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Villagers benefit from handicraft workshop

 Aug 11 | 08:18 am

Ministry of Information
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A five-day handicraft workshop organized by Birdlife International Fiji will "help villagers earn money rather than waiting for Government assistance," the Roko Tui Cakaudrove, Ro Aca Mataitini said.

Ro Aca was commenting on a recent workshop that saw 28 women from the District of Laucala in Cakaudrove receive training in traditional jewellery making and basket weaving.

The workshop was conducted by Samuela Cabe, an expert in traditional and contemporary jewellery and Finau Mara who had represented Fiji as a master weaver at the Pacific Arts Festival.

According to Tuverea Tuamoto from Birdlife, the training was focused on improving the livelihoods of communities in the Laucala District and in particular landowners of the Ringgold Islands- a group of seven seabird islands to the North of Taveuni.

The islands support globally important seabird populations.

"Through the workshop we wanted to show the landowners that there are alternative income sources rather than those that might exploit the islands limited fragile natural resources," he said

As an example of the income making potential resulting from the workshop, participant Maria Walesi said that she had spent 25 years weaving mats but had never woven a basket.



Workshop motivates Laucala villagers

writer : Source: BirdLife International Fiji

8/11/2010



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As an example of the income making potential resulting from the workshop, participant Maria Walesi said that she had spent 25 years weaving mats but had never woven a basket.

"I spend nearly one month in finishing a mat and that would earn me \$160, whereas a basket only takes me four days to complete and it can easily fetch me \$85 in the Suva Flea Market," she said.

She said when she returns she'll teach other women in the village about an art that is quickly disappearing from their communities.

Ro Aca said that the training has helped young women take the challenge upon themselves to develop and utilise their cultural and traditional skills into a valuable income source.

Women turn art to cash

Ioane Burese

Saturday, August 14, 2010

A FIVE-DAY handicraft workshop, organised by BirdLife International Fiji, will "help villagers earn money rather than waiting for Government assistance," says Roko Tui Cakaudrove, Ro Aca Mataitini.

Ro Aca was commenting on a workshop which saw 28 women from Laucala district in Cakaudrove learn and improve their talents on jewellery-making and basket-weaving.

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Workshop participants showcase their artwork

Women turn art to cash

Villagers find alternative source of income

By IOANE BURESE

A FIVE-DAY handcraft workshop, organised by BirdLife International Fiji, will "help villagers earn money rather than waiting for Government assistance," says Roko Tui Cakaudrove, Ro Aca Mataatini.

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Workshop participants showcase their artwork



Keeping islands rat-free for pacific birds and people – with Elenoa Seniloli

Elenoa Seniloli is a Conservation Officer in the BirdLife International Fiji Programme.

“Lying in my tent at night, I could hear rat-traps snapping shut all around me”, said Elenoa Seniloli – Conservation Officer BirdLife International Fiji Programme.

Many Pacific islands are alive with rats which are thriving on seabird eggs and chicks, driving many species towards extinction. BirdLife in the Pacific is undertaking a ground-breaking programme with local communities to rid the islands of these invasive predators for the benefit of birds, biodiversity and people.

The Pacific region spreads over more than 38 million square kilometres of ocean – an area three times larger than mainland China or the United States of America. Less than 2% of this vast region is dry land; land holding a rather sobering biodiversity record. It has more threatened bird species per unit of land area than any other region in the world.

An important reason for this is that Pacific birds have evolved on tiny islands in isolation from predators, and therefore have few defences against them. Invasive predators – such as rats and cats – have been spread widely across the Pacific by man and are one of the greatest drivers of biodiversity loss. Globally, they have been implicated in almost half of all bird extinctions in the past five centuries.

“Particularly susceptible are ground-nesting seabirds; their eggs and chicks are easy pickings for a hungry rat”, said Ms Seniloli. Species such as Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel*, Black Noddy *Anous minutus* and Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster* face a barrage of attacks at their breeding colonies. Tackling this threat, the BirdLife Pacific Partnership is involved in an expanding and successful programme of invasive species eradications to save the islands for seabirds, wildlife and local people.



Pacific rats predate bird eggs in huge numbers.

The first step is to identify the most vital islands for seabirds – Important Bird Areas (IBAs) – and to assess the threats posed by invasive species. IBAs are sites selected from international criteria defined by BirdLife and represent the world’s most important locations for birds. This list of Pacific IBAs serves to prioritise the

eradication action which follows.

This action started in 2006 on the small Fijian island of Vatuira, an IBA for several seabird species including 28,000 breeding pairs of Black Noddies *Anous minutus*. By working in partnership with the Nagilogilo Clan of Vatuira, BirdLife staff successfully eradicated Pacific Rats by adapting techniques developed in New Zealand. Poison baits – safe to all species except rats on Vatuira – were laid down during two visits in July 2006. Remarkably, the rats found most of the baits in the first night alone, and, just 18 months later, the island was officially declared free from rats.

