



## PILN

Pacific Invasives Learning Network.  
Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme

PO Box 240, Apia, Samoa  
E: [sprep@sprep.org](mailto:sprep@sprep.org)  
T: +685 21929  
F: +685 20231  
W: [www.sprep.org](http://www.sprep.org)

### PILN Teams:

- American Samoa
- Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands
- Fiji
- French Polynesia
- Guam
- Hawaii
- Kiribati
- Kosrae
- Marshall Islands
- New Caledonia
- Niue
- Palau
- Pohnpei
- Samoa
- Yap

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*Contributions for our January 2011 are now needed!*

## NETWORK NEWS:

*PILN SOUNDBITES is the monthly newsletter of the Pacific Invasives Learning Network: a participant-driven island network, reporting on news of PILN Country Teams and the Pacific Invasives Partnership. Relevant and news-worthy invasive news are also reported. The Soundbites aims to be informative to PILN teams and the general public. Past issues are available from our webpage: [www.sprep.org/piln](http://www.sprep.org/piln). Do share this issue with your colleagues and networks. Comments and feedback are always welcome to help improve our services. Please send them to the PILN Coordinator: [posas@sprep.org](mailto:posas@sprep.org).*

I take this opportunity to thank all our teams, our partners in particular the Pacific Invasives Partnership, the governments and administrative bodies for working together in addressing invasive species. As we wind down for the year it is important that we reflect on our many successes and achievements, as well as challenges we faced. We celebrate successful eradication of invasive species from islands in Fiji, Kiribati, Guam, Samoa and the French territories. We look ahead to 2011 with renewed optimism that our successes will continue. May your plans be realized in 2011 and may you all have a great and safe festive season. PAS

## PILN TEAMS - UPDATES:

*Many of you have suggested that this is one of the most interesting and valuable bite of your SOUNDBITES. Yet we don't hear enough from you. Let us make this one of the highlights of our learning network and contribute an item a month.*

**AMERICAN SAMOA:** [source: Tavita Togia, - [tavita\\_togia@nps.gov](mailto:tavita_togia@nps.gov)]

We continue to work in collaboration with Dr R. Flint Hughes, Research Ecologist from the Institute of Pacific Island Forestry (USDA Forest Service) to establish and monitor 25 long-term research plots that document the impacts of invasive, non-native *tamaligi* tree (*Falcataria moluccana*) populations on our native forests and how their subsequent removal affects recovery of the native forests during forest succession and in the context of future disturbance/climate change scenarios. Results of our research with Dr. Hughes have clearly demonstrated that our management approach of killing extant *tamaligi* trees in the forest is quite effective; once forest succession is 'pushed' in the right direction by killing the invasive trees, the native forest community regenerates very rapidly - reaching pre-invasion native biomass levels in less than 10 years following *tamaligi* control measures - and it appears quite capable of maintaining itself through time.

**COMMONWEALTH OF NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS** [sources: Victor Guerrero, Jr. [victordlg@pticom.com](mailto:victordlg@pticom.com); Marisol Quintanilla - [quinta13@gmail.com](mailto:quinta13@gmail.com)]

We welcome Mr Victor Guerrero Jr as the new point of contact on invasive issues for Mariana Islands to replace Ms Laura Williams who recently migrated to Hawaii.

The CNMNI Northern Marianas College in conjunction with Dr. Reddy in Guam, successfully introduced a Psyllid to control *Mimosa diplotricha*. The Psyllid is established in Rota and Saipan. Dr Quintanilla and colleagues continue to identify the nematodes of the Mariana Islands. They are also working on introducing a biocontrol for the Erythrina Gall Wasp and for the Fruit Piercing Moth. They are collaborating with Casper Vanderwoud and Saipan's Department of Land and Natural Resources to survey invasive ant species in Saipan.

**GUAM:** [source: Diane Vice - [dianevice@gmail.com](mailto:dianevice@gmail.com)]

The Micronesia Regional Invasive Species Council (RISC) met in Palau from 13-14 December. It was a two-day meeting prior to the Micronesia Chief Executives' Summit meeting on 15-17 December. The Council meeting was well attended by RISC members - Palau, Yap, Kosrae, Guam, Pohnpei and CNMI. On Day 1: each jurisdiction provided updates on their invasive projects and information was exchanged. Day 2 was spent preparing the report for presentation to the Chief Executives and recommendations for the Communiqué of the 14<sup>th</sup> Micronesia Chief Executives' Summit. In addition to reaffirming previous commitments, RISC recommended the Chief Executives: a) instruct their invasive species coordinators and other relevant staff to actively participate in the development of the Micronesia Biosecurity Plan; b) send a letter of request to SPC to fill the Plant Protection Specialist for Micronesia in 2011; and, c) financially support a RISC meeting

in April 2011 with the intent to revise the RISC Strategic Action Plan and develop Emergency Response Plans for those jurisdictions that do not have one.

*A copy of the final report of the 14<sup>th</sup> Micronesia Chief Executive Summit can be obtained by contacting Diane Vice or the PILN Coordinator.*

**HAWAII:** [source: Teya Penniman - [misc@hawaii.edu](mailto:misc@hawaii.edu)]



A team working with the University of Hawaii and Maui Invasive Species Committee visited Tahiti in November 2010 to conduct research on the economic impacts of the little fire ant (*Wasmannia auropunctata*) and as part of an educational video project to encourage early detection. The little fire ant is spreading on the island of Hawaii and elsewhere in the Pacific, but has recently been eradicated from the island of Maui. The Tahiti trip benefited greatly from the assistance of Maryline Simon, of Direction de l'environnement de la Polynésie française, and provided an opportunity to strengthen Pacific connections while sharing challenges and strategies.

Image provided by Teya Penniman - shows the team interviewing a vegetable farmer from Mahaena, Tahiti about little fire ant.

