



REPORT ON PHOENIX ISLANDS PROTECTED AREA (PIPA) TRAINING WORKSHOP HELD AT KIRITIMATI IN APRIL 2008

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

A workshop and field work was held with Government of Kiribati staff at Kiritimati during 17-23 April 2008. The objectives of this work were primarily to support biodiversity recovery in the Phoenix Islands, including planned pest eradications on Rawaki (European rabbits), Mckean (Asian rats) and Birnie (Pacific rat). The Kiritimati workshop and field work targeted the following aspects:

- Overview of biodiversity values, threats and opportunities in Phoenix and Line Islands, including Kiritimati.
- Pest eradication methods that will be used during May 2008 in the PIPA.
- Biosecurity needs of the PIPA.
- Biota monitoring methods that will be used in PIPA.
- Application of the above methods in Kiritimati and other Line Islands.

These aspects were approached with a combination of powerpoint presentations, discussion and especially field activities.

2.0 ATTENDEES

Staff in attendance were as follows:

Wildlife Conservation Unit

Katareti Taabu - workshop and field trips

Uriam Anterea - workshop, field trips and PIPA follow-up

Aana Tetari - workshop and field trips

Aobure Teatata - workshop and field trips, one sick day

Ibeatabu Katabanin - workshop and field trips

Ngauea Rabaul - workshop and field trips

CXI agriculture staff

Mamarau Karirieta - workshop and field trips except for two boat inspection duties

Nautonga Anterea - workshop and field trips and PIPA follow-up

Customs staff

Sam Tekiree - workshop and field trips

Tabuaka N Tunna - workshop and field trips

Police

Ramatoa Teikauea - workshop and field trips

Linnix

Ereti Takabaia - workshop and field trips

MELAD

Nenenteiti Teariki - workshop, field trips and PIPA followup.

3.0 TIMETABLE

The timetable for work was as follows in 17-23 April.

Day 1 Wed	Arrive 0630 am; hotel and conference room logistics; rental vehicle; meet staff of WCU and Agriculture; briefing of work with Linnix Senior Assistant Secretary (Teue Baikarawa temporarily present on CXI from Tarawa)
Day 2 Thu	Am, conference room – introductions; mihi; confirm timetable; powerpoint overview of Kiribati, PIPA, Kiritimati values, roles of WCU, Ag etc. Pm field exercises – taking directions with standard and sighting compasses, grid layout, GPS readings, fun learning
Day 3 Fri	Am, Baiting, Safety and Biosecurity – ppts, demos and visit airport to set ant stations, collected these pm; Pm field trip to Tabo Channel (Tangoua Lagoon) for plant lists, plant photopoints, importance of islands within CXI, identifying and counting seabirds during evening fly-ons.
Day 4 Sat	Am, London seaport biosecurity, disembarkation procedures to lagoon islands, visit Motu Upua for bait grids, bait spreading, seabirds, photopoints. Pm visit Motu Tabu (view pristine island from boat) and Cook Island (check for sign of reported cat)
Day 5 Sun	Day off – DB and RP working on PIPA planning
Day 6 Mon	Am Biosecurity – ppt review of CXI/PIPA, legislative framework (Teiti, Nautonga) and discussion, Pm – Wrap up formal workshop, final evaluation, certificates
Day 7 Tues	Am PIPA logistics with Nautonga and Uriam – gear, purchased boots, air and hotel bookings, London ant stations established and collected late morning, associated GPS training. Pm General support – sorting and graphing data with Katareti, PIPA finances Evening – Manulu Lagoon evening observations of seabirds on islands
Day 8	Am – Bokikokiko survey at Manulu Lagoon with WCU, Teiti, Alan Tye and

Wed	Jill Key. Involved taped call surveys, habitat assessments, GPS waypoints and odometer. Pm - farewells and depart 4 pm
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4.0 RESULTS AND OBSERVATIONS

Pre-evaluation interests

During the Pre-evaluation, some of the outcomes participants indicated they wanted to achieve were:

- Increased general knowledge about conservation, invasive species and biosecurity
- Main threats to wildlife
- Conserving wildlife
- How personal role can help protect wildlife
- Methods of preventing invasives getting to our islands
- Methods of controlling pests
- Monitoring and data.

