

Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

(due 31 October 2010)

Project Ref. No.	17-026
Project Title	Restoration of Priority Pacific Island Ecosystems for People and Biodiversity
Countries	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	Steve Cranwell
Report date	October 2010
Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4)	2
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).

Output 1; Eradication of rodents and feral cats from Kayangel Atoll

The Palau project has continued regular visits to Kayangel consulting with Kayangel leaders over eradication planning decisions and preparations the dialogue maintaining community support for the project and operation. PCS has circulated a draft operational plan and received feedback from experts. In response the plan is currently being revised by PCS and will be peer reviewed by the technical Eradication Advisory Group in December. The baiting operation is scheduled for February 2011. It is proposed to apply the bait aerially the logistics for which PCS have arranged with Palau Helicopters and obtained technical support from the US Fish and Wildlife Service. A trial to assess the impact of rodent bait on Micronesian Megapode, and any mitigating actions needed was completed with the assistance of the US Department of Agriculture. PCS, are awaiting the final data analysis and recommendations which will enable the operational plan to be finalised. Delays in completing the mitigation trial and finalising the operational plan have prevented confirmation of the bait order.

Assistance from an expert (formerly with the US Smithsonian Institution) has helped resolve a previous issue with the monitoring plan (pertaining to lizards) with techniques now finalised the collection of field data will be made and assisted by the expert. Although, baseline data has been collected for all other biological and social indicators the data entry has taken longer than expected and the associated report is still to be completed.

Output 2; Government and civil society stakeholders in Palau have the capacity to perpetuate and manage restored island ecosystems

The mitigation trial was organized as a training activity which, PCS and partners from Koror State and Kayangel State participated in. An opportunity for PCS staff to participate in an aerial operation to be conducted in New Caledonia (Lepredour Island) had been arranged for October. However, this could not proceed due to cancelation of the operation. A regional eradication training workshop scheduled for November has also been postponed until March.

The development of practical eradication experience will now largely focus on technical experts providing on the job training but, other opportunities (such as the training workshop) will be taken up where possible.

Output 3; Sustainable management of restored island ecosystems in Fiji and Palau is improved through enhanced protection status of islands

A management planning workshop was held with the landowning community for Vatuiria Island in late June. Attended by local and national government officials and facilitated by the University of the South Pacific, and BirdLife Fiji, the workshop produced an agreed livelihood and conservation plan with community support for the formal protection of the Island and reef surrounding Vatuiria. A series of presentations have since been made to provincial and national government officials who have endorsed the protection request and an application is now being made to the Native Land Trust Board to have this formally recognised.

For the communities of the 7 Ringgold Islands social, economic and conservation information has been collated into a Participatory Action Plan reflecting conservation and livelihood needs and opportunities. This has been presented to the two District Councils in consideration of the request for developing Protected Areas for these sites. Consultations are continuing but, it is expected endorsement will be given for a community based management planning process to proceed for the area.

The development of livelihoods in support of sustainable protection aims have been advanced through training in small business management (for the Vatuiria community) and the production of traditional handicrafts (Ringgold communities). Representatives from all 5 project communities (in Fiji) have also been trained in biosecurity and project fundraising. Two projects developed in the training have been submitted to the GEF Small Grants programme. In Palau the Kayangel community have received preliminary approval for a grant (developed by BirdLife and PCS) for the purchase of a coconut mill. This will produce virgin coconut oil for value added products such as cosmetics; a growing small business cooperative in Palau.

Output 4; The development and implementation of island restoration projects in Palau, Fiji, and other Small Island Developing States is enhanced through effective dissemination of best practice

Project information continues to be shared through a variety of national and regional networks. The monitoring indicators developed for Kayangel have been provided to other partners of the BirdLife Pacific Partnership and project updates posted in the Pacific Invasives Learning Network and BL Pacific E-bulletins. Video footage of the mitigation trial has been recorded which will be used to showcase a series of eradication, biosecurity and monitoring best practice procedures on completion of the project. The website and blog has experienced some delay in its development but this is expected to be operational by December 2010.

Press releases, and presentations continue to be made highlighting the support of the Darwin Initiative. These include two national press releases and a story on the Fiji Government website on the handicrafts workshop (Fiji) and an associated video posted on UTube

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z4RMXKsryb0>

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.

It took much longer to arrange for the mitigation trial (Palau) than was originally envisaged. The trial was finally completed in September, although the volume of data is causing an additional delay in receiving the final analysis. The decision about which bait to use and application rates awaits this report which is also necessary for finalising the operational plan. It's anticipated the plan will be completed (including peer review) by mid December. If however, the review identifies substantial work is still required there maybe insufficient time to complete this for an operation in February (2011), compounding this will be difficulties associated with the December/January period (due to absences etc). A robust planning process is critical to the eradication success. The bait manufacturer has indicated they are unlikely to begin new bait

production until February thus unless there is sufficient stock the operation will be delayed until stock can be produced and shipped which, would take 4-6 weeks. An operation needs to be completed before the end of May (2011) after this there will be disruptions associated with the wet season and it maybe some months before suitable conditions occur. Delays to an eradication operation beyond May would require the timing of project activities and expenditure to be revised.

Have any of these issues been discussed with LTS International and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

No, they are being raised here for the first time.

Discussed with LTS: no/yes, in..... (month/yr)

Formal change request submitted: no/yes, in.....(month/yr)

Received confirmation of change acceptance no/yes in.....(month/yr)

3. Do you expect to have any significant (eg more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this year?

Yes No

If yes, and you wish to request a carryforward of funds, this should be done as soon as possible. It would help Defra manage Darwin funds more efficiently if you could give an indication of how much you expect this request might be for.

Estimated carryforward request: £

4. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin's management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

If you were asked to provide a response to this year's annual report review with your next half year report, please attach your response to this document.

Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan or budget should not be discussed in this report but raised with LTS International directly.

Please send your **completed form by email** to Eilidh Young at Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk . The report should be between 1-2 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message eg Subject: 17-075 Darwin Half Year Report**