



# PRISMSS

Newsletter

## Pacific Regional Invasive Species Management Support Service (PRISMSS)

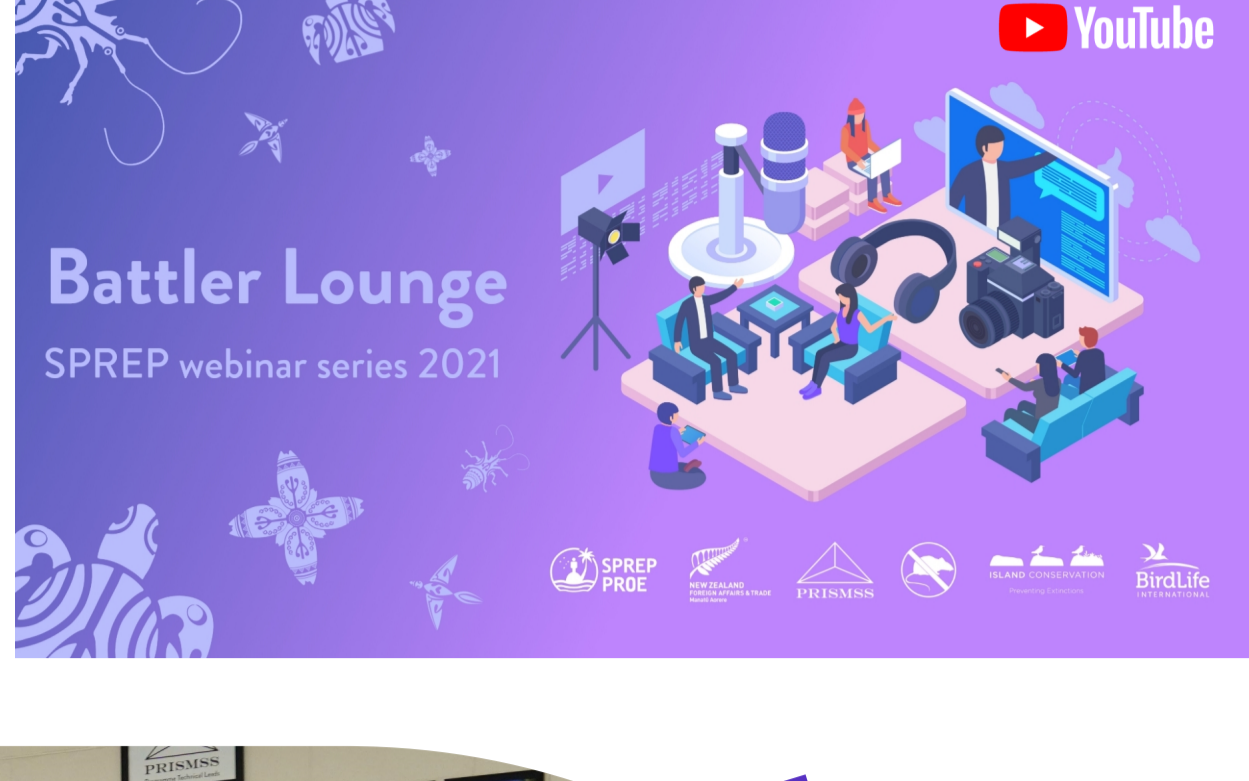
Invasive species are the leading driver of biodiversity loss in the Pacific. They have a significant impact on ecosystem resilience leading to a loss of ecosystem services and a reduced ability to adapt to climate change.

PRISMSS aims to assist the Pacific in stepping up on-the-ground management of invasive species.

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## PRISMSS Update

PRISMSS hosted the 2nd Battler Lounge session in early December focusing on our Predator Free Pacific programme, rodents and their impact on ecosystem resilience as well as a dedicated session on the Invasive Species Regional Mainstreaming Strategy. [You can view the session here.](#)



SPREP Invasive species team in the battler lounge hosting the final SPREP webinar for 2021

Other key PRISMSS core activities include the continuing development of the PRISMSS Capability Development Framework which will facilitate the mapping of national and regional capability in implementing the five PRISMSS regional programmes. The framework will identify training needs and inform donors of country readiness to implement a program.

We would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. We look forward to being of further assistance to you in 2022.

## Rattus rattus Present



Find out more about rats and their impacts from our Battler Lounge "Creature Feature" session with host Richard Griffiths from PRISMSS

## Protect Our Islands

"National and Inter-Island Biosecurity and Early Detection/Rapid Response"

The Protect our Islands Programme is continuing work on Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR) protocols for use throughout the Pacific for eight priority groups of species under the GEF6 Regional Invasives Project. Tonga and Tuvalu have endorsed the development of their EDRR plans. Resources are being developed for inter-island biosecurity training for biosecurity and invasive species practitioners under the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (NZMFAT) MISCCAP project. Community engagement in inter-island biosecurity is essential to safeguard islands from invasive species threats.