**NEW CALEDONIA** [sources: Jean-Jerome Cassan, Florian Kirchner, Anne-Claire Goarant, Yohann Soubeyran]



Over 60 experts attended a meeting from 29 November to 2 December to strengthen the management of invasive species in the French territories in the Pacific. The problem of invasive species is well known in the territories where a good proportion of the world's 100 most invasive species are found on the islands of French Polynesia, Wallis & Futuna and New Caledonia. The threat from invasive species will continue, especially given increasing trade links between countries. The cost for eradicating invasive species is very high, therefore efforts should be focused on preventing them from arriving and establishing in the islands. The group discussed biosecurity issues and also how to involve other sectors, especially the private sector.

The communiqué from the invasive species workshop for Pacific French territories and region held from 29 November to 2 December in New Caledonia is now available. The programme of the workshop, presentations and the final report will be available shortly on the website on IAS in the French Overseas Territories (<http://www.especes-envahissantes-outremer.fr/>). Picture is of the workshop participants [image provided by Yohann Soubeyran]

*Contact the PILN Coordinator for a copy of the communiqué. A report of the workshop is also featured in the PII News ([pii@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:pii@auckland.ac.nz)).*

## NEWS FROM THE PACIFIC INVASIVES PARTNERSHIPS:

### IUCN - Oceania [source: Helen Pippard - Helen.pippard@iucn.org]

Following the production of 'The Pacific islands: An analysis of the status of species as listed on the 2008 IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™' key taxonomic and geographical gaps were identified in the region. IUCN is now working towards increasing information on Pacific island species for inclusion on the IUCN Red List. (Downloadable from:

[http://www.iucn.org/about/union/secretariat/offices/oceania/oro\\_programmes/oro\\_species/oro\\_redlist/](http://www.iucn.org/about/union/secretariat/offices/oceania/oro_programmes/oro_species/oro_redlist/))

Species identified as priority for assessment in the Pacific islands region include: reptiles, fishes (freshwater and marine), all invertebrates (except hard corals) and all plants and fungi (except conifers and cycads which are almost completely assessed globally). The Pacific islands Red List project will be an on-going process that aims to assess the conservation status of the fauna and flora of the Pacific islands region according to the IUCN Red Listing guidelines.

The Global Marine Species Assessment team, a joint programme of IUCN and Conservation International, has been involved in carrying out assessments for marine species globally and in Oceania. Workshops have been conducted for Indo-Pacific tuna, groupers and wrasses, blennies, butterfly-fishes and angelfishes, sharks and rays, mangroves, seagrasses, sea cucumbers, sea snakes, and corals. Most recently, damselfishes were assessed at a workshop held in Fiji, which was funded by Conservation International. An assessment workshop for Gobies and Cardinal Fish will be held in Palau, in January 2011, also with funding from Conservation International.

For other species, funding support has been secured from the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF), and the Fonds Pacifique, that will allow assessments to begin on other priority species groups. Over the next 18 months, the project will assess Pacific freshwater fishes, reptiles and land snails. Assessments will involve the convening of experts at workshops, analyzing all available data, and using the IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria to apply an extinction risk to each species being assessed. The first workshop - a training workshop for specialists who will carry out draft assessments for these three groups - will take place in Fiji from February 14<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup> 2011. The completed assessments will increase our knowledge of species in the region, form a baseline of the status and distribution of species in the region, and create a more comprehensive Red List in relation to Pacific island species.

IUCN Oceania's long term aim of improving information on the Red List is to empower people to effectively utilise this knowledge in order to guide conservation decision-making and planning, raise awareness of threatened species and promote the integration of biodiversity conservation and sustainable development. For more information, please contact Helen Pippard, Species Focal Point at IUCN Oceania: [helen.pippard@iucn.org](mailto:helen.pippard@iucn.org)

### Pacific Invasives Initiative: [source: Pacific Invasives Initiatives - [n.doherty@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:n.doherty@auckland.ac.nz)]

The Pacific Invasives Initiative has released their PII News for December 2010 ([www.issg.org/cii/pii/](http://www.issg.org/cii/pii/)). Some of articles you will find include: Invasive species management in the Pacific - a review of national plans and current activities; Skills sharing: a regional cooperation mission for the Ornithological; Invasive species in the Pacific French Territories workshop; Island Eradication Advisory Group Meeting; Fijian Crested Iguana Recovery Project and some countries/territories activities. You can download PII News from the website ([www.issg.org/cii/pii/](http://www.issg.org/cii/pii/)) or by emailing PII at [pii@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:pii@auckland.ac.nz).

### Secretariat of the Pacific Community - Farewell to an Invasive Battler

Warea Orapa - a long-time friend of PILN and an invasive battler is finally hanging up his gloves as he ends his time with SPC on 31 January 2011. In his own words: 'I really enjoyed meeting many of you and even working with you all to address the issues that affect the Pacific islands as well as humanity'. Warea will return back to Papua New Guinea where he has vowed to continue fighting against invasive species, weeds, pests and diseases. Warea can be contacted on [ware.orapa@gmail.com](mailto:ware.orapa@gmail.com).

*On behalf of the PILN teams, I sincerely thank Warea for the support, leadership, technical advice and friendship to the countries and to all of us. We wish you and your family the best in your move back home and we look forward to future collaboration with you on our battle with invasive species.*

### Vacancies, Consultancies & Scholarships:

- **Hawaii Invasive Species Coordinator.** A full-time position with the Pacific Cooperative Studies Unit, located in Honolulu, Hawaii. Main duties: to provide professional assistance to the Invasive Species Program on matters pertinent to the Hawaii Invasive Species Council, Invasive Species Committees and related tasks: i) planning; ii) contract administration; iii) public meetings; iv) writing of annual reports; v) facilitation; vi) write management plans & drafting policy documents including quarantine, noxious weed and animal control, early detection and rapid response to invasive species; vii) administration; viii) preparation of correspondence and reports; ix) public outreach coordination; x) field work related to invasive species control. Further information from Christy Finlayson - tel. + 1808 587 0164. Application

prefers to be done online - please go to: [www.rcuh.com](http://www.rcuh.com) click on employment and navigate to job announcements/apply for a job. Closing date 07 January 2011.

