



# Strengthening Local Capacity for the Protection of the Terrestrial Natural Heritage of Rimatara

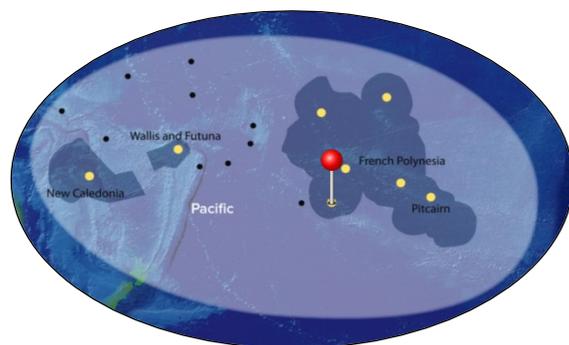
**Targeted territory:** French Polynesia

**Total project budget:** 49,659 Euros

**BEST 2.0 grant awarded:** 49,659 Euros

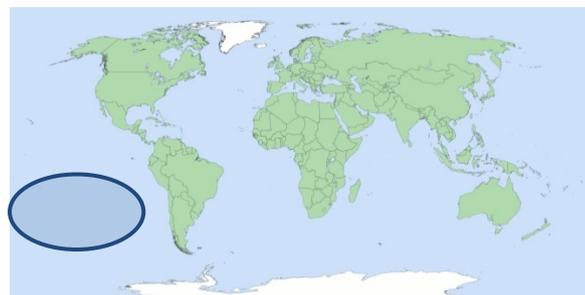
**Duration:** January 2017 – January 2018 (12 months)

**Lead organisation:** Association Rima'ura



## Background:

Because it is one of the last two inhabited islands of French Polynesia that is still free of black rats, Rimatara hosts two endemic bird species that are restricted to this unique island: the Kuhl's Lorikeet (*Vini kuhlii*) and the Rimatara reed warbler (*Acrocephalus rimatarae*). The Kuhl's Lorikeet would not survive the invasion of the island by the black rat, and it is not known what the chances of survival of the Rimatara reed warbler - Rimatara's strict endemic – would be in the face of this predator since the cause of the disappearance of reed warblers from the islands of Moorea and Raiatea is unknown. These two birds have recently been classified as Critically Endangered (CR) on the Red List of French Polynesia Birds of IUCN France because, on this tiny island of 840 ha, their habitat is being degraded due to a



large-scale return to agriculture due to the crisis, and the recent destruction of 40% to 50% of its natural forest, in the feo (sharp rocky area formed from exposed reefs) area of the island, due to the development (in 2006) and then the upgrading (in 2016) of the Rimatara airfield.

### Description of the Project:

This project will strengthen the protection of this island from the black rat through training the dog inspection team which inspects the goods arriving on the island, and extending their work to goods arriving by plane. It will enable several concrete conservation actions for the island's endemic birds:

- The regular census of birds by the local conservation association, Rima'ura, in charge of this project, to monitor their demographic trend in the future.
- The protection of trees - often a hundred-years old - carrying lorries' nests from the current deforestation of the island.
- The delineation of future bird habitat supply areas in the feo with the local population;
- Drafting of an action plan for these two endangered species.

Awareness of the project will be realized through simple projects to rehabilitate the island's habitats: setting up educational projects with school children, holding quarterly public meetings, meeting and sensitizing island decision-makers, promotion of ecotourism, publishing of communication tools, writing activity reports to decision-makers and running the Facebook site of Rima'ura. The project will also contribute to the preservation of ecosystem services because Rimatara will be protected from the black rat and the damage it causes to crops.

### Intended results:

The aim of this project is to strengthen the capacities of the population of Rimatara for the protection of its terrestrial natural heritage.

- Strengthened biosecurity of the island of Rimatara with regards to the black rat.
- Improved protection of the birds of Rimatara and their habitats.
- Increased involvement and sensitisation of the populations concerned and decision makers with regards to the problem of safeguarding the terrestrial environment.



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