“The results were quick to see, with ground-nesting seabirds – such as Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus* and Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana* – raising chicks on Vatuira for the first time”, Ms Seniloli said. It is now hoped that these species, and others, will establish significant populations on the island. The benefits to local people were immediate. “No longer do they sleep in fear of rats eating their food – or worse still, their toes – at night”.

The Nagilogilo Clan are now exploring low impact ecotourism opportunities on Vatuira, and BirdLife staff have trained community members in rat eradication, seabird identification and methods for preventing the re-establishment of rats and other introduced species. Local guides are now educating visitors about the importance of stopping rats from returning and how the islands have benefitted from the eradication work.



Loading a helicopter with baits to remove rats from islands in Fiji. (Credit: Steve Cranwell)

Following on from the early success on Vatuira, BirdLife staff have already replicated their eradication work on a total of 16 islands across Fiji, French Polynesia, New Caledonia and Palau. Working with BirdLife Partners – Société d’Ornithologie de Polynésie MANU, Société Calédonienne d’Ornithologie, the Palau Conservation Society and the BirdLife Fiji Programme – this joint conservation action has successfully eradicated rats from 12 islands, creating 255 ha of predator-free island habitat, while protecting breeding colonies for 15 species of seabird and many other native life forms including uncommon and threatened landbirds, reptiles, invertebrates and plants.

With the vast majority of seabird colonies across the region under attack from at least one invasive species, BirdLife’s eradication work continues to expand and preparations are underway to restore an additional 16 important seabird islands, through; the removal of rodents, feral goats, cats and rabbits, which, will result in secure habitat for up to 30 seabird species in the same four countries (Fiji, French Polynesia, New Caledonia and Palau) and are being managed by the respective Birdlife Partners. Additional islands are also being assessed for seabirds, introduced predators and restoration need in the Cook Islands, working with our BirdLife Partner, the Te Ipukarea Society. The eradications and surveys are proposed to take place in 2011.

In addition, these BirdLife Partners will continue to monitor seabird and biological responses to the removal of predators. They will work with local communities and government agencies towards the long-term security of restored seabird islands, notably through the establishment of effective island biosecurity and quarantine controls.

BirdLife's invasive species eradication work in the Pacific is a hugely important contribution to seabird and biodiversity conservation in the region; it is an example of how conservation intervention really works.

The BirdLife Seabird Island Restoration programme is chiefly supported by the David & Lucile Packard Foundation, the Darwin Initiative and the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund. Numerous other donors, governments and regional invasive species experts and agencies have also provided invaluable assistance in making the island restoration programme possible.

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The Magnificent Seven (rat free Fijian islands)

Seabird chicks - like Brown Noddy - are very vulnerable to rat predation.
Credit: Steve Cranwell.

Two years after the BirdLife International Fiji Programme implemented an operation to eradicate rats from the Ringgold Islands, all seven islands have been confirmed rodent-free. Early monitoring also shows that the birds, people and wider wildlife of these remote islands are already benefitting from the removal of these invasive pests. BirdLife staff are continuing to work with local people to ensure the rats don't return.

Located to the northeast of Taveuni, Fiji, the Ringgold Islands hold internationally important numbers of nesting seabirds. Seabird populations here, as elsewhere in the Pacific, were suffering because of rats, which eat eggs and nestlings. The Ringgolts are also an important source of natural resources and income for the islands' landowners.



In August 2008, the BirdLife Fiji programme began working closely with the two landowning clans, Yavusa Nagelevu and Mataqali Qilo, to eradicate the rats. A specially formulated rodent bait was dropped on the islands from a helicopter.

Among the positive changes recorded since 2008 Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus* have been observed for two of the seven islands. This species was not previously known in the area, and its appearance is a promising sign that birds vulnerable to the impacts of rats will establish breeding colonies.

Click notes to view the image descriptions.

In mid-November 2010, BirdLife's Fiji team led a survey of the Ringgold Islands. Colonies of Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel*, Black Noddy *Anous minutus* and Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster* were recorded. These populations represent over 1% of the global number for each species, and qualify the island group as an Important Bird Area.

In addition, nationally significant numbers of Red-footed Booby *Sula sula*, Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus*, Common White Tern *Gygis alba*, and the globally Vulnerable Bristle-thighed Curlew *Numenius tahitiensis* were also present.

Significant numbers of turtle nests were recorded on three islands and skink activity had also increased, particularly the Pacific Black Skink *Emoia nigra*, which is listed under Fiji's Endangered and Protected Species Act.

The eradication programme was only the first step in keeping these islands free of rats and other foreign pests. Biosecurity plans have been developed for all the islands, and village representatives have been trained in techniques to prevent the introduction of alien species.

Bridled Tern have been observed on two of the islands for the first time. An early sign of success. Credit: Rosswebsdale / Flickr.