The workshop had been intended to cover the above aspects, but we also took the opportunity to further emphasize some of the above, and have follow-up sessions with relevant staff, e.g. data manipulation with Katareti.

Workshop focus

The following aspects were covered in detail at the workshop:

- Biodiversity values and threats at PIPA and Kiritimati
- Strategic approaches to protection – biosecurity and eradications
- Important roles of GOK staff at Kiritimati
- Eradication skills particularly compass lines, grid set-up, bait spreading
- Bird surveys - counting methods, bird handling, data sheets
- Plant surveys – species lists and photo-points
- Inter-island biosecurity – cargo checks at ports, ant surveys
- Lagoon-islands biosecurity – inspection methods for small boats
- Safety, particularly around toxins
- Working with data, graphing results.

Aspects needing further work for participants in the PIPA pest eradications include:

- Safety in regard to boats, landings and camps
- Crab surveys – shortage of hermit crabs on Kiritimati!
- Most of the aspects listed above will need refreshers at, or en route to, the PIPA.

Workshop observations

Some observations we made during the workshop were:

General:

- All participants showed a keenness to improve general knowledge and field skills
- Participants were more eager to be involved and more responsive where they could see immediate relevance of the training activity to their individual roles – wherever possible, these should be pre-identified (often not possible though), and some time flexibility built into the course to allow for greater development in these areas
- At times participants were clearly more comfortable speaking in Kiribati during group discussions – it was good to have a confident intermediary to activate these discussions and provide translations
- The group identified deficiencies in local biosecurity and conservation work and expressed a desire to improve working relationship and cooperation among agencies (WCU, Ag, Customs, Police, Ministry) and community
- Agencies often lack basic tools of trade (facilities and equipment) to carry out roles effectively, e.g. modest budgets and support infrastructure (boats, vehicles, telecoms, computer service, etc)
- Limited ability to support biosecurity in PIPA and rest of Line, except what they can do with air and sea craft
- Field training skills were easily absorbed, e.g. compass and grid work, bird IDs, plant photopoints, the ease of which probably reflecting their long experience with field activities in their work. Wherever possible, to maximize participation and learning value, hands-on or applied learning is recommended over ‘desk-top theory’ – the latter should be used as briefly as possible to instil or reinforce the concepts applied in the field. Colour pics in workbook seemed to encourage casual reading.
- Environment Act (1999) amended in 2007.

WCU

- Currently MELAD is reviewing the Conservation Ordinance for WCU
- One Bokikokiko survey had been completed by WCU on 7 April at a new site
- Equipment left with WCU following capacity building work in June 2006 (Pierce et al 1006) was in good working order – binoculars, camera, GPS. However, some other equipment (shotgun, traps) were not so well maintained, perhaps due to lack of resources to purchase basic equipment such as a can of CRC. Shotgun was also ineffective as a tool because there was no ammunition available on the island.
- WCU responses to cat sightings on Cook Island reported by residents to be slow. Lack of use of notebooks or written reports compounded problems with obtaining information with regard to the (multiple) cat sightings on the island
- Hard to gauge frequency of WCU anti-poaching patrols
- Activities of WCU do however, seem modest in recent years, probably reflecting a number of interacting factors, e.g.
 - leadership - OIC position advertised and interviews are due late April,
 - multiple biodiversity issues and inability to focus – island biosecurity, patrols, survey needs, etc
 - limited budget, no boat, etc

- limited computer capability – e.g. ephemeral internet ability, virus-prone computers due to limited ability to download anti-virus programme updates.
- sometimes lack of knowledge of powers in relation to law enforcement
- very limited technical advisory support, e.g. follow-up from June 2007 visits not working
- The work completed during the week seemed to cement the need to carry out more targeted work via draft work-plans presented by Teiti. We identified improvements to some prescribed activities:
 - ant surveillance, e.g. baits in shade, and between-site quarantine (i.e. not shifting live ants from site)
 - focusing Bokikokiko surveys in late April-May when birds probably most conspicuous pre-breeding, and
 - collect consistent information during field patrols, and the effective storage and recording of such information
- There is a need for ongoing technical support, particularly advice on when to carry out tasks, interim support for analyses, but these skills should eventually be acquired by WCU staff.