- **Coastal & Marine Adviser** - Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme. Closing date: 7 January 2011. More information from the Personnel Officer: tel. +685 21929 ext. 230; fax 20231. email: [luanac@sprep.org](mailto:luanac@sprep.org) .
- **Post Doctoral Fellowships on Marine Protected Areas:**

World Wildlife Fund is announcing the 2011 Kathryn Fuller Science for Nature Fellowships to support doctoral and postdoctoral research on marine protected areas (MPAs) that shows promise to enhance scientific understanding of their ecological and social impacts and that will strengthen science-based conservation and policy in the following WWF-US priority marine regions:

Bering Sea <http://www.worldwildlife.org/what/wherework/arctic/bskpriorityareas.html>;

Gulf of California <http://www.worldwildlife.org/what/wherework/gulfofca/index.html>;

Mesoamerican Reef <http://www.worldwildlife.org/what/wherework/mesoamericanreef/index.html>;

Galapagos <http://www.worldwildlife.org/what/wherework/galapagos/index.html>;

Coastal East Africa <http://www.worldwildlife.org/what/wherework/coastaleastafrica/index.html> (coastal and marine areas of Kenya, Mozambique, Tanzania); and

Coral Triangle <http://www.worldwildlife.org/what/wherework/coraltriangle/index.html> (Bismarck-Solomon Seas, Banda-Flores Seas, Sulu-Sulawesi Seas).

Fuller Postdoctoral Fellows receive \$140,000 to cover a stipend and research expenses over a period of up to two years. In addition, up to \$17,500 will be granted to cover indirect costs at the host institution over the two-year fellowship period. Doctoral Fellows receive either \$15,000 or \$20,000, depending on the location of their research and home universities, allocated over a period of up to 2 years to cover research expenses. The deadline for application submission is January 31, 2011. For more information on the Fuller Doctoral Fellowship, please visit: <http://www.worldwildlife.org/science/fellowships/fuller/doctoralfund.html>. For more information on the Fuller Postdoctoral Fellowship, please visit: <http://www.worldwildlife.org/science/fellowships/fuller/postdoctoral-fellowships.html> For questions or further information, please contact [fullerfund@wwfus.org](mailto:fullerfund@wwfus.org)

## MEETING/CONFERENCE & TRAINING ANNOUNCEMENTS

### World Wetlands Day - 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2011

The 2<sup>nd</sup> of February each year marks the World Wetlands Day - the day of the signing of the Convention on Wetlands in the city of Ramsar, Iran. The theme for 2011 is Wetlands and Forests - appropriately themed as 2011 is declared as the UN International Year of Forests. Invasive species are detrimental to our wetlands and forests, and therefore the need to continue our efforts in eradicating and managing them is important. For more information refer to the Ramsar website: [http://www.ramsar.org/cda/en/ramsar-activities-wwds-wwd2011index/main/ramsar/1-63-78%5E24770\\_4000\\_0](http://www.ramsar.org/cda/en/ramsar-activities-wwds-wwd2011index/main/ramsar/1-63-78%5E24770_4000_0) .

For activities and coordination for the Pacific Islands region, please contact the SPREP Ramsar Officer Oceania, Vainuupo Jungblut ([vainuupoj@sprep.org](mailto:vainuupoj@sprep.org)).

### Ant Identification Workshops - February 2011 [source: Casper Vanderwoude - [casperv@hawaii.edu](mailto:casperv@hawaii.edu)]

Two ant identification workshops are currently being planned by Casper Vanderwoude and team for Palau and Yap. The dates will be finalized shortly and this will be circulated to the PILN teams and partners. Other training is being organized for Pohnpei and Kosrae but dates are not yet decided. Details can be obtained by contacting Casper.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> International Invasive Bird Conference, Cape Town, South Africa: 7-9 March, 2011

The aim of the conference is to explore developments in invasive bird biology, to assess the level of understanding of the different facets of bird invasions and our ability to manage them, and to discuss priorities for the future. The programme will be structured to address key themes presented through keynote talks and oral and poster presentations. For more information visit: [www.iibc2011.co.za](http://www.iibc2011.co.za)

### 15<sup>th</sup> Australasian Vertebrate Pest Conference: 20-23 June, 2011 [source: <http://www.avpc.net.au/>]

The 15<sup>th</sup> Australasian Vertebrate Pest Conference is to be held in Sydney, Australia on 20-23 June, 2011 ([www.avpc.net.au](http://www.avpc.net.au)). As part of the conference we will be holding a symposium on the management of vertebrate pests on islands. We are soliciting oral papers (15 minutes total) around this topic - eradication, sustained control, biosecurity and quarantine, detecting and managing survivors, the strategies and tools that worked or failed management of non-target or environmental problems, etc. The emphasis is for projects in the Australasian region but papers from elsewhere will be considered especially if they demonstrate some general or novel problems or solutions. So, if you have a story to tell from your island and its pests send an abstract to the conference organizers at the above

website and a copy to the symposium organizers (Elaine Murphy and John Parkes) at [emurphy@doc.govt.nz](mailto:emurphy@doc.govt.nz). The deadline for abstracts is 28 February 2011.