"BirdLife urges all visitors to these islands to check their boats and equipment for stowaway rats prior to departure", said Mr Sialisi Rasalato, BirdLife Fiji programme Conservation Officer. "The introduction of just one pregnant rat would be enough to undo all the hard work, and set the clock back to a time where the islands were crawling with rats."

Sia Rasalato added that the BirdLife International Fiji programme is grateful to the two land owning clans for their support. "Without this, the eradication and the islands' ongoing pest free status would not have been



possible.”

In association with the landowning communities, BirdLife has established a Site Support Group – the Ringgold Seabird Committee – to lead the islands’ management, communicate the results of the eradication, and champion the islands’ protection among the wider communities.

The seven islands are traditionally under the District (*tikina*) of Laucala. Mr Josefa Tale, the *Mata ni Tikina* (Laucala District representative), heads the SSG, and provides a link to the Cakaudrove Provincial Council in achieving support for the islands protection.

Mr Tale has affirmed the interest of the landowners in protecting the islands from invasive species such as rats.

“In order to achieve this, we the island owners must ensure that the islands continue to be rat free. On behalf of the Ringgold Seabird Committee and the Ringgolds Community, I therefore ask visitors to be especially careful when visiting the Ringgolds”, said Mr Tale.

Pacific rats predate bird eggs in huge numbers.

Mr Tevita Mereti of Nagelelevu village thanked BirdLife International Fiji programme for eradicating rats off the islands, as they were damaging the islands unique biodiversity, and ruining their plantation crops and food stores. He urged fishermen and others who may visit the islands to check their boats and equipment for possible stowaways.

“It has taken years of preparation and work to get rid of rats; a careless visitor could bring it back in a day, so we ask visitors to be especially careful” concluded Mr Mereti.



The BirdLife Seabird Island Restoration programme is supported by the David & Lucile Packard Foundation, and the Darwin Initiative. Assistance to the programme has also been provided by the Pacific Invasives Initiative, the Pacific Invasives Learning Network, and the New Zealand Department of Conservation. The Fiji Department of Environment and wider Fiji Government have also supported the island restoration programme.

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NEWS

Message from the Regional Director



Don Stewart

Welcome to our first e-bulletin in 2011. In this issue we bring you news of some of the activities being carried out by BirdLife Partners across the Pacific region to save our most threatened bird species – and our wider biodiversity – from extinction. You'll read about what's being done for the Critically Endangered Crow Honeyeater in New Caledonia; the New Zealand Fairy Tern – that country's rarest bird – and the Great Spotted Kiwi; an attempt to rediscover the elusive Pohnpei Mountain Starling in the Federated States of Micronesia; plus reports on Important Bird Areas for seabirds in the Pacific and how seabirds are returning to Fiji's Ringgold Islands following a successful programme to eradicate rats; community efforts to restore forest habitats in Fiji; success with combating invasive vines in Vanuatu; and dismay in Australia over an extension of the duck-shooting season in the State of Victoria.

Back in the Secretariat, we received a visit in November from the Board of Trustees of the David and Lucile Packard Foundation of the United States, led by the Chairman of the Foundation, Susan Packard Orr, and her sister, Nancy Packard Burnett – daughters of the Foundation's founders – and seven other trustees and staff. The Packard party was briefed on the work being undertaken by BirdLife Pacific Partners in the region, especially on seabirds and islands restorations and was also taken on birdwatching trips around Suva. Funding grants from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation were instrumental in initialing seabirds' programmes in the Pacific which are being undertaken by BirdLife Partners in Fiji, French Polynesia, New Caledonia, New Zealand and Palau and the visit gave the trustees the opportunity to learn at first-hand the issues involved in implementing these programmes.

Following the signing of a contract with the European Union in December, in the coming weeks we shall be appointing a Regional Programme Manager Alien Invasive Species to manage our new, EU-funded regional project. We shall also be planning to host a mid-term review, on behalf of Conservation International, of projects funded under the CEPF's Polynesia-Micronesia Hotspot. That meeting is expected to be held in Fiji in early June. We shall also begin preparations for the convening, in October, in association with SOP-MANU, the BirdLife Partner in French Polynesia, of the next Pacific Partnership Meeting. All-in-all, 2011 is shaping up to be another productive and exciting year, as was 2010, for the Partnership and for all those interested in and concerned about the conservation status of birds in the Pacific. I wish all our readers the same.

Don Stewart

LATEST NEWS

Ruddy hell: turnstone flies 27,000 kms – twice!! Researchers from the Victorian Wader Study Group - a special interest group of Birds Australia (BirdLife in Australia) - have just recaptured a Ruddy Turnstone which has completed a 27,000 km round trip migration for the second time. Read the full story on the BirdLife Community: www.birdlife.org/community/2011/01/ruddy-hell-turnstone-flies-27000-kms---twice/

THIS E-BULLETIN

This e-bulletin is produced by the BirdLife International Pacific Partnership Secretariat to inform our collaborators and supporters about BirdLife activities in the Pacific. In case you have any questions about this e-bulletin or about the work of the BirdLife Pacific Partnership, please contact us at birds@birdlifepacific.org.fj

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Message from the BirdLife Global Council

The 38th meeting of the BirdLife Global Council was held in Cambridge, UK between 30 November and 2 December 2010. Cambridge is a nice little city, but you better go there in summer...

