



# Urgency for the Protection of the Terrestrial Environment of Rapa Island

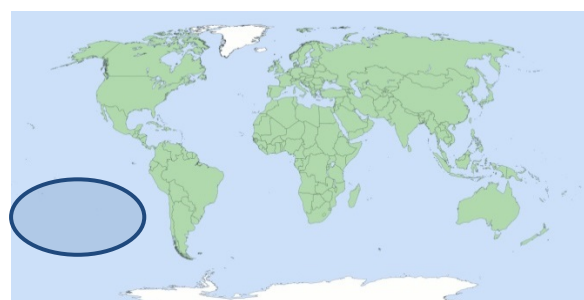
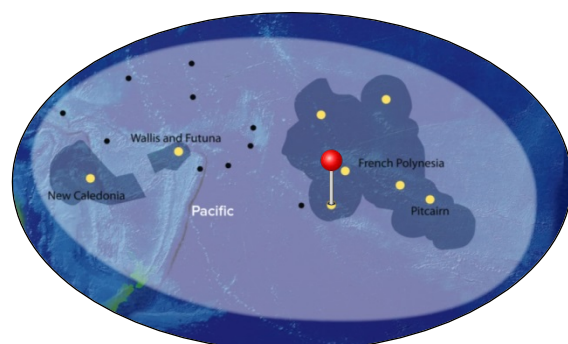
**Targeted territory:** French Polynesia

**Total project budget:** 49,968 Euros

**BEST 2.0 grant awarded:** 49,968 Euros

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

**Lead organisation:** Raumatariki (Rapa)



## Background:

The island of Rapa is a place of extraordinary speciation, with at least 300 endemic plant and animal species found on the island which is only 43 km<sup>2</sup>.

Threats to its terrestrial flora and fauna have increased dramatically over the past 15 years. Twenty years ago overgrazing and extensive degradation of the island's endemic forests were caused by oxen and goats; now the guava tree and the pine forest established in the seventies accentuate the pressure on the native habitats.

The situation deteriorated in 2017; the thickening guava undergrowth is now littered with the dead trunks of native species, while the pine trees settled in the previously untouched cloud forest. A major ecological disaster is underway and seems unstoppable. If nothing is done the native forest will have disappeared within a decade.

The other peculiarity of Rapa is that the island is free from black rats. With the exception of two islands: Rimatarara (Austral) and Ua Huka (Marquesas) all other inhabited islands of French Polynesia have been colonized by this species. The black rat is known for its negative impact on bird life and flora and for its ability to invade the Polynesian islands.

### Description of the Project:

The project aims to improve the situation of the endangered plant and animal species that are endemic to Rapa.

In order to strengthen the biosecurity with respect to black rats, training activities will be conducted for members and volunteers of the association. Twenty rat poison stations will be set up and goods inspections will be carried out by a trained technical officer. Outreach activities will also be conducted, including the installation of information boards and meetings with the public.



The protection of the terrestrial environment will be implemented by defining key areas of the island to be protected, enlarging the enclosure already in place to protect herds, one of the last remnants of the island's forests, and eliminating invasive plants (guavas and pines) on at least 3 sites, including the one protected by the enclosure with the ambition to restore 10 ha of forest.

Finally, the capacities of the local nature protection association Raumatariki Rapa will be strengthened and the local population will be better informed and sensitized by strengthening public communication.

### Intended results:

The main objective of the project is to improve the conservation of the unique terrestrial natural heritage of the island of Rapa. The expected results are as follows:



- Biosecurity against the black rat will be established.
- The key forest areas of the island will be protected by expanding the existing enclosure to protect herds from a forest area (3 ha), eliminating invasive plants and planting native or endemic species.
- The capacity of the Raumatariki Rapa, the Local Nature Conservation Association, will be strengthened.

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