



NEREIS: Conservation of the Fairy Tern *Sternula nereis exsul*

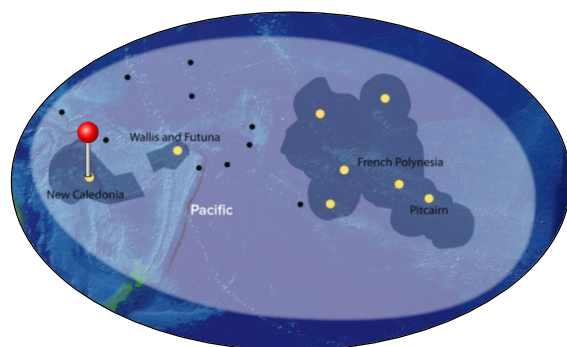
Targeted territory: New Caledonia

Total project budget: 96,801 Euros

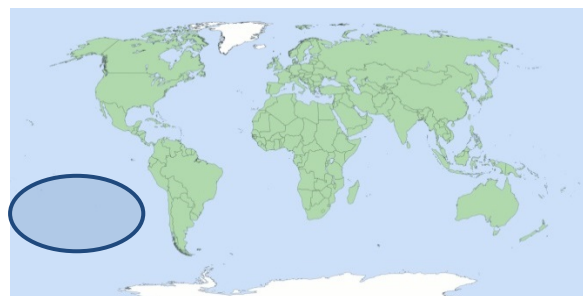
BEST 2.0 grant awarded: 96,801 Euros

Duration: January 2018 – January 2019 (12 months)

Lead organisation: Province Nord



PROVINCE NORD



Background:

New Caledonia is recognized as having exceptional biodiversity. The archipelago is home to the largest number of endemic species in the Pacific and makes up the largest closed lagoon in the world. It is also recognized as a "hotspot" of biodiversity.

The Fairy tern is a migratory marine bird of the Southwest Pacific, whose conservation status on the IUCN Red List has been vulnerable (VU) since 2008. These terns have a low reproductive rate. The identified causes are predation, especially by introduced rodents, and disturbance, mainly anthropogenic. In the longer term, climate change is also likely to alter its habitat: disturbances will modify and reduce the exploitable surfaces for the establishment of nesting colonies and alter its food resources.

In New Caledonia the population of the subspecies *Sternula nereis exsul* is estimated at less than 200 breeding pairs. The majority of the population of Fairy terns in New Caledonia is regularly observed on about fifteen islets in the lagoon of the communes of Koumac and Kaala-Gomen, in the north of Grande-Terre island. The colonies, which are monitored nature guards in the North Province supported by a few volunteers, have a high reproductive failure rate for reasons that remain unclear.

Description of the Project:

The project addresses the main documented short-term threats to the Fairy Tern population, in parallel with bio-ecological monitoring that remains essential. In a context of increasing human population, and in particular the increase of activity on the lagoon, the component of local activities and awareness raising occupies an important place because the involvement of residents and users is essential.

The activities implemented will:

- Equip the islands with permanent signalling devices, as well as defences and removable panels.
- Create colony tracking and capitalization tools maintained in the North Province Information System.
- Confirm the absence of rodents and maintain a biosecurity network on the islets;
- Initiate a process for setting aside an island known to be frequently used by terns for breeding.



Intended results:

The project will improve the conservation status of the Fairy terns settling in the north-western lagoon by:

- Improving protocols, tools and monitoring capitalization.
- Proposing methods of treatment of known causes of reproductive failure.
- Increasing the sense of ownership and sensitivity of local communities in the area.
- Protecting a site (to start with) known to be regularly used by terns for breeding, with the support of local partners.

CONTACT

Jean-Jérôme CASSAN

Province Nord

jj.cassan@province-nord.nc