Finally, if you haven't seen it already, check out this [article](#) that estimates how much red imported fire ant could cost your country if it established (see Table 4 for a summary of all impacts). If this ant establishes in all the SPREP/SPC member countries it could cost the region USD329 million per year in impacts. Another good reason to make sure your international and inter-island biosecurity/quarantine teams are well resourced to prevent these invaders.



Red imported fire ants



Environment Service Team Wallis & Futuna



## Predator Free Pacific

"Removing Invasive Mammalian Predators from Islands"

Among the highlights this year has been the [removal of rats from four islets in Wallis and Futuna](#) in November. The project activity was executed by the Environment Service Team with remote technical support from PRISMSS, contributing to the team taking out the [2021 Battler of the Year award](#).

Rat removal operations in French Polynesia are moving forward to remove rats from three islands in the Marquesas. This European Union funded PROTEGE project activity will protect globally significant sites for seabirds and areas of cultural value, increasing the communities resilience to climate change.

The Predator Free Pacific Programme has been strengthened with the development of a regional PFP strategy, funded by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade MISCCAP project. This reflects PRISMSS partners' commitment to support PICTs to increase their capacity for predator eradication as an effective nature-based solution to climate change.



## War On Weeds

"Management of high priority weeds"

The War On Weeds kicked into gear in Tonga recently with the start of a delimiting survey for the invasive *Castilla elastica* or Panama rubber tree. *C. elastica* is a deciduous latex-producing tree, native to Central America and parts of South America. It is present in several Pacific Islands where it poses a significant threat to native forest ecosystems. This invasive tree was discovered in Tonga in 2015. Although it produces vast quantities of seed that are spread by birds, it is thought to be limited in distribution. This survey is looking to identify all populations of *C. elastica* in Tongatapu. The data will enable informed decision making about the management of this invasive species.

The Department of Environment team received training from the PRISMSS War On Weeds programme in the use of a data recording tool called Fulcrum. This application enables the team to record data in the field from their phones. The War On Weeds programme is funded by the GEF6 Regional Invasives Project.



Panama rubber tree (*Castilla elastica*) - a deciduous latex-producing tree significant threat to native forest ecosystems



Moluccan albizia (*Falcataria moluccana*)

## Natural Enemies - Natural Solutions

"Biological control of widespread weeds"

The feasibility of targeting Moluccan albizia (*Falcataria moluccana*) with natural enemies has been explored recently, with plans underway now to enact a project against this invasive weed species. This extremely fast-growing tree is a widespread problem in the Pacific region as it can readily establish in disturbed areas and can grow on a variety of soil types.

It has also shown the ability to alter ecosystems by preventing the establishment of native flora in favour of exotic species and by increasing decomposition rates and soil nutrient availability. Furthermore, it can cause significant damage when it breaks apart during storms. Two insects, a stem-boring weevil, and a leaf-galling mite, have been selected for further studies within this activity funded by the NZMFAT MISCCAP Project. The sustainability of a gall-forming rust fungus (*Uromycladium falcatariae*) will also be studied.



## Resilient Ecosystems - Resilient Communities

"Priority area ecological restoration"

Close to 100 mature invasive trees and 8,000m<sup>2</sup> of invasive vines have been removed from two sites located in the Taputapuataea UNESCO landscape in Raiatea, French Polynesia. This work was conducted under the European Union funded PROTEGE project, in partnership with French Polynesia's Directorate for Environment (DIREN) and the Directorate for Culture and Heritage (DCP).

The main targets on the sites were snakewood (*Cecropia peltata*) and *Meremia peltata*. These species had taken over parts of the sites. The sites were chosen for their high cultural value for communities as archeological structures are present. The removal of the invasive targets had to take this into account to avoid causing any damage.

The removal of the mature trees and vines is the first step, a team will continue to revisit the sites over the coming year to continue removing any seedlings that may have germinating.

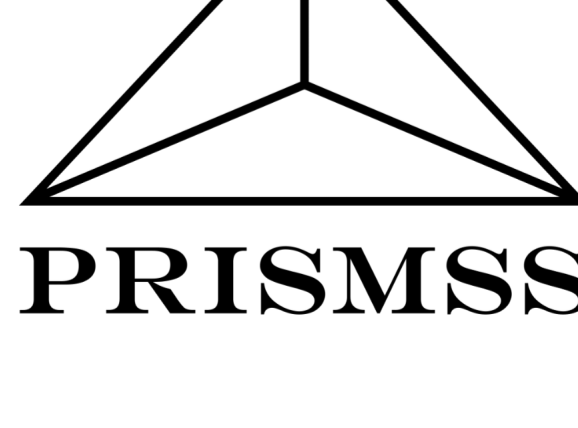
In some areas tree planting will be completed. For this purpose, a seedling nursery was built, native seedlings which will be planted in the first half of 2022. Teams will maintain the tree planting areas.

Further sites within the UNESCO landscape are being identified and will see restoration activities in 2022 and 2023.



Snakewood stump in Taputapuataea UNESCO landscape

## PRISMSS Partners



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