGolds) have had a steady source of income selling handicrafts to resorts and major towns in the nearby islands of Vanualevu and Taveuni. The income is understood to mostly support children's education but outcomes from the revenue generated are yet to be formally evaluated.

The development and implementation of island restoration projects is enhanced through effective dissemination of best practice

In Fiji, lessons learned from this project have been shared with communities at other Important Bird Areas. Notably the Participatory Appraisal process which has proven to be a successful mechanism for identifying natural resources available (and needed) to a community. The process of then linking sustainable resource practices and identifying complimentary livelihoods engenders strong support as a result of being a community owned process. Those that have then capitalised on opportunities have done so independently once the initial skills and start-up support has been provided.

Similarly, a participatory approach to management planning has resulted in a community agreed and owned outcome. Although, this process takes some time it has developed champions for IBAs (RingGolds and Vatuiria) and widespread support from chiefs and traditional leadership. This experience has been shared between staff of the BL Fiji programme involved in this project assisting others in developing management plans for IBAs in Natewa and Taveuni.

PCS have compiled a "Lessons learned" document which includes information from the eradication itself, but also on project management, fund management, and community involvement. The information has been made available to IAS networks in the region and will be included in accompanying information to the final report but is available now if desired

2. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments that the project has encountered over the last 6 months. Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

Persistence by the PCS project leader has meant multiple complications in finalising arrangements, logistics and planning needs for the eradication have been overcome enabling the rodent and cat operations to be implemented. This has been no small undertaking and while the rodent operation has been completed the eradication of cats requires continuation of a sustained effort. Additional technical support will be sought to assist this but a follow up effort beyond March maybe necessary to complete the eradication and certainly to confirm the result.

