

Kuhl's Lorikeet Project

The Kuhl's Lorikeet Project was formed to save the remaining Kuhl's lorikeet population on the Pacific island of Rimatara.

Ship rats (*Rattus rattus*) threatening to invade the volcanic Pacific island Rimatara have conservationists worried about the survival of the endangered Kuhl's lorikeet (*Vini kuhlii*) population on the island. Many experts believe the lory once inhabited several southern Cook Islands, but it now lives solely on Rimatara, which is part of French Polynesia's Austral Islands, and in the nearby northern Line Islands.

To save the remaining Rimatara population, estimated at 750 in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, the Kuhl's Lorikeet Project was formed. The group plans to relocate 20 of the Rimatara lories to the island of 'Atiu in the Cook Islands, which appears to be rat free, by July 2007. Ornithologists hope this will provide a reserve population in case the original Rimatara inhabitants are fatally threatened by the rats.

The consortium, which includes the Zoological Society of San Diego (ZSSD), the Cook Islands Natural Heritage Trust, regional affiliates of BirdLife International and the Ornithological Society of Polynesia, approached the American Lory Society (ALS) for funding. "We liked the idea of working with some of these small, fragile island species," said Margrethe Warden, ALS board member. At the August 2006 American Federation of Aviculture Convention, ALS raised \$2,500 for the project, according to Warden, and it has planned additional fund-raisers. Warden explained that ALS is donating the money directly to ZSSD, which is a 501(c) (3), making all contributions tax deductible. Contact Warden at (770) 277-6782 or birdbrain@mindspring.com.