

HENDERSON ISLAND NEWS

Henderson Island to be Restored in August 2011

Henderson Island Facts

- Part of the Pitcairn Island group, a UK Overseas Territory in the South Pacific
- The last near-pristine limestone island of significant size in the world
- Home to over 55 unique species, including 4 species of endemic landbird
- Only known breeding site of the endangered Henderson petrel
- Global stronghold of the gadfly petrel group
- Declared a natural World Heritage Site in 1988



The RSPB is delighted to announce that it will be proceeding with its world-leading operation to restore Henderson Island World Heritage Site this August. This partnership with the Pitcairn Islands Government will save the Henderson petrel from the threat of extinction by eradicating the introduced rats which are devastating its island home.

The rats will be removed by highly experienced eradication experts, who will use two GPS-guided helicopters to methodically drop poison bait across the island. It will take approximately two days for the entire island to be treated, with the whole operation being repeated one week later so as to ensure that no rats survive. Bird populations are expected to boom once rats are removed, with Henderson petrel numbers projected to increase from



Murphy's Petrel above Henderson Island. Over 25,000 petrel chicks are killed by rats on Henderson every year. (Peter Harrison)

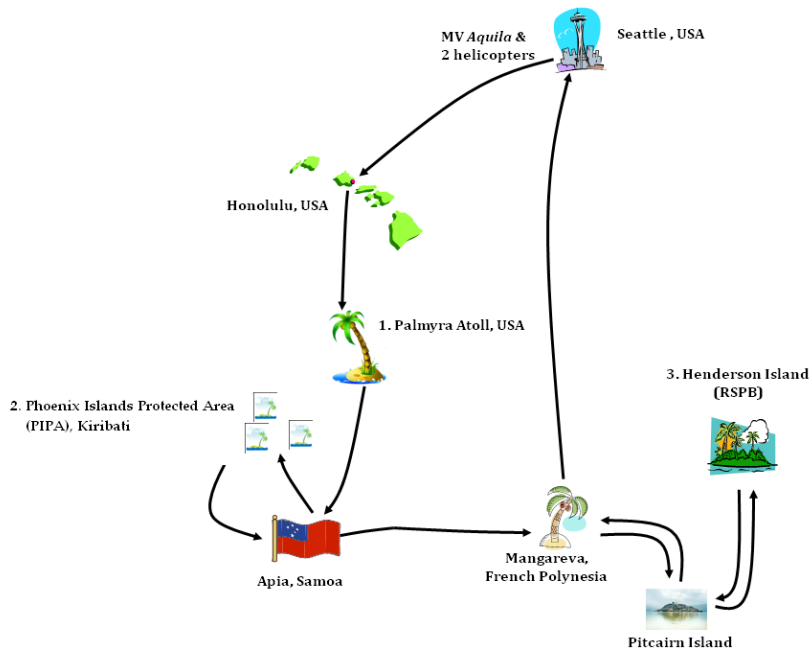
16,000 pairs today to up to 1.6 million pairs within 70-100 years.

This eradication programme has been evaluated to ensure compliance with the principles of Humane Vertebrate Pest Control (HVPC), as developed by RSPCA Australia. The potential impact on non-target species has also been carefully assessed by a team of scientists. No other species are expected to be severely affected, with the only landbird

whose feeding habits may put it at risk being the Henderson rail. A captive population of rails will therefore be established and kept for the duration of the operation.

Rail numbers can recover quickly from any potential reduction, with the overall population expected to rapidly grow beyond current levels once rats are removed and this unique island ecosystem begins to recover its near-pristine nature.

Ground-Breaking Pacific Partnership



The route of the *MV Aquila*, which will complete 3 restoration projects in succession.

A unique international partnership with two other island restoration projects means that a single vessel, the *MV Aquila*, will complete a remarkable 27,000km voyage of conservation. The *Aquila* will sail to Palmyra Atoll (USA), the Phoenix Islands Protected Area (PIPA, Kiribati) and then Henderson Island (UK), restoring crucial seabird habitats at every stop by removing the introduced rats that have proved so devastating.

Given the extremely high costs and logistical complexities of getting aerial eradication equipment to remote island locations, such a multi-island restoration has been mooted in the Pacific for many years. However, this is the first time that such a partnership has been achieved. Not only will this exceptional use of resources deliver significant cost

savings, but it will also encourage and enable technical knowledge to be shared between all three projects.

The additional conservation benefits of this joint-voyage will be enormous: Palmyra Atoll Restoration Project, which is being led by Island Conservation in partnership with the US Fish & Wildlife Service and The Nature Conservancy, will help conserve an atoll which is home to one million nesting seabirds, including the world's second largest colony of red-footed boobies. The Phoenix Island Protected Area Management Committee and Eco-Oceania Pty Ltd. will subsequently restore two islands within PIPA: Enderbury & Birnie. These islands are located within the world's largest World Heritage Site, and provide important nesting habitat for a large variety of seabird species.

Exclusive Prints of Henderson's Endemic Birds

World-renowned seabird expert & wildlife artist, Peter Harrison, has painted all five endemic birds of Henderson Island in support of the restoration project.

A strictly limited print run of 36 copies of each painting are available, and can be viewed online at www.rspb.org.uk/hendersonprints. Every print comes with an original signature by the artist and a certificate of authenticity. Prints are £90 each (plus £5 postage & packaging), or the set of five is available for £400 (plus £5 p&p).

All proceeds will go directly towards the Restoration Project and ensuring its long-term success. Please contact Jonathan Hall (details below) to order prints and support this unique operation.



The endemic Henderson Lorikeet
(Peter Harrison)

Supported by:

Supporting Partners: The Royal Zoological Society of Scotland (RZSS), Forest & Bird, BirdLife International, Island Conservation, Eco Oceania and Tamarack Ventures.

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Contact Us

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