Apart from the usual administrative business such as the budget and network updates, one of the highlights from this week was the presence of the new CEO of Audubon Society (USA), David Yarnold, as BirdLife expects to strengthen the relations with this important Partner organisation in the Americas. David Yarnold explained that saving birds and habitats on the US mainland only is not sufficient and that Audubon will now also focus on Canada and Central and South America. However, the Pacific also shares some important birds with the US, for instance the Bristle-thighed Curlew - so we expect some future interest from Audubon in our region as well. And of course, Hawaii is part of the Pacific region too.

As the year 2011 has been declared the International Year of Forests, the BirdLife Council decided that this is a good opportunity to promote some important projects that are under development, through the Forests of Hope programme which may prove particularly useful in some of the Pacific countries like Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, where primary forests are under serious threat. A proposed Memorandum of Understanding with the International Tropical Timber Organisation (ITTO) was agreed by the Council members. For more information about the Forests of Hope programme, see www.birdlife.org/forests/

We also heard a report on the CBD COP held in Nagoya in October 2010. BirdLife was well represented at this meeting and was present on many events always acting as a strong group, which impressed many people attending the COP. The Council further discussed climate change adaptation, biodiversity offsets, carbon finance and how to work with corporates. An interesting paper on the procedure to follow on how to agree which corporates could be BirdLife donors was presented to members and received approval after some amendments. It may be very useful to apply these procedures at regional or national level as well.

We finally heard an interesting update on the controversial conservation issues of the Houbara Bustard in the Middle East by Dr Nigel Collar.

The next meeting will be held in May in Copenhagen (Denmark) and will be a unique opportunity to meet people from the Aage V Jensen Charity Foundation, which is an important donor of the BirdLife International Partnership.

For more information, please contact Dr Philippe Raust, BirdLife Global Councillor for the Pacific, at phil.raust@mail.pf

BirdLife in the Pacific

The BirdLife International Pacific Partnership includes seven Partner organisations working in Australia (Birds Australia), Cook Islands (Te Ipukarea Society), French Polynesia (Société d'Ornithologie de Polynésie), New Caledonia (Société Calédonienne d'Ornithologie), New Zealand (Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society Inc), Palau (Palau Conservation Society) and Samoa (O le Si'osi'omaga Society Inc). BirdLife International is also delivering a conservation Programme in Fiji pending the development of an eligible national NGO to become the BirdLife Partner in the country. The Partnership is supported by a regional Secretariat based in Fiji that provides technical, logistical, programmatic and fundraising support to the Pacific Partners. For more information and the latest news on BirdLife's work in the Pacific, see www.birdlife.org/regional/pacific



More BirdLife news: birds and arts



The winners of *The World's Rarest Birds* international photo competition have been announced. The competition, launched in 2010, aimed to secure images of the 566 most threatened birds on Earth for a new book highlighting their plight: www.birdlife.org/community/2011/01/winners-of-the-worlds-rarest-birds-announced/



In 2009, Margaret Atwood, co-President with Graeme Gibson of BirdLife's Rare Bird Club, redefined the book tour, taking her new novel: *The Year of the Flood*, on a journey through the US, Canada, and Europe. The tour has now been captured with a new film entitled *In the Wake of the Flood*. Follow the trail on www.birdlife.org/community/2010/12/from-ground-breaking-book-tour-to-documentary-film/



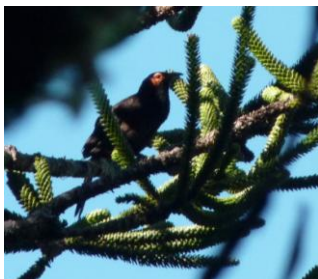
BIRDLIFE INITIATIVES IN THE PACIFIC

Species

CROW HONEYEATER SURVEYS IN NEW CALEDONIA



One guide in the field.
Photo Baptiste Angin



Crow Honeyeater. Photo
Fabien Jan

The Crow Honeyeater has recently been upgraded from Endangered to Critically Endangered in the IUCN Red List, as a result of the findings during the fieldwork to identify the Important Bird Areas in New Caledonia, when very few individuals were located. The information at the time [2003-2006] indicated that the total population was likely to be no more than 250 individuals - a substantial decline compared with an estimate of 1,000 to 3,000 individuals just five years earlier. This, combined with a substantial contraction in range, indicated that the species was in rapid decline. SCO (Société Calédonienne d'Ornithologie, BirdLife in New Caledonia) decided to survey the Massif du Sud Important Bird Area (IBA), and in particular areas that had not previously been surveyed in detail, to obtain an improved population estimate.

