

**Island Invasives:  
Eradications and Management**

**A Report on the New Zealand  
Invasive Species Conference**

**8-12<sup>th</sup> February, 2010**

**Tamaki Campus, Auckland, NZ**

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## **Island Invasives: Eradications and Management**

### **A Report on the New Zealand Invasive Species Conference 8-12<sup>th</sup> February, 2010**

The Tamaki Campus at the University of Auckland in New Zealand recently played host to an international conference on invasive species. The conference, which was entitled: Island Invasives: Eradications and Management, took place at the Auckland venue from 8-12 February 2010. It was facilitated by the Centre for Biodiversity and Biosecurity (CBB) in partnership with the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and the Invasive Species Specialist Group (ISSG), and it attracted just about 250 participants from various boundaries of the world.

As indicated from its title, the overall goal of the conference focused on the eradication and management of invasive species from islands. Research has shown that islands are known to be associated with a high level of endemism, and are also considered to be one of the most vulnerable places to be affected by invasive predators. Hence, almost all of the keynote speakers and presenters at the conference highlighted the importance of conserving and creating management plans for various organisms to combat the introduction and spread of alien invasive species. Additionally, they have shared their knowledge and experience of various territories they have successfully removed invasives and restored the islands native biodiversity.

In an effort to effectively address the issues with regard to islands and the challenges they are faced with on a global scale with reference to the plight of alien species, the organizers of the conference grouped the presentations/posters into five broad themes. These are as follows: Eradicating Multiple Pest and Species; Social and Economic Dimensions of Eradications; Ecological Outcomes of Eradications; Finding the First and last; New Techniques and Approaches; In addition to the aforementioned themes, there were general sessions in such areas as toxins, ecosystems, rodents, plants, mustelids, amphibians and invertebrates.

It can be stated that the Auckland invasives conference can be described as a major success as it attracted a high caliber of invasive experts and other budding researchers/participants in the field of alien species control and management from the wider world. Several of these participants, including myself, had the opportunity to partake in some very meaningful and thought provoking presentations which were based on various projects they have been involved in or currently coordinating throughout their respective countries and the global community. It is important to note that these presentations not only provided persons with the opportunity to share their knowledge and experiences, but they were also used as a tool for educating the participants about some of the delicate issues with regards to the eradication and management of invasive species on islands.

Furthermore, the invasive species conference also provided me with an opportunity to interact with and learned from several invasive experts who have led successful eradications on various species. These interactive sessions have encouraged and provided me with a sense of inspiration in terms of continuing to spread public education and awareness programmes and initiatives with regards to alien species within my territory, and the rest of the overseas territories, about the potential impact of Alien Invasive Species. It has also cast aside any doubts that were in my mind with respect to the successful eradication of *Rattus rattus*, the black rat, from Dog Island, one of Anguilla's satellite cays.

Another highlights of this conference for me personally, was the opportunity to give a presentation on behalf of Anguilla, and by extension, the United Kingdom Overseas Territories. The said presentation was entitled: **Of Rats and Birds: Creating a Seabird's Paradise on Dog island, Anguilla**. This proposed project basically envisaged the removal of the invasive black rats from Dog Island, which is an offshore cay some 13miles NW of Anguilla, and is considered to be one of the major breeding and nesting hotspots for sooty terns and other seabird species (see appendix). It can be said that the presentation was well received as it not only captured the audiences' attention based on the prolong discussion that followed, but also caused them to express an interest and desire to see the project to fruition.

Furthermore, another key component of the Auckland Island Invasives Eradication and Management conference was the key messages of cooperation and networking that were echoed in many aspects of the presentations. Many of the presentations demonstrated that some of the main elements for the successful eradication of any organism must involve gaining financial and political support, as well as involving commitment from key stakeholders within the communities.

It should also be pointed out that another major highlight of the New Zealand's Invasives Conference was the field trips offered by the organizers. As New Zealand is recognized as one of the most proactive nations with regards to managing and eradicating invasive species, the field trips allowed the participants the opportunity to observe some of the current eradication projects as well as the strict biosecurity measures that are enforced at the port of entries. These fieldtrips were led by members of the NZ Department of Conservation (DOC) and they were used as reinforcement to demonstrate successful invasive restoration/prevention projects. The field trip that was most useful to me was the restoration project on Auckland's satellite islands of Rangitoto and Motupatu. The project for these islands is an ongoing programme involving the eradication of seven mammalian species including rats, rabbits, hedgehogs and feral cats as a mean of protecting native flora and fauna. Prior to this visit, the project has already been successful in eradicating stoats, wallabies and possums from the said island. This project in itself provided me with the insight and first hand knowledge of the commitment and mechanisms that must be in place for the successful eradication of rats and other mammals from Dog Island, if and when the proposal receives funding.

Overall, the 2010 Auckland conference on Island Invasives: Eradication and Management truly served as a mechanism for showing Small Island Developing States like Anguilla and the other UK Overseas Territories the true meaning of pest free islands. The said territories can learn many lessons through partnerships with the New Zealand Department of Conservation, since they are a leading agency in island eradications and restoration projects. In retrospect, the work conducted by the DOC as well as that displayed by other invasive experts has demonstrated in full extent all of the success stories, while not excluding the challenges, that are required to undertake successful

eradication of various elements of organism from islands. The conference has also highlighted the importance of partnership and networking in facilitating and implementing effective strategies to improve biosecurity measures.

Lastly, the sessions on Island Invasives has shown that islands play a vital role in hosting most of the world's rarest and threatened species. It has also confirmed that the said are very vulnerable to introduced species. Therefore, the key message resonating throughout the conference was that effective biosecurity measures must be established to reduce the threat of such invasive organisms from entering and disrupting native/endemic biota. However, should this fail, the lessons learned from the Auckland conference on Island Invasives: Eradication and Management has also instilled a sense of hope in the participants as it has proven to us that island ecosystems can be restored, and remain pest free, once the resources are available and all of the monitoring strategies are fully implemented.