### **NZ Biosecurity Institute Conference 6-8 July, 2011** [source: Dr Margaret Stanley via Pacific Invasives Initiative]

The annual conference for the NZ Biosecurity Institute will take place in Takapuna on the North Shore of Auckland (July 6-8, 2011). The theme of the conference is: the Northern Gateway: Tomorrow's pests today. It will focus on Northland and Auckland as the gateway to New Zealand for pests. Find out how they are closing the doors on threats to NZ and fighting what is already there. You will hear great speakers and be able to attend field trips that will showcase the innovative/unique programmes going on around the region. For more information and to register for the conference, visit <http://www.biosecurity.org.nz>

### **BIOLIEF 2011 - 2<sup>nd</sup> World Conference on Biological Invasions and Ecosystem Function: 21-24 November, 2011**

BIOLIEF 2011 will be a forum for the presentation, discussion, and synthesis of research on biological invasions in its broadest sense. The conference will place a particular emphasis on studies concerning the impact of invasive species on ecosystem functioning and/or services, irrespective of taxonomic groups or ecosystem types. However, studies on any other ecological aspect of biological invasions will also be welcome. Topics such as the spread of invasive species into ecosystems, the biogeography and history of species introductions, and the community- or species-level impact of biological invasions will also have an important coverage in the final conference program. Contact Jorge L. Gutiérrez ([biolief@grieta.org.ar](mailto:biolief@grieta.org.ar)) for more information, or visit the website: <http://www.grieta.org.ar/biolief/>.

### **25th International Congress for Conservation Biology Call for Proposals: 28 November-2 December, 2011**

The call for proposals for symposia, workshops, and short courses is now open for the 25<sup>th</sup> International Congress for Conservation Biology, to be held from 28 November - 2 December 2011 in Christchurch, New Zealand.

Meeting Theme: Engaging Society in Conservation

Biodiversity around the world continues to decline at an ever-increasing pace, yet much of society carries on business as usual. How can conservation biologists engage with society to achieve positive outcomes for conservation without compromising our scientific rigor or integrity? The deadline for proposals is **10 December 2010**. Proposal guidelines can be found here: <http://www.conbio.org/Activities/Meetings/2011/register/proposals.cfm>. For additional information please visit [www.conbio.org/2011](http://www.conbio.org/2011) or contact the scientific program committee at [2011@conbio.org](mailto:2011@conbio.org).

### **Global Resistance Challenge: February 2013**

The Global Resistance Challenge 2013 conference offers a multidisciplinary forum focused on all aspects of herbicide resistance in crops and weeds and their impact on global food production. Scientific sessions will range from the molecular basis of herbicide resistance evolution through agro-ecology and agronomy to on-farm resistance management. The **Global Resistance Challenge 2013** conference will provide a stage for young and established private and public sector researchers, crop consultants and others to present their work in front of a welcoming international audience in the beautiful portside city of Fremantle, Perth, Western Australia. We welcome everyone who wishes to discover the latest advances in herbicide resistance to Perth in February 2013, to experience a magnificent Western Australian late summer. Further information can be obtained from Lisa Mayer ([lisa.mayer@uwa.edu.au](mailto:lisa.mayer@uwa.edu.au))

## **FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES:**

### **PADI Foundation - 1 November, 2010 to January 31, 2011**

The PADI Foundation encourages and supports underwater science, environmental projects, and education. In 2010, it expects to award a total of approximately \$180,000 USD and will consider proposals with budgets up to \$20,000 though the average for proposals will be \$5,000 to \$10,000. For more information, see: <http://www.padifoundation.org/>.

### **Conservation Leadership Programme**

November 15 - BP Conservation Leadership Programme. The Conservation Leadership Programme is offering Future Conservationist Awards of up to \$12,500 to high potential teams who aim to develop their skills through practical conservation projects. The CLP offers support to young conservationists (35 years and younger) living and working in Africa, Asia, East/ Southeastern Europe, the Middle East, the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean. See: <http://www.conservationleadershipprogramme.org/FutureConservationistAward.asp>.

### **SeaWorld Busch Gardens Conservation Fund**

December 1 - SeaWorld Busch Gardens Conservation Fund. The Fund supports research in one of four areas: 1) Species research, 2) Animal rescue and rehabilitation, 3) Habitat protection, 4) Conservation education. It has no set minimum or maximum grant amount but in the past it has supported projects ranging from \$5,000 to \$25,000 for a one-year term. See: <http://www.swbg-conservationfund.org/grantInfo.htm> No deadline - SeaWorld & Busch Gardens Conservation Fund

Animal Crisis Grants. In 2007, the SeaWorld & Busch Gardens Conservation Fund launched the Animal Crisis Grants, which provide rapid, much-needed funding to aid wildlife and habitats in peril due to either natural or human-caused events. The Fund reserves up to \$100,000 each year for such grants. For more information see: <http://www.swbg-conservationfund.org/animalCrisisGrants.htm>.

### UNESCO: Pacific Youth Visioning for Island Living 2010 Small Grants

Youth Visioning for Island Living is a capacity building initiative that aims to empower young people in small islands to make a difference. The UNESCO Office for the Pacific states encourages young people and or youth organisations from member countries to submit application to support a wide range of projects. If you are a young person or a youth organisation and would like to take part in this opportunity, feel free to contact Natalia Pereira ([n.pereira@unesco.org](mailto:n.pereira@unesco.org)).

### Rapid Response Facility

The Rapid Response Facility (RRF) is an emergency small grants programme jointly operated by Fauna & Flora International (FFI), UNESCO World Heritage Centre, and the United Nations Foundation. With a target processing time for grant applications of just 8 working days, the RRF provides rapid support to enable conservation practitioners to tackle emergencies in some of the World's most important sites for biodiversity. To date it has supported 16 rapid interventions in 14 UNESCO designated natural World Heritage sites, responding to the conservation impacts of a range of emergencies such as natural disaster, armed conflict and sudden increases in illegal activity within these protected areas. Those interested in approaching the RRF for emergency funding should see [www.rapid-response.org](http://www.rapid-response.org), which provides details on application procedures, funding criteria, and case studies of past RRF grants.