Between October and December 2010, SCO spent 65 team-days (2 men) in the field in the Massif du Sud IBA, covering 17 of the 23 areas that we identified as being the priority areas to survey for the bird. Within this area, the team managed to undertake 473 point counts with playback and a further 47 nocturnal point counts. In total, Crow Honeyeaters were located on 33 occasions. SCO is planning to make a detailed assessment in 2011 of the density that this represents. Another project, which is being undertaken in the north of New Caledonia, will survey a site for Crow Honeyeaters in an area that has not been surveyed for 10 years. The results from there will be awaited with great interest. SCO will then need to plan a course of action to assess how to improve the conservation status of the species within the remaining known range.

For more information, contact Baptiste Angin baptiste.angin@wanadoo.fr or Mark O'Brien mark@birdlifepacific.org.fj

FAIRY TERNS IN FOCUS



Fairy Tern. Photo New
Zealand Department of
Conservation

Forest & Bird, BirdLife in New Zealand, is studying the behavior of the Fairy Tern with the aim of gathering information to help secure the future of one of New Zealand's most endangered bird species. The Fairy Tern is listed as (globally) Vulnerable in the IUCN Red List, but the New Zealand subspecies *davisae* is in much worse condition. Forest & Bird's Karen Baird is coordinating research during the breeding season (i.e. the New Zealand summer) to learn more about the feeding habits of breeding birds, and to track the movements of non-breeding birds. Out of the 43 known Fairy Terns, there are just eight to 10 breeding pairs. The only four known breeding sites are all in the north of the North Island at Mangawhai, Waipu, Pakiri on the east coast and at Papakanui on the western side. The study of the feeding habits of the birds is being done at Mangawhai, where about a quarter of the birds are known to breed. The study tries to find what the breeding birds are feeding on and where they go to forage. The information will be used to try to determine what is needed in the birds' habitat and how to enhance potential breeding sites. "What we are hoping is that we can identify a number of sites which are

in the current range of the Fairy Tern that they can move to," Karen Baird said. "If we can identify new recovery sites, we can make them safer for Fairy Terns to move to." The researchers are also tracking the movements and behaviour of the non-breeding adult birds, to explain why they do not join the birds at the four known breeding sites. Fairy Terns used to be very widespread in New Zealand but have been decimated by introduced predators and habitat loss. They are also very sensitive to dog and human disturbance, including vehicles on beaches, which can destroy nests, chicks and eggs.

Please contact Karin Baird at k.baird@forestandbird.org.nz for more information about this story.

OTHER NEW ZEALAND SPECIES NEWS

Great Spotted Kiwi making a comeback in the Cobb Valley could have a greater chance of survival, thanks to a wildlife sanctuary proposal by Golden Bay conservation group 'Friends of the Cobb' that was recently funded by the BirdLife International Community Conservation Fund (managed by Forest & Bird). Read the full story on www.stuff.co.nz/nelson-mail/news/4440094/Sanctuary-plan-a-boost-for-kiwi

For more news about penguin research: see www.nature.com/news/2011/110112/full/news.2011.15.html#B3

SEARCH CONTINUES FOR POHNPEI'S RAREST BIRD



CSP staff searching for the elusive starling. Photo Mark O'Brien

A recent survey in the Federated States of Micronesia, jointly funded by the 2009 British Birdfair's *Lost and Found Initiative*, BirdLife's Preventing Extinctions Programme and the BirdLife International Community Conservation Fund, tried to find one of the region's rarest bird: the Pohnpei Starling. The Conservation Society of Pohnpei (CSP)'s Terrestrial Programme staff, in collaboration with BirdLife International's Dr Mark O'Brien, looked for seven days along the high ridges of Pohnpei in search of the Critically Endangered bird. The last confirmed report of the species was in 1995, but there have been occasional, unconfirmed, sightings since, including by CSP staff in 2008. The recent expedition revisited the areas where the bird has most recently been recorded. Unfortunately, the team was unsuccessful in its primary aim of locating the starling, however, it did provide all parties with the opportunity to assess how they might best confirm the continued existence of the starling. Based on these findings, a next visit is being planned in for early 2011.

For more information, read the full article on the BirdLife 'community' website www.birdlife.org/community/2011/01/search-continues-for-pohnpei-s-rarest-bird/ or contact Mark O'Brien at mark@birdlifepacific.org.fj

Sites

MARINE IBAS IN THE PACIFIC – AN UPDATE

BirdLife International is implementing a cross-regional project entitled "Conserving marine biodiversity through a world-wide network of marine protected areas," supported by the Aage V. Jensen Charity Foundation. Under this project, work is ongoing to identify marine IBAs throughout the Pacific. The BirdLife Pacific Partnership Secretariat, together with BirdLife Partners and Affiliates in the region, have already identified 122 sites that qualify as Important Bird Areas (IBAs) for their seabird populations in Fiji, French Polynesia, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Palau and Samoa. Thirty coastal and pelagic marine sites have been proposed as candidate marine IBAs to encompass key foraging grounds for the IBA trigger species by identifying seaward extensions based upon known foraging radii or satellite tracking data. Work is ongoing to extend this approach to countries and territories not represented in the BirdLife Partnership based on literature review to collate published information about important seabird sites.

