

Pacific Invasives Learning Network Network sound bites, August 2007

Not all teams and their achievements are included here and for those missed out it just means I failed to catch up with you in time, so apologies.

Current activities

PILN 2007 annual meeting

The 2007 PILN annual meeting will take place at the Richard B. Gump Research Station, Moorea, French Polynesia from 3 to 7 September 2007, hosted by the Ministry of Tourism and Environment. Around 70 – 80 people will participate, from 14 different countries.

The meeting will be followed from 10 to 12 September by a 3-day workshop on social marketing run by RARE. Concurrently from 11 – 12 September there will be an invasive species strategic planning workshop for French Polynesia.

Cook Islands

Predator protection is on the drawing board for Atiu Island to help preserve the newly introduced Rimatara lorikeet or kura population following rat scat found when collecting cargo unloaded from a boat. The people of Rimatara gifted the 27 birds to Atiu who are now responsible for them. A proposal will be put to the Atiu island administration to have the island's harbour completely rat proofed using a series of permanent bait stations around the area.

Guam

Congratulations to Cheryl Calastro of the Guam Division of Aquatic and Wildlife Resources for being accepted into the Rare Pride program. Cheryl will leave this September to start her diploma in social marketing with RARE.

Palau

The Republic of Palau is working to develop its capacity to prevent, detect, and respond rapidly to marine invasive species. To this end, the National Invasive Species Committee organized a marine invasives survey and training from July 23-27, 2007. The training was conducted by Dr. Chad Hewitt and Dr. Marnie Campbell, both from Australia. Participants developed recommendations to enable Palau to respond to the threat of marine invasives, which will be taken up by the National Invasive Species Committee. The training in survey design and methodology included hands-on surveying in the field as well as training in laboratory techniques for sorting and identifying marine invasives. High-risk sites in Malakal Harbor were selected for the training and as result Palau now has a 17-member team of divers and support personnel representing national government agencies, state governments, non-governmental agencies, and dive tour companies.

On July 26, 2007, during the survey and training, Palau's newly-formed Marine Invasives Survey Team, discovered several potentially invasive species in small patches on the keel

of a vessel docked at the commercial port in Malakal, Koror. All of these organisms are found in the Philippines and Indonesia, but have never before been found in Palau and all have the potential to grow in Palau, and to significantly impact Palau's world-renowned marine ecosystems. It was therefore urgent that these organisms be removed from Palau's waters before they could reproduce and spread. The President of Palau joined the Survey Team and volunteers in an emergency cleanup to keep them from spreading.

This activity was supported by the Republic of China-Taiwan under Operation Counter-Invasion, the IUCN, the Marine Bio-security Education Consortium, the Australian Maritime College and PILN, as well as several local agencies, organizations, and private companies.

Samoa

- Congratulations to James Atherton of CI for obtaining funding for the Mt Vaea restoration project. This is a long-term project to restore Mt Vaea Forest Reserve of a variety of invasive and introduced plants and replant with native species. Inception funds have been obtained from the Robert Louis Stevenson Foundation to initiate project planning. The full project will be implemented over 5 years from 2008 to 2012.
- A workshop was held 9 - 10 August by the Samoan National Invasive Species Task (SNITT) team, hosted by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment and supported by Conservation International. The purpose of the workshop was to prioritise the top 20 invasive species in Samoa using the simple data base system for scoring and prioritizing invasive species which SNITT has been developing over the last 18 months. A total of 18 people participated from a number of Government Ministries and NGO's'. Management plans were then drafted for three of the species, *Merremia peltata*, *Sida acuta* and *Coccinia grandis*. The prioritization is not yet complete as the system is still being refined, but it will be presented at the PILN 2007 annual meeting, 3 – 7 September in French Polynesia.

Partnership

- The July Newsletter from PII has been issued, with an account of the PII Partners meeting and an update on some demonstration projects. Anyone who would like a copy please email the Pacific Invasives Initiative, PII@auckland.ac.nz
- PILN received an award of \$100,000 from the National Fish and Wildlife Fund and around \$83,000 from Fonds Pacifique (French government), to cover airfares for the annual meeting and the coordinator costs. Together with other funds already obtained this means that the PILN pilot programme is now fully funded up to the end of May 2008.

Planned work

Guam

Eradication of rats and mice from Cocos Island, planned for the dry season 2008 (February). Meanwhile conducting further studies, such as:

- Radio telemetry of rodents to determine habitat use (radio collars will be loaned to us from Island Conservation)
- Crab density estimates
- Biosecurity implementation and evaluation

USDA's National Wildlife Research Center Hilo Station in Hawaii is still conducting toxicity trials for mice, Polynesian rats, ship/black/roof rats and Norway rats.

New Caledonia

A feasibility study for restoration of Lepredour Island, South Province, is being planned together with the Pacific Invasive initiative. Leprédour Island is a protected area in the South Province (Boulouparis). Tropical dry sclerophyll forest is one of the most endangered major vegetation types in the New Caledonia biodiversity hot spot. Lepredour, a 740-ha island in St Vincent Bay, contains some key remnants of this forest type, but these are highly degraded and under severe threat from introduced weeds (*Passiflora suberosa*) and pests (rabbits, rodents, deer, Giant African snails). Preservation and restoration of these remnants through weed and pest control and/or eradication could therefore make potentially globally important contribution to conservation. Highlighting this, two individuals of a new tree species *Pittosporum taniaum*, were first discovered in 1988, but both died in 1992. Three more individuals were found in 2002, but no more since. Although some hundreds of seedlings have been propagated *ex situ*, this species will not persist in the wild on Lepredour without herbivore control.

The objectives of the feasibility study are to design trials to determine the consequences (on other pests/weeds and on native vegetation recovery/restoration) of removing or controlling the suit of pests in different sequences or combinations on Lepredour Island and to assess the technical feasibility and costs of removing (or reducing) the impacts of introduced plants and animals in the order identified above on Lepredour Island.

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