### International Climate Initiative (IKI)

Proposals for projects for 2011 are being requested and must be submitted to the Programme Office until 31 December 2010. Funding will be for investment projects and activities in the fields of technology transfer, policy advice, research cooperation, capacity development and training and elaboration of studies and strategies. PILN teams may wish to apply under Area II: Adaptation to climate change and Area III: Preservation and sustainable use of natural carbon sinks/REDD. Further information can be obtained online - <http://www.bmu-klimaschutzinitiative.de/en/application>

## MARINE INVASIVE SPECIES:

**What lurks beneath: the Bay Area's battle with invasive species in ballast water** [source: San Francisco Chronicle Julia Scott]

Every summer, a few unlucky children playing in the water at Crown Beach in Alameda come down with a suspicious rash. It feels a lot like poison oak, but it's really something called 'swimmer's itch.' Andy Cohen, the director of the Center for Research of Aquatic Bioinvasions (CRAB), said he has swimmer's itch four times from working in San Francisco Bay. Andy figured out swimmer's itch came from the Japanese bubble snail, which isn't supposed to be in San Francisco Bay. In 2005, the bubble snails were very abundant at Crown Beach and they had a parasitic worm living within them. Turns out the parasitic worm was using the invasive snail as a host, until it found human skin to burrow into. And while that's pretty nasty, it's just the tip of the unsettling iceberg. Cohen estimates more than 300 exotic species now live in San Francisco Bay and the Sacramento Delta, making it the most invaded estuary in the world. And that doesn't even include viruses or bacteria. According to Cohen, exotic species make up more than 90% of the common species in the system, more than 90% of the individual organisms and more than 90% of the biomass of the weight of living organisms out there. Which means 90% of what's living in the Bay isn't supposed to be here. They're stowaways.

**Invasive sea species spreads off New England** [source: <http://www.gloucestertimes.com/local/x1312703550/Invasive-sea-species-spreads-off-New-England>]

An invasive species known as sea squirts has spread on the sea floor off New England, but scientists say it's not all bad news. The species of this soft-bodied animal spreads rapidly across the ocean bottom in rope-like chains or mats. It was discovered offshore in Georges Bank in the early 2000s, and now covers about 90 square miles of the 17,000 square miles that make up the Bank. Gloucester fishermen visit some of the bank, which is southeast of Cape Ann, about 100 miles east of Cape Cod. The sea squirts' spread raised concerns about effects on valuable species that live on or near the sea floor, such as scallops and cod. Those effects are still unclear, but scientists have found it can be beneficial for some species, including winter flounder. That fish benefits because the sea squirts provide a good habitat for worms that the flounder likes to eat. Scientists say more study is needed to determine the sea squirts' long-term effects.

## INVASIVE NEWS AND INTERSTING NEWS/LINKS/WEBSITES:

**Kid-killing bird, the Indian house crow, arrives by boat from Asia** [source: Townsville Bulletin

[http://www.townsvillebulletin.com.au/article/2010/12/03/189401\\_news.html](http://www.townsvillebulletin.com.au/article/2010/12/03/189401_news.html)]

AN Asian bird capable of killing calves and kid goats is on the loose in North Queensland after reaching Australia by boat.



[Image Wikipedia]

Biosecurity Queensland has enlisted the help of birdwatchers to find an Indian house crow, seen in Innisfail almost eight weeks ago, the *Townsville Bulletin* said. Birds Australia North Queensland secretary Ivor Preston said he spotted the pest being hassled by native species at Flying Fish Point on October 11. 'It was out on a pylon in the water and every time it would try to fly back to land, the other birds would harass it and it would go back out to the pylon again for a bit of peace,' he said. Mr Preston, who has seen house crows in their native Malaysia and Vietnam, said he knew the bird was not local, but was shocked once he realised its identity. 'I was pretty surprised, but once I thought of Mourilyan harbour, I thought there's fair odds it came from there because of the ships coming in to collect sugar during sugar season,' he said. 'It probably came from one of those and it just made my identification even more positive.' A Biosecurity Queensland spokeswoman said the crow, which hails from central Asia, is considered a 'major pest'. 'Once found, Biosecurity Queensland will arrange for the bird to be destroyed,' the spokeswoman said. 'The exotic pest is believed to have come into the country on a ship.' Biosecurity was working with local authorities and birdwatchers to find the pest which, if not caught, could have a devastating effect on the North's agriculture. 'The pest is known to raid crops such as

wheat, maize and sunflower as well as causing severe damage to vegetables and fruit crops including mango, guava, pawpaw, fig, apple, pear, grape and stone fruit,' she said. A national animal pest alert says the house crow can kill animals.

'The house crow will attack and kill poultry, new-born calves and kid goats,' the alert reads. 'Adult livestock are harassed and can be injured.' House crows have been spotted in Australia before, particularly in Western Australia, but biosecurity departments have killed them before they could breed. It is believed in each case the birds arrived by ship. A scientific risk assessment conducted by the Department of Agriculture and Food in WA and endorsed by the National Vertebrate Pests Committee indicated the house crow posed an extreme threat the highest of four categories to Australia. Anyone who spots the pest should call the National Exotic Plant and Pest Hotline on 1800 084 881.

The above headline was seen as a bit over the top and Murukesan Krishnapillai, one of our PILN team members offers the following first hand account of the Indian house crow.