Having identified priority sites for seabirds where they nest, and at sea, the programme will seek to identify knowledge gaps where seabird information is insufficient to identify IBAs, and to encourage surveys to plug these gaps. Importantly, we are hoping to support Partners to advocate for the inclusion of marine IBAs by governments when designating marine protected areas within national jurisdictions. Many countries in the Pacific have agreed to setting up to 30% of their marine Exclusive Economic Zones aside for protection as a commitment under the Convention on Biological Diversity. We hope that marine IBAs will form an integral part of plans to conserve the Pacific's unprecedented marine resources and as a blue print for focussing seabird conservation in the region.

Please contact Jez Bird for more information on this story at jez@birdlifepacific.org.fj

REFORESTATION ON MOUNT NABUKELEVU, KADAVU



Photo Mere Valu

The Fiji Programme, together with the Nabukelevu Site Support Group (SSG), participated in some strenuous tree planting prior to the festive season last year. Five hundred native tree species were planted in areas which were previously dominated by grassland used for agriculture, on the lower slopes of Lomati village at the foot of Mount Nabukelevu. The reforestation drive was proudly supported by the children and village members of Lomati village. Native tree species planted included the kauri tree *Agathis macrophylla*, the vesi *Instia bijuga*, the tavola *Terminalia capitanea*, kavvula *Endospermum macrophyllum* and the vaivia ni Viti *Serianthes melanesica*. The idea to begin the reforestation programme was initiated by the elders in Lomati village as a result of the pressing problem of erosion and landslides, caused by unsustainable agricultural practices on the hillside. This was causing much damage to the soil, water availability and livelihoods which the village depended on. Reforestation started in May 2009, with support from a GEF-Small Grants Programme-funded project, and is currently being extended to other lowland grassland areas in the three other villages near the summit, supported by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund. The programme has also allowed members of the community, in particular the younger generation to assist the SSG in promoting reforestation of native trees for the purpose of providing habitats for their native and endemic bird species.

Mount Nabukelevu is one of two IBAs (Important Bird Areas) on the island of Kadavu, and its montane forest is of critical importance for five Globally Threatened bird species: White-throated Storm-petrel and Kadavu Musk-parrot (both Vulnerable), and Collared Petrel, Whistling Dove and Kadavu Fantail (all Near Threatened).

For more information, contact Tuverea Tuamoto at tuamoto@birdlifepacific.org.fj

Habitats

BREAKTHROUGH IN CONTROLLING AN INVASIVE VINE IN THE PACIFIC



Joseph testing the specially adapted vine injector at a workshop in Vanuatu. Photo Sue Maturin

Vatthe Conservation Area owners in Vanuatu, working with BirdLife International's New Zealand Partner, Forest & Bird, have developed a successful method of controlling the invasive vine, *Merremia peltata*, which is destroying forests on many Pacific Islands. Sue Maturin, Forests & Bird's Vanuatu specialist, has been working with the owners of Vatthe Conservation Area on the island of Espiritu Santo in Vanuatu to trial the use of herbicides and cutting the vine. Vatthe is Vanuatu's largest Conservation Area, and its most extensive lowland alluvial forest. Its diverse wildlife includes the globally Endangered Santa Cruz Ground-dove, and the Vulnerable endemic Vanuatu Megapode. Vatthe is on the Vanuatu Government's tentative list for World Heritage Site nomination. Sue Maturin explained: "We can kill the vines by injecting 'Weedmaster Duo' (active ingredient 360g/L glyphosate) into the vines main stem. We have also developed special hole punches, injection kits and a walking stick injector which means people can walk through the forest easily and quickly injecting the myriads of ground running stems, that lie tangled like a mass of electric wiring on the forest floor. Now hundreds of unhealthy trees have regenerated their crowns and the forest floor is covered with young seedlings." Forest & Bird, in partnership with a Vanuatu NGO partner - Eco-Livelihood Development Associates (EDA) -, managed to obtain a \$US 50,000 grant from UNDP/GEF/SGP to develop landowner capacity to control the invasive vine by injecting the Weedmaster. It is hoped this will reduce the density of vine to a level where the landowners can control it in the future by regular cycles of hand cutting in 800ha that surround a core vine-free 200ha area. "We hope this is a breakthrough as until now most people thought it would be impossible to control this giant super weed which is capable of completely smothering vast areas of forest."

