



HENDERSON ISLAND NEWS

UN warns that rats threaten island's Heritage status

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



Government of Pitcairn Islands

The UNESCO World Heritage Committee, which met in Brasilia in August, has warned the UK Government that the outstanding natural qualities for which Henderson Island World Heritage Site was listed would be jeopardised if rats are allowed to continue to eat the unique seabird population.

The Committee urged the UK Government to "rapidly secure adequate funding to implement the rat eradication scheme", warning that it was of "critical importance to maintaining... the integrity of the property".

Commenting on the decision, Tim Stowe, the RSPB's International Director, said: "It is extremely embarrassing that the UK is failing in its duty to protect species solely in our care. The



The endangered Henderson petrel, photographed on its only known breeding site. Over 25,000 petrel chicks are killed by rats on Henderson Island every year. (Alve Henricson)

removal of rats from Henderson is one of the most pressing conservation actions of our time. It costs only £1.7 million and the RSPB has already raised more than half of the cost from its members and others. A detailed plan is in place, and specialists are on stand-by to act. Unfortunately, time is running out, and if the remainder isn't raised within the next

few weeks, this work will have to be postponed by at least a year with the result of the cruel death of another 25,000 chicks and the knowledge that more species are at risk of extinction".

The RSPB, in partnership with the Pitcairn Government, is ready to eradicate the rats in 2011 if sufficient funds can be raised.

Over £1 million raised towards Henderson Island Restoration Project



Sir David Attenborough speaking in support of the Henderson Island Restoration Project at a reception for donors at the Foreign & Commonwealth Office. (06/07/10)

We are very pleased to announce that over GBP £1 million has now been raised towards the Henderson Island Restoration Project. The project will restore this remarkable World Heritage Site by removing the introduced Pacific rats which are devastating its unique wildlife. The total cost of the operation is estimated at £1.7 million.

The project has received strong

backing from a wide variety of sources, including Sir David Attenborough. Speaking at an evening reception for Henderson Island held at the Foreign & Commonwealth Office in July, Sir David spoke passionately about such island ecosystems, their unique wildlife, and their intense fragility. He remarked upon the quirks of history that had left the UK with the duty, as well as the

privilege, of caring for such a special place, and concluded that this was one of the very best types of conservation project: a highly targeted, short-term effort with massive long-term benefits.

The operation is tentatively scheduled for August 2011, but, due to the imminent need to sign contracts, we will not be able to proceed unless the remainder of the funds can be raised by the end of September (2010). If this deadline is missed, the next available operational window is August 2012, by when a further 25,000 petrel chicks will have been killed.

The funding shortfall is now the only obstacle in the way of this critical restoration project. We are therefore entirely focussed on raising the remainder over the coming month, and hope to be able to update you with good news by the end of September. If you are able to help with the fundraising effort, please contact David Agombar on 01767 693360, or at david.agombar@rspb.org.uk.

Raffle Winners Drawn

The lucky winners of two luxury expedition cruises to Henderson Island have now been announced. Thank you very much to all those who took part in the raffle, as well as to Zegrahm Expeditions for so generously donating the prizes.

New Photo Released

New photographic evidence of rat impacts on Henderson has been obtained. 95% of petrel chicks on Henderson are eaten within one week of hatching (25,000 chicks every year), and this will continue until we raise sufficient funds to eradicate the rats.



A rat eating a petrel chick (*Alve Henricson*)

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Contact Us

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