

**Pacific Invasives Learning Network
Special Soundbites, April 2008**

Activities and achievements in New Caledonia

This is a special Soundbites, reporting on the many excellent activities and achievements being done by the invasive species workers in New Caledonia.

New Caledonia is a French Overseas Country, organized into 3 administrative provinces, South, North and Loyalty Islands. Each province defines its own priorities for invasive species work. New Caledonia has a very active invasive species committee, formed in 2004 and chaired by Anne-Claire Gourant, Direction of the Environment, South Province. In 2006 the committee commissioned a report on the current status of invasive species in New Caledonia, a big job which took 6 months to complete, and the resulting document has given them an invaluable framework to plan their work.

Current status of invasives

Historically speaking, invasive species arrived in New Caledonia in 3 waves: Melanesian, European, and present.

Plants: 1412 species introduced, of which 360 have naturalized and 67 are invasive. Of the ISSG list of the 100 Worst Invasives, 7 are present in New Caledonia. Vertebrates: 38 species introduced. Invertebrates: over 25,000 species are estimated to occur in New Caledonia, of which only 6,000 have been named so far. Introduced status is unknown.

Current actions on the identified priorities

1. Prevention of new introductions

Lots has been done already, and in 2008 a big improvement programme is underway:

- Plants. Two decrees have been adopted:
 - List of species banned from entry
 - Integration of the 65 most invasive plant species present in New Caledonia into the list of species banned from possession and transport.

The Provinces must regulate internal trade and movement in line with environmental problems.

- Animals. Zoo-sanitary regulations currently authorize the importation of a limited number of species.
- Infrastructure and facilities improvements in hand include: construction of a phyto- and zoosanitary laboratory which will include a phytopathology lab, veterinary lab and plant, animal and insect quarantine facility; x-ray equipment at the post centre; rehabilitation of the treatment platform for imports and exports at the airport; autoclave for destruction of airport waste.

- Border control improvements in hand include: improve border inspections; establish black lists of invasive species prohibited from entry; risk assessments carried out with the help of PILN; establishment of a rapid / emergency response programme for new incursions.

2. Management programme for invasive species already present in New Caledonia

New Caledonia has a lot of very active projects going on. The following activities are currently being implemented:

Vertebrates (rats, deer, pigs, rabbits, bulbuls, cats and dogs)

- Impact study of **rats** on birds in the wet forest of North Province
- Management plan for invasive species in Guen, Mt Panie, at 2 different altitudes (Conservation International Association Dayu Biik):
 - Higher altitude: eradication of **rats** and **cats**, and follow-up on impact on birds, reptiles and vegetation.
 - Lower altitude near habitations: **pig** control.
- **Rat** eradication from islets. This is a BirdLife International project to eradicate rats from 2 islets, the îlots du lagon, to improve seabird reproduction, following the protocols of the Department of Conservation, New Zealand (2 phases of work: trapping and baiting with brodifacoum baits, then follow-up). Funding comes from the Packard Foundation, with other projects in French Polynesia, Fiji and Palau, in each case carried out in collaboration with the local people, particularly with regards the biosecurity plans. So far, every successful eradication has resulted in a positive response in the native bird populations at the affected sites.
- Sterilisation/eradication campaigns for street **cats** and **dogs**.
- Domestic animal control in Haut Coulna. A trainee vet is working with the tribe's **dogs** and **horses**. People are keen to care for their animals at a reasonable cost, but lack the knowledge on how to care for them.
- Restoration plan and invasive species management on Leprédour islet. This islet is of high biodiversity interest but environmental issues are of great concern:
 - **Rabbit** control
 - Save the last 3 stands of the endemic plant *Pittosporum tananiam*
 - Restore the island's native ecosystems (protect or restore the dry forest, manage invasive species)
 - Manage and raise the value of the public marine areas

Landcare Research of New Zealand has done a feasibility study and defined:

- The effect of the eradication or control methods themselves on the assemblage of invasive species, and studies of the different possible combinations of sequences of actions.
- Evaluation of the cost effectiveness of eradication or reduction of the impacts of introduced animals and plants within the predefined target.

- Follow-up to survey on the status and distribution of the **red-vented bulbul**. The survey will be completed, then look for ways to slow down the invasion front by testing traps or ways of killing birds spotted.
- **Deer** control programme, and management of overpopulations.
 - Two campaigns are planned, with hunting associations
 - A public information film has been aired
 - A Centre for the Regulation of Large Game has been created

Priority is given to environmental issues and the search for solutions, with 2 main objectives:

- Coordination of a global regulation plan
- Measuring the effects on the environment and the populations of **wild deer**

South Province is looking to work with North Province to coordinate work at the scale of the entire main island.

Plants

- Ouen toro: site of *Anredera cordifolia* eradication and restoration with dry forest plants, in collaboration with Noumea college students, the mayor of Noumea, and the Dry Forest Programme on World Biodiversity Day.
- Revival of the *Miconia* eradication programme. Two campaigns of chemical and mechanical control took place, each of 6 weeks. No new infestation sites have been found.
- Eradication of **giant reed** (*Arundo donax*) in Nodela reserve. Reeds are uprooted manually, and resprouting treated with glyphosphate.
- Eradication of **invasive weeds** in the îlot Bailly marine reserve, with the association for the protection of New Caledonian nature (ASNNC).

Aquatic (freshwater and marine, all taxa)

- Discussion on the banning of possession and sale of the introduced **Florida turtle**. This was approved in South Province in November 2007.
- Follow-up to the study on fresh water invasive species carried out by Hytech, WWF and CI, financed by South and North Provinces. Diagnostic and consideration of management strategies for: 2 invasive plants (the **water hyacinth** *Hydrilla verticillata*), 1 mollusk, 2 fish (**black bass** and **Tilapia**), and the **Florida turtle**.

Other (various species, including ants)

- Follow-up to the plan to safeguard the endemic Uvea parakeet in the Loyalty Isles Province.
 - Fight against **domestic bees**
 - Verification of the absence of **black rats**
 - Follow-up on control of introduced **goats** and **lorikeets**
- Eradications of the India rubber vine and the **little red fire ant** *Wasmannia auropunctata* by WWF volunteers in Maa point, Dry Forest.
- Various actions undertaken on the Dry Forest programme: 6 sites protected by deer proof fences, scientific diagnostic studies undertaken on the little red fire ant, invasive weeds, etc.