For more information, contact Sue Maturin at s.maturin@forestandbird.org.nz

SEABIRDS BACK TO RAT-FREE RINGGOLD ISLANDS



Nesting Black Noddy (*Gogo*) on the rat free Ringgold Islands. Photo Steve Cranwell



Adult Brown Booby (*Koro*) and chick. Photo Steve Cranwell

Two years after the BirdLife International Fiji Programme introduced an operation to eradicate rats from the seven Ringgold Islands, off the shores of Taveuni in Fiji, all seven islands have been confirmed rodent-free. Early investigations also show that the birds, people and wider wildlife of these remote islands are already benefitting from the removal of these invasive pests. Located to the northeast of Taveuni, the Ringgold Islands hold internationally important numbers of nesting seabirds. The numbers of Lesser Frigate-bird (*Kasaqa*) on the islands are among the highest in Fiji. The many thousands of Black Noddies (*Gogo*) and large Brown Booby and Red-footed Booby (*Koro*) colonies represent over 1% of the global number for each species, and qualify the island group as an internationally Important Bird Area. However, rats began eating the eggs and chicks of nesting seabirds, seriously affecting these bird populations.

A recent monitoring survey of the Ringgold Islands by the Fiji Programme showed the positive impact that the eradication programme has had on bird and animal life. Since the start of the programme in August 2008, the Fiji Programme has worked closely with the Ringgold's two landowning clans, Yavusa Naqelelevu and Mataqali Qilo, to successfully eradicate the rats. The recent survey detected Bridled Tern, a species previously not known in the area, on two of the islands, as well as significant numbers of the Brown noddy, White Tern (*Tala*), and the globally Vulnerable Bristle-thighed Curlew. The team also saw increased reptile activity including the Pacific Black Skink (*Moko loa*), which is listed under Fiji's Endangered and Protected Species Act.

Working with local people, BirdLife continues to monitor the islands to ensure that the rats do not return. To protect the natural resources and the landowners' sources of income, the landowning communities have established a Site Support Group for the islands which has developed a bio-security plan for the islands. BirdLife has provided training to village communities in techniques to prevent the introduction of rats and other foreign species.

The seabird restoration program is supported by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation and the Darwin Initiative, with assistance provided by the Pacific Invasives Initiative, the New Zealand Department of Conservation and the Fiji Government, in particular the Department of Environment.

For more information, read the article on www.birdlife.org/community/2010/12/the-magnificent-seven-rat-free-fijian-islands/ or contact Steve Cranwell at steve@birdlifepacific.org.fj

People

A FOWL POLITICAL DECISION IN AUSTRALIA

At last the drought is over, and rather than allowing Australia's besieged waterfowl populations to recover after 13 years of debilitating drought, Victoria's new Baillieu State Government has responded by approving the 2011 Recreational Duck Shooting Season for the widespread slaughter of native wildlife. While most people would throw a lifeline to the waterfowl and put an end to the annual massacre (as has happened in most other states), the Government has instead extended the duration of the Duck Shooting Season to 12 weeks and increased the bag limit of ducks that can be shot up to 10 ducks for every day of the season. That is, every hunter can legally kill up to 840 ducks this year (if they were laid from end to end, they would stretch more than 3½ times the length of the MCG).

Birds Australia (BirdLife in Australia) vehemently opposes the expansion of the Recreational Duck Shooting Season, and emphatically rejects that it should be allowed to occur at all. "The level of mortality and wounding of these native birds for the amusement of a handful of shooters cannot be justified in a modern society," said Dr Graeme Hamilton, Birds Australia's CEO. "Young, inexperienced ducks will bear the brunt of the onslaught, which could be disastrous for the overall waterfowl population for years to come".

Polls have regularly shown overwhelming support for the abolition of duck shooting in Victoria, and yet successive governments have insisted on pandering to a small number of shooters, especially in rural constituencies. "There can be no realistic justification for this decision. Our wildlife should not be sacrificed for political purposes. Victoria's Recreational Duck Shooting Season should be abandoned once and for all", said Dr Hamilton. "After all," he added, "there are substantial penalties if you kill virtually any other native wildlife, but you can happily shoot native waterfowl for the fun of it".

For more information, contact Graeme Hamilton, Birds Australia CEO, at g.hamilton@birdsaustralia.com.au

[downloaded from www.birdsaustralia.com.au/media-releases-news/media-releases-and-news.html, 13 January 2011]

TIP

Check out the amazing pictures on www.birdsaustralia.com.au/homepage-news/2010-ba-photo-comp-winners.html

NEWS FROM THE SECRETARIAT



New staff member at the BirdLife Pacific Partnership Secretariat

Nick Askew



Dr Nick Askew is replacing Maaïke Manten as the Regional Programme Development Manager for the BirdLife Pacific Partnership and Secretariat, and will be based at the Fiji office from April 2011. Nick has worked for the BirdLife International office in Cambridge, UK, as a Communications Officer from 2008. During this period he has been responsible for promoting the Pacific, Africa and Middle Eastern Partnerships, and the Global Seabird and Flyways Programmes. Prior to BirdLife, Nick worked as an Ecological Consultant and completed a PhD studying the conservation ecology of Barn Owls in the UK. Please contact Nick at nick.askew@birdlife.org

BIRDLIFE GLOSSARY

What are "SSGs?"