*I read the article 'Kid-killing bird...' with great interest. However, I could not comprehend why house crows are designated as 'killers.' I was born and brought up in a village in Kerala (South West India), where at least two species (house crow and jungle crow) of this bird are very common. In all my life there, I haven't heard any such stories crow 'killing' calves. My mother used to raise cows at home and I always noticed a friendly relationship between crows and cows, a perfect display of commensalism. When the ruminants rest and chew cud, crows perch at their back to look for insects. The cow gets a free cleaning and 'anti-insect' service, and the crow gets its food. Crows even pull hairs from cow's tail for nesting!*

*Crow easily intrudes one's attention. No avid nature observer can miss their glossy black color or shrill quah quah. The house crow is a confirmed commensal of man too. The haunts of the man are the haunts of house crow and with him it is numerous in cities and towns. Crows are a major presence in Indian life. According to our Hindu mythology, they possess souls of our ancestors. During funeral and death anniversary rituals, we call them by clapping wet hands in a typical rhythm. If they don't turn up, our souls will be sad. But the acceptance of proffered food during rituals signifies the contentment of the departed soul. Its guttural call, especially when sitting on a banana plant, heralds the arrival of a guest for meal, possibly from the direction of its tail. Crows are very clever, cunning and gregarious. Besides parables, idioms and kids stories that tell its skills, crow is celebrated by poets in all Indian languages.*

*I believe the portrayal as killers stem from observations of these birds selectively attacking young or wounded small mammals, amphibians and reptiles. However, that is a behavioral adaptation and survival tactic, and not to be considered cruelty.*

**Nonetheless, appropriate quarantine measures need to be taken if they invade a territory and become threat to native fauna.**

Muru



**Blue tongue, blight, beetles pester a warmer world** [source: Timothy Gardner for Reuter:  
<http://af.reuters.com/article/energyOilNews/idAFN0850289420101208?sp=true>]

Beetles killing trees in North America, blue tongue disease ravaging livestock in Europe, and borers destroying African coffee crops are examples of migrating invasive species not getting enough attention at global climate talks, scientists said on Wednesday. Invasive pests have plagued agriculture and nature for thousands of years as mankind's migrations brought them to places without natural enemies. But the price tag to battle them, now estimated at \$1.4 trillion annually, may go up as rising temperatures and more storms and floods unleash species to new areas. 'The problem of invasive species has been all but omitted from the U.N. talks here in Mexico,' A.G. Kawamura, the secretary of California's Department of Food and Agriculture, told Reuters. He said scientists want to reintroduce the issue of invasive insects, germs and plants so at next year's talks in Durban, South Africa, pests will be a top subject. Humans are also at risk as mosquitoes and other pests may spread malaria, dengue fever and other diseases as they move north. Nobody can say a particular outbreak is caused by climate change, but a look at growing problems in ecosystems can give clues to what the world may face if the world warms further.

**Volunteers repel invading mink** [source: Tom Marshall for PlanetEarth Online:  
<http://planetearth.nerc.ac.uk/news/story.aspx?id=891>]

Ordinary people have joined forces with scientists to wipe out invasive American mink in northeastern Scotland and protect the native water vole they were threatening. Since their introduction during the last Century, the American minks have menaced indigenous wildlife driving out native species and unbalancing delicate river ecosystems.

The recent success in Scotland is just the latest addition to a growing body of evidence that invasive species can be stopped and even turned back. 'This project should contribute to overturning the prevailing lack of ambition about managing invasive species in Europe by providing a model for other programmes,' the researchers write. 'It is a strong testament to what can be achieved when empowering local communities to take a stake in their local biodiversity, and thus reason for optimism that the tide of invasion can be rolled back.'

Part of the reason it worked was that the scientists cooperated with many other interested groups in the wider community. These ranged from gamekeepers and river bailiffs to wildlife rangers, people who manage land on behalf of big landowners and those who were simply keen to do something for the local environment.

Already, the mink eradication effort has inspired sister projects elsewhere in the country, and the various programmes may eventually be combined with the aim of creating a mink-free Scotland. In the Cairngorms, monitoring and trapping will continue for the foreseeable future, to prevent the mink from returning. To keep volunteers interested, they may be involved in other local conservation issues.

It may be possible to apply similar methods to dealing with other harmful non-native species across large areas, according to the scientists. The programme's success depended on broad public support and on the involvement of many different groups, each with different concerns but a common interest in eradicating mink.

**Customs ridding island of invasive species** [source: Nick Delgado for Kuam News:  
<http://www.kuam.com/story/13617323/2010/12/04/customs-ridding-island-of-invasive-species>]

There is an alarming rate of invasive species entering our island and according to Guam Customs officials the problem is anticipated to only get worse. But officials are working to exterminate the problem.

'Our officers are out there and they are very aware that there are a lot of invasive species that are coming in to the island and it's a concern for our people our environment here then we identify these to ensure that they are not spread all over the island,' explained Lieutenant Frank Cruz. The Guam Customs and Quarantine Agency is working to beef up its efforts to keep out species that are not native to the island. Cruz is with the Bio-Terroristic Task Force.

But keeping them out is a problem both Cruz and the agency director Colonel Dennis Santo Tomas say may be a long fought battle. 'Every time you bring in materials, cargo and all that the chance of invasive species is always there as evidence by this Christmas tree shipment,' he said.

About a week ago several dozen black widow spiders were found at the port on a Matson cargo ship as well as in a container at the Tamuning Cost-U-Less. In order to reduce the number of invasive species that enter the island ports, Santo Tomas says they have made their pleas to the Governor's Office and the Guam Legislature for more funding. 'On the Guam Customs side,' said Santo Tomas, 'I believe our ballpark is somewhere around a half-million dollars to stand it up with personnel, equipment, training and vehicles and everything else that we need to address because the problem is not only contained to the ports of entry, its become a problem inland.'

For the inland creatures, Santo Tomas says the task force is working with the Department of Agriculture. He says the agency is providing some much needed help due to the lack of staff they have in place. 'Right now there are just a two-to three-man teams going around from port to port and mind you ports of entry are no longer just the commercial port and the airport we are talking about the DOD installations, we are talking about the post office, if the Marine Corps opens another base that'll be another port of entry,' he said.

'We definitely need more staffing on our part because we are encountering a lot of these invasive species coming in that are being identified during inspections.'

