

Northern Kermadec seabirds

By the end of twentieth century the largest island in the Kermadec group, Raoul Island (2943 hectares), was all but devoid of seabirds. No petrels or shearwaters remained. What must have been one of the world's great seabird islands had all but been annihilated, millions of birds lost to the ravages of cats and rats following scattered periods of human occupation. Every restoration island has its own dynamic, in particular the speed and ways in which species recolonise naturally in the wake of the eradication of pests and predators. Monitoring post-eradication changes over the long term should be a high priority, but not only what is happening on land. Seabirds, as marine creatures, have a vital role in helping develop our understanding of the complex marine world.

The project for which funding has been granted by the Birds NZ Research Fund is for two volunteers to spend up to three months on Raoul Island, Northern Kermadecs, in early 2017. This project by the Northern NZ Seabird Trust (together with a group of collaborators) is the first stage towards establishing a comprehensive research programme for northern Kermadec seabirds, building on the ad hoc study since eradication by visiting scientists and DOC staff. Key tasks for this project are:



1. Establish study sites for both the winter and summer breeding Kermadec petrel populations established on Raoul and the Meyer islands
2. Study burrows for wedge-tailed shearwaters to be established on Raoul Island
3. Initiate tracking studies for winter and summer breeding Kermadec petrels and wedge-tailed shearwaters
4. Surveying for other species (white and sooty terns, and red-tailed tropicbirds) to be completed, including mapping.
5. Search for signs of white-naped petrel breeding on Raoul (species extirpated on Raoul by 1940s).

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