Site Support Groups (or 'Local Conservation Groups') are groups or individuals who, together with relevant stakeholders, work with BirdLife Partner organisations to help promote conservation and sustainable development at Important Bird Areas. Members are usually volunteers and are typically drawn from the local community but may also include local authority representatives, business persons or other stakeholders.

SSGs are one of the practical ways of achieving conservation by the local communities.

The SSG approach is applied by national BirdLife Partners as the main mechanism to create a network of local constituencies working to protect the most threatened biodiversity sites in the Pacific, while benefiting from the wise use of the natural resources there-in.

Probably the most important value of SSGs is in their links with the future. SSGs provide conservation now, and due to their intricate relationships with the wider community and to the resources within the IBAs, will continue to do so in the future. They have proven to be a highly sustainable conservation and sustainable development tool, applied by BirdLife Partners all-over the world.

For more information about Site Support Groups in the Pacific, contact Miliana Ravuso at milly@birdlifepacific.org.fj

Keep an eye out for BirdLife Pacific's very own "Site Support Group / Community Conservation model" that will be announced in the next Pacific e-bulletin....

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

- Who:** **International Riverfoundation – Riverprize 2011**
When: 30 March 2011
What: Grants and recognition through a high-profile award in river management
How much: Aus\$ 350,000 for Thiess (international) and Aus\$ 200,000 for Australian prize
More information: http://riverfoundation.org.au/riverprize_entering.php
- Who:** **Pacific Islands Polynesian Education Fund**
When: 31 March 2011
What: Financial assistance for Polynesian people undertaking tertiary study in New Zealand
How much: NZ\$ 28,500
Eligible countries: Cook Islands, Fiji, Niue, Samoa, Tokelau and Tonga
More information: www.pipfef.org.nz
- Who:** **Derek Tribe Award / Crawford Fund**
When: 1 May 2011 (expected – call not out yet)
What: Biannual award for outstanding performance in agriculture and natural resource management
Eligible countries: Developing countries
More information: www.crawfordfund.org/training/awards/tribeward.html

EVENTS IN 2011



Please let us know what you are planning to do in 2011, the Year of Forests!

See also
www.birdlife.org/datazone/sowb/spotforest
 and
www.birdlife.org/community/2011/01/save-forests-save-ourselves/

NEW RESOURCES

NEW COMIC STRIP FOR CHILDREN OF NABUKELEVU, KADAVU, FIJI



The BirdLife Fiji Programme has published its first comic strip for the children of Nabukelevu, Kadavu. This was produced through a project backed by the local and national government and supported by the Keidanren Nature Conservation Fund, which is promoting the children of Mount Nabukelevu as conservationists of the future. Educational tools such as this comic strip and a children-friendly pocket guide to Kadavu's birds (which will be produced later this year) will provide the children of Kadavu with accessible and easy-to-understand information about the value of forests, ecosystems, birds and biodiversity. The comic describes actual practices currently degrading Kadavu's forests and how they affect birds, their habitats and water quality. It also points out valuable lessons that can be learnt by the current generation, including the importance of sustainable management for soil conservation, food security, water quality and biodiversity. The distribution of these comic books to the primary schools around Mount Nabukelevu will be preceded by a Kids Eco-Camp in early 2011, which will see the children getting their hands dirty undertaking native tree-planting in and around their communities and bird identification training and setting up of nature clubs.

ON-LINE ARTICLES FROM ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION (2010) vol.37 (01):

Some interesting new Open Source scientific articles about community-based natural resource management in the Pacific (Australia and Pacific) recently became available on-line:

- **Using local ecological knowledge to identify shark river habitats in Fiji (South Pacific)**, by RASALATO E, MAGINNITY V, BRUNNSCHWEILER JM.
<http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract?fromPage=online&aid=7819772>
- **Law, custom and community-based natural resource management in Kubulau District (Fiji)**, by CLARKE P, JUPITER SD.
<http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract?fromPage=online&aid=7819784>
- **Adaptive community-based biodiversity conservation in Australia's tropical rainforests**, by HILL R, WILLIAMS KJ, PERT PL, ROBINSON CJ, DALE AP, WESTCOTT DA, GRACE RA, O'MALLEY T.
<http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract?fromPage=online&aid=7819778>

CONTRIBUTION OF ARTICLES

We welcome contributions to this e-bulletin from the BirdLife Pacific Partners about activities and events in the fields of species, site and habitat conservation. We are also very interested in your work with people. Please send your contributions to birds@birdlifepacific.org.fj.

Please feel free to send this e-bulletin to your own members, collaborators and supporters