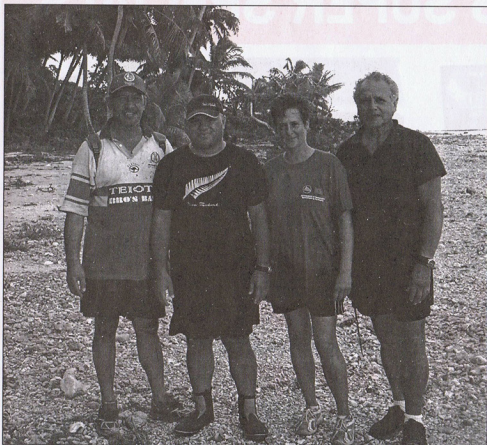


# Conservation mission to Takutea



Some of the team members who conducted the biodiversity survey on Takutea last week – Cook Islands Seacology Foundation field representative Allan Tuara (at right) with Atiu resident Nga Makikiriri (left) and Maja Poeschko. 08061252

Concern over the possible presence of coconut scales on Takutea led to a survey being conducted on the uninhabited island last week.

The survey was carried out by staff from Ministry of Agriculture, National Environment Service, Ministry of Marine Resources and Seacology Foundation. The visit was made at the request of the Atiu Island Trust and Atiu Island Government. A trust member and two staff from the Atiu agriculture accompanied the group.

The survey was to determine the presence of coconut scale and the coconut flat moth, and check out the paua population as well as the tavake (red tailed tropic bird) nestlings population on the island.

Headed by entomologist Maja Poeschko, the team left Atiu for Takutea on the morning of Wednesday 11 June.

At the end of last year Atiu experienced a severe outbreak of coconut scales due to favourable weather conditions and the absence of effective natural enemies. The devastating coconut flat moth was also discovered six years ago.

Poeschko says there was a concern that these pests may have spread to Takutea, however a check found none of these pests present. On Atiu the population of both pests are under control due to introduced natural enemies.

Sonny Tatuava and Nga Makikiriri from marine resources checked out the mooring buoy and also surveyed the paua (clam) population within the lagoon areas. According to Makikiriri, it is in a

“delicate condition” and needs careful observation to prevent loss of stock due to, among other things, possible unauthorised harvesting.

Cook Islands Seacology Foundation field representative Allan Tuara from Mangaia accompanied the team on behalf of Seacology USA. The organisation is a co-signatory with the Atiu Island Trust, over the conservation of the island of Takutea.

While on the island, Tuara did a survey of nesting tavake for the Cook Islands Heritage Project. He counted 400-plus healthy nesting birds in the short time they were on the island.

Due to changing weather and flight arrangements, the survey team left the island early to head back for Atiu, leaving part of the team behind to wait for calmer seas to make the return trip.

The Atiu Island Trust, which consists of the aronga mana who are in turn the caretakers of Takutea for the people of Atiu, would like to remind intending fishermen that the island and surrounding radius of five miles – extending out to sea from the shores of Takutea – is under conservation and any unauthorised landings and fishing in the restricted zone are strictly forbidden.

“We would like everyone to be mindful of the necessity and to please abide with this request to have Takutea under conservation for our future generations,” said trust chairperson Rongomatane Ada Ariki. — Tara Carr