Agriculture

- Activities of Agriculture seem focused, e.g. cargo inspections of boats (boarding via boats landing craft) and aircraft
- Inspections can be missed, particularly because of unscheduled arrivals, lack of knowledge of arrivals, etc, although our scheduled incoming flight was also not inspected
 - Resources are limited – no phytosanitary sanitation, no insecticide, limited poison, no vet, etc
 - Foreign boats are generally biosecure and have certification. Areas of concern and posing risks to biosecurity for CXI and Phoenix Islands include some supply boats from Hawaii, Apia (aircraft) and internal Kiribati boat traffic

Community

- There appears to be a prevailing culture of “not caring” within the Kiritimati community which may reflect the history of land ownership by the government (not freehold). This extends to “taking” from the government and unsustainable harvesting of fish and bird stocks on the island. Despite the livelihoods of many people depending on bone-fishing, the agencies seem unable to stop the illegal gill-netting activities going on.
- There is likely to be greatly increased population growth on Kiritimati in the future stemming from internal growth and immigration or resettlement from elsewhere in Kiribati, with correspondingly increased pressure on biodiversity.

Workshop usefulness and means of improving

Ten participants provided feedback on the workshop via evaluation form as follows:

- Nine of ten participants indicated the workshop was very useful in improving knowledge
- Nine of ten participants indicated the workshop was very useful in improving skills
- All ten participants indicated they were able to contribute personal expertise
- Most indicated a desire for the agencies to work together more
- One comment suggested allowing all agencies (Police, Customs etc) time to prepare presentations to brief workshop participants on their area of work
- Three comments to allow more/longer time needed for gaining proficiency in the field activities
- One comment on interest in other invasives over and above the ones we focused on – rats, cats, rabbits, invasive ants
- One comment on difficulty at adapting to kiwi language first day
- One comment to have workshop every year
- One comment suggesting WCU sends data to NZ monthly for analysis.

In addition we felt some other improvements could include:

- Introductory session would be better if it were preceded by a field activity as a loosener – slow start to workshop here
- Pre-evaluation and post-evaluation could include more practical questions to help gauge field proficiency and any associated changes
- Anonymous forms would also encourage more honest responses
- Possibly look to more competitive field activities and fine to repeat some activities if complex
- It was good having digital camera and ability to download and project pics of field sessions during later recap
- Some PIPA tasks (e.g. hermit crab survey) will need to be completed at PIPA where crabs are abundant, and other methods revisited
- Impetus needs sustaining.
- Some semi-scientific methods (e.g. paired ant traps) need good explanation of method, otherwise a desire for short-term results (e.g catch more ants by spreading out traps) may override scientific consistency.
- Care needs to be taken with technical terms, acronyms etc that are very familiar to us in our everyday work but may not be so with people to whom English is well understood but nonetheless a second language (e.g. what an ‘agency’ is, the difference between ‘endangered’ and ‘vulnerable’, what an EEA is, etc).
- Much valuable information is known by staff but currently not recorded, and further encouragement and support is needed to develop accurate data collection and failsafe storage (e.g back-up disks/paper copies as well as the virus-vulnerable hard-drive).

5.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Key aspects for protecting biodiversity of the Phoenix and Line Islands are to encourage the agencies to collaborate more, enhance capacity building and raise community awareness. We recommend the following actions:

- Encourage workshops and collaborative field work, e.g. PIPA eradications and follow-up; where possible PIPA research and tourism trips should have WCU/Ag participants; Line Island surveys; direct CXI support
- Need to have a “buddy system” of formal technical support, primarily for external advice, analysis, etc – see Pierce et al 2007 for discussion of this need.
- GOK and/or supporters to bid for funds to cover the following:
 - Equipment needs, e.g. boat, vehicles, radios, etc as previously identified, e.g. Fiji Environment Consultants (1999), (Pierce et al 2007). We left some basic materials with WCU and Agriculture, e.g. buckets, drum, Riplock pesticide, new tape-deck for Bokikokiko surveys.
 - Community awareness, Rare Pride campaign, etc
 - Rat eradications on small islands in the lagoons
 - Funding for buddy support system, Line Island surveys, etc.

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Fig 1 – Compass work



Fig 2 – Grid lines