

Pacific Invasives Learning Network Network sound bites, December 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.

Welcome to our new network friends, the Ogasawara Research Group of Japan who are doing some interesting invasive species work that they are keen to share with their colleagues in the Pacific. This group will receive PILN communications from now on.

Invasive species management on the Ogasawara islands

The subtropical Ogasawara (Bonin) islands belong to Japan and lie just north of the Marianas (CNMI). The Ogasawara Research Group works on the conservation of these islands, including invasive species problems. Among their projects are development of eradication techniques for an introduced anolis lizard and black rat, and research for the control of the snail-eating flatworm *Platydemus manokwari*, which has been introduced to many Pacific islands in unsuccessful attempts to control Giant African Snail, but instead has decimated populations of endemic snails. Further information on these and other projects can be obtained from <http://www.ffpri.affrc.go.jp/labs/bonin/english/indexeng2.html>.

Quarantine alerts

Samoa – a cane toad was found and reported to Quarantine. The Samoa National Invasive Species Task Team was alerted and members are helping with surveys to see if there are any more. Good work Quarantine and Environment!

Pohnpei – about 20 tree sparrows (identification to be confirmed) have turned up in town and along the airport causeway, reported first by John Wichep of Quarantine. The Pohnpei Invasive Species Task Team are on the case and considering what action can be taken.

Current activities

Network evaluation

An evaluation was made of members' satisfaction with the network in November 2007. A questionnaire was sent out to all 200 names on the PILN email distribution list. This list includes the PILN team members, national invasive species committee members in participating countries / states / territories, partner representatives, and a variety of others who have requested joining the list over the past 18 months. A total of 31 people responded, of whom 7 were PILN partner representatives and 19 were members of 11 PILN teams.

Overall the evaluation was very positive. In total 83% of responders felt that they had benefited from the network, and 77% felt that it was doing enough, while 64% scored a high level of satisfaction. Specific benefits included:

- Clearer picture of priority needs in the field
- Contacts and networking, sharing knowledge and experience, encouragement and information
- Regional approach and regional views
- Receiving advice on specific issues including how to deal with specific invasive species
- New and stronger relationships with other regional agencies working on invasive species
- Greater leverage for activities

- Closer working relationship with the PILN team members, all of whom are from other agencies/organizations.
- Many more contacts and better working relationships with colleagues throughout the Pacific Islands region

American Samoa and Palau

The weed team on American Samoa received a visit on 15 October from Joe Tiobech, the invasive weeds coordinator in Palau. A happy day was spent in the field sharing experiences of weed management, specifically the vine *Merremia* and the tree *Falcataria moluccana* (Tamaligi).

Fiji

On 2 November the first multi-agency invasive species meeting in Fiji was held, chaired by Eleni Rova Tokaduadua, Department of Environment and hosted by BirdLife International. 17 people from 8 agencies met to share current work and identify opportunities for coordination and collaboration.

Kiribati

The newly formed Kiribati invasive species committee met on 3 December 2007 to review progress on activities scheduled for the second half of 2007 in the draft Kiribati invasive species strategic action plan (SAP). Work planned for the first half of 2008 was updated, and the team is well on track. At the same meeting, action plans for the remaining 3 goals were drafted, and the final version of the SAP is expected to be ready for submission for cabinet approval in early 2008.

Samoa

Rattan eradication. On Friday 1st December the sites where rattan is being eradicated were checked and 73 seedlings and 1 tree were removed. On Monday 3rd December a further 4 small trees were uprooted and 529 small seedlings removed. There is one more tree to be removed which requires a shovel to get it, as it is growing under a stump. The number of live rattan plants continues to drop as in June 2007 the team pulled 980 seedlings and 7 small trees, while in April 2007 they removed 10 small trees and 3,771 seedlings.

There are four main lessons we have learnt:

The work will have to continue for at least another year as seeds continue to germinate

1. Return trips can now be done every 5 -6 months, rather than every 2 months as we were doing last year
2. Seeds have been scattered (or distributed by birds) up to 100m away from source mother trees so extra effort must be made to scan a buffer zone around the site
3. It is best to have a group of 6 or more to conduct a broad sweep through the site as many pairs of eyes mean that it is less likely that plants will be missed.

Suemalo Talie will be coordinating a return trip to the site in the next 2 weeks with a GPS to map the site thoroughly and to remove the one remaining tree. Otherwise we will organize a big group in about April 2008 to sweep the site.

Planned work

Let me have details of any worked you are planning and would like to include.

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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