Customs also says that the anticipated port modernization will cut in half the capacity of containers that can be held at the facility. With the anticipated growth of incoming cargo from the military buildup, Santo Tomas urges the community to start now by looking out and reporting any invasive species they might come across.

He assured the community, 'They can call Guam customs or the Department of Agriculture the local certainly any one of us, we can collaborate together and see if we can get a sample specimen and get it tested.'

### **Destructive rabbits cost Britain 260 million pounds** [source: Invasive Species News]



A new study released by the Centre for Agricultural Bioscience International (CABI), an international agriculture and environment organization estimated 40 million rabbits found in Britain, and have identified it as the mostly costly invasive species in the country. More than 260 million pounds a year is the cost to damage crops, business and infrastructure caused by rabbits - introduced by the Romans to Britain.

[image source: Wikipedia]

### **Henderson Island Restoration Project Newsletter Update out now!** [source: Jonathan Hall - [jonathan.hall@rspb.org.uk](mailto:jonathan.hall@rspb.org.uk)]

The latest newsletter for the Henderson Island Restoration project is now available for your reading pleasure. Please contact Jonathan Hall for a copy. According to Jonathan: 'Much has happened since our last edition in September, and the newsletter contains details of our provisional decision to proceed with the operation in 2011, a report on the islands of the Pitcairn group which have already been restored, and some exciting DEFRA funding news.'

### **INVASIVES - Newsletter of the Asia-Pacific Forest Invasive Species Network out now!** [source: APFISN [APFISN@fao.org](mailto:APFISN@fao.org)]

The latest newsletter of the Asia-Pacific Forest Invasive Species Network is out now! INVASIVES, is a bimonthly newsletter of the Asia-Pacific Forest Invasive Species Network (APFISN) and is intended to share information among countries in the Asia-Pacific region on Forest Invasive Species (FIS) and the threats they pose in the region. Contributions are welcome; please contact the editor - Dr. K. V. Sankaran ([sankaran@kfri.org](mailto:sankaran@kfri.org)). The latest edition highlights the threat by the Mexican poppy (*Argemone mexicana*) and a column on species extinction - a biodiversity crisis. A number of new publications are also highlighted.

*A copy of the newsletter can be obtained by contacting the PILN Coordinator.*

### **Mariana Crow will go extinct in 75 years - study suggests** [source: Science Daily]

Researchers from the University of Washington say the Mariana crow, a forest crow living on Rota Island in the western Pacific Ocean, will go extinct in 75 years. The extinction could happen almost twice as soon as previously believed. The crow's extinction can be prevented with a bird management program that focuses on helping fledgling birds reach their first birthday, said James Ha, University of Washington research associate professor in psychology. Of the about 35 crow species, Mariana crows are considered rare and classified as critically endangered. Weighing about a half of a pound, Mariana crows are 40 percent smaller than other crows. Monogamously-mating, Mariana crows live exclusively on Rota Island, populated by about 1,200 people and located 56 miles northeast of Guam. Brown tree snakes introduced to the island after World War II wiped out native birds, such as the Guam flycatcher and the Rufous fantail. The Ha's suspect that the uncontrolled increase of feral cats on Rota is leading to the decrease of Mariana crows, much like brown tree snakes led to the disappearance of forest birds on Guam. The researchers say that a captive rearing program could save the Mariana crows. They hope to set up a rearing facility where they could incubate eggs from the wild, raise the fledglings until their first birthday and then release the grown birds into nesting sites on the island. The study was funded by the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

*Contact PILN Coordinator for a copy of the publication*

### **Invasive species lie in wait, strike after decades!** [source: Alister Doyle for ABC News: <http://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory?id=12442736&page=1>]

Animals and plants introduced from foreign habitats may not reveal themselves to be harmful 'invasive' species for decades, according to a European study published on Monday. Species that are moved away from their natural predators back home can displace native species in their new habitats, and scientists say the problem already costs Europe 12 billion euros (\$16 billion) a year. The study, which is likely to hold true for other continents too, means that the seeds of future, perhaps bigger, problems have literally already been sown. The study compared the effects of 'alien species' such as American ragweed, Canada geese or Japanese deer in 28 European countries. The study's findings indicated that it can take decades to figure out which alien species will be disruptive, and looking at those that arrived in 1900 was a better indicator of current problems than looking at those from 2000. 'This lag in the cause-and-effect relationship

would mean that ... the seeds of future invasion problems have already been sown,' said the study, published in the U.S. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. Birds and insects were quickest to get established in new habitats, helped by their mobility. Others took far longer to reach the critical numbers to become invasive. Introductions to Europe from the 19th century included ragweed, whose pollen is blamed for some hay fever, and the black locust tree, also from North America, which can damage European grassland with its ability to store nitrogen. Increasing trade and travel during the 20th and 21st centuries means that the problems are likely to worsen unless checks on everything from the ballast tanks of ships to coffee or grain imports are tightened. 'We should do more about this problem now,' said Stefan Dullinger, of the University of Vienna, Austria, who was among authors of the study from institutes in New Zealand, the Czech Republic, Germany, Switzerland, Spain, Italy and France.

**Heightened alert sounded over invasive species** [source: Thanh Nien News.com:

<http://www.thanhniennews.com/2010/Pages/20101224173013.aspx>

A recent photograph taken by a scientist of a red-eared slider clinging to a giant turtle's carapace at Hanoi's Hoan Kiem Lake, Vietnam has scientists screaming blue murder. They have long warned against pollution and illegal fishing threatening the life of the Hoan Kiem Lake turtle. Now, they are renewing with added vigor the call for better protection of the rare giant soft-shell turtle in Hoan Kiem Lake that is being invaded by the notorious invasive species - red-eared slider turtle (*Trachemys scripta elegans*). 'It is difficult to assess the actual red-eared slider population but their impacts on the giant turtle are obvious,' said Ha Dinh Duc, a scientist who has authored research about the lake for the past decade. The giant soft-shell turtle (*Rafetus swinhoei*) has played a crucial role in Vietnamese lore for more than 2,000 years. There are only four confirmed members of the species left in the world - two living wild in Vietnamese lakes and a captive pair in China. The Hoan Kiem Lake turtles are traditionally viewed as manifestations of the Golden Turtle God, or Kim Qui. Over the last two millennia, the deity is said to have helped design fortifications, thwart enemy armies and produce a number of enchanted weapons. Duc said he has warned against the invasion of red eared sliders in Hoan Kiem Lake since 2004 but local authorities have taken no action against the problem. 'City leaders should discuss the issue thoroughly before launching a long-term plan to protect the giant turtle,' he said. Dang Huy Huynh, chairman of the Vietnam Zoology Association, slammed lax surveillance in importing invasive species like the red-eared sliders.

'Vietnam has struggled several times against invasive species like the channeled apple-snail (*Pomacea canaliculata*) and piranha,' he said. 'The government has issued regulations to protect the Hoan Kiem Lake giant turtle. The invasion of red eared sliders in the lake is unacceptable. Related government agencies should take strict action on this issue,' he said.

Huynh advised that the population of red eared sliders in the lake is killed and strict fines imposed on those who release any more invasive animals into its waters. Many Vietnamese people have the habit of releasing animals, including red eared sliders, into the wild to pray for good luck, an action that has been severely criticized by conservationists.

## NEW PUBLICATIONS:

**National Strategy on Invasive Species in Mexico - prevention, control and eradication** [source: Yolanda Barrios - [especiesinvasora@conabio.gob.mx](mailto:especiesinvasora@conabio.gob.mx)]

We are pleased to inform you that the National Strategy on Invasive Species in Mexico: Prevention, Control and Eradication is now available in English. Contact Yolanda if you need more information. The pdf version is available for download at: <http://www.conabio.gob.mx/invasoras/index.php/Portada>.

**Sooper Yooper - superhero Billy Cooper battles Alien Sea Creatures** [source: <http://sooperyooper.com>]



In time for Christmas is a new children's book about superhero Billy Cooper and his SCUBA-diving bulldog, Mighty Mac, doing everything in their power to safeguard the Great Lakes. The book is designed to educate and entertain kids about the importance of protecting our natural resources. The book sees Billy Cooper fight alien lampreys and invading mussels. The book's simple message is when it comes to the environment, everyone can be a superhero! The book is

beautifully illustrated by the late Mark Heckman and written by Mark Newman. More information can be obtained from the website.

**Invisible invaders: non-pathogenic invasive microbes in aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems**

Author: Elena Litchman. Microbial invasions by viruses, bacteria, fungi and protists occur worldwide but are much harder to detect. Invasive microbes have the potential to significantly alter community structure and ecosystem functioning in diverse terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. Consequently, increased attention is needed on non-pathogenic invasive microbes, both free-living and symbiotic, and their impacts on communities and ecosystems. You can view this publication online: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1461-0248.2010.01544.x/full>

**Mapping and management of invasive species: *Chromolaena odorata*** : [source: APFSIN]



Authors: Chudamani Joshi & Jan de LAP Lambert Academic Publishing. 2010. The book presents a spatial and temporal analysis of the enduring problem of bioinvasion in the modern world, and the role of GIS and remotes sensing imagery in mapping and management of *Chromolaena odorata*. It also gives a new perspective of the capabilities of indirect use of remote sensing tools in mapping and management of invasive species.

[Image source: Wikipedia]

**Wildfires, fuels and invasive plants** [source: APFSIN]

Authors: Ed. Louise E. Willems, Nova Science Pub Inc. 2010. The main reason for the occurrence of wildfires is climate change and partly by the increasing number of homes in and near the forest. However, it is known that wildfire suppression and historic land management practices have led to unnaturally high accumulations of biomass in many forests, primarily in the intermountain West. While high-intensity conflagrations (wildfires that burn the forest canopy) occur naturally in some ecosystems (called crown-fire or stand-replacement fire ecosystems), abnormally high biomass levels can lead to conflagrations in ecosystems when such crown fires are rare. This book explores wildland fires, fuels and non-native invasive plants in our forest ecosystems.

**State of Australia's Birds 2010** [source: Wendy Henderson - wendy.henderson@canberra.edu.au]

Compiled by: Julie Kirkwood and James O'Connor. <http://www.birdsaustralia.com.au/soab/state-of-australias-birds.html>

This report features articles on a small number of Australia's precious islands, but it is only a snapshot of the situation, as more than 8,300 islands occur within Australia's jurisdiction. Indeed, only a small number of these islands are ever visited regularly by people who record biological data, and precious little is known about most of them. We are left to make inferences about what is happening on those unknown islands from what is happening on the few we have studied. Nevertheless, some distinct themes emerge from the articles in this report: a high level of endemism means islands represent a critical biodiversity ark; even small increments of climate change-induced sea-level rise will have grave consequences for low-lying islands; and invasive species have already caused widespread devastation of many islands' biological resources and ecological processes, and continue to do so at an alarming rate. We tend to know much more about islands inhabited by humans, of course, and the processes on inhabited islands are likely to be distinct. Patterns of invasion of islands by novel species, for example, are bound to be heavily influenced by human habitation: by contrast, climate change and sea-level rise will affect any island on the basis of its physical situation. Opportunities for mitigation, too, may depend on whether an island is inhabited. For instance, most examples of successful eradications and reintroductions have, so far, come from uninhabited islands, although there are some notable exceptions.

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**Contact for PILN SOUNDBITES: Dr. Posa A. Skelton, PILN  
Coordinator  
SPREP, Apia, SAMOA  
Tel. +685 66276, Fax. +685 20231, [posas@sprep.org](mailto:posas@sprep.org)**