

Presidential Migratory Bird Federal Stewardship Award Nomination

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service: Migratory Bird Conservation on Cocos Island

Project Partners: Guam Department of Agriculture, Division of Aquatic and Wildlife Resources (DAWR); Cocos Island Resort; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS); Guam Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR); U.S. Department of Interior, Office of Insular Affairs (OIA); The Guam Telephone Authority (GTA); Guam Division of Forest and Soil Resources; USDA, Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS); Guam Visitors Bureau

Habitat degradation and predation by invasive vertebrates have left many of Guam's native birds extinct or extirpated in the wild. Following intensive planning and habitat preparation, Cocos Island, a 34-ha island south of Guam, represents a successful conservation partnership that is benefiting both native wildlife and conservation organizations.

A broad group of partners developed and implemented project actions, which included biosecurity efforts, forest restoration, rodent eradication, and endangered species introductions. Following the successful eradication of rodents from the island, endangered Guam rails (*Gallirallus owstoni*) were released on Cocos Island and are now successfully breeding. Resident seabird species including white tern (*Gygis alba*), black noddy (*Anous minutus*), and brown noddy (*A. stolidus*) also are thriving on the tropical island. Today, island residents and visitors have an opportunity to experience Guam's native forests and wildlife in a protected environment—something that could not be done prior to this project. The Cocos Island conservation project provides a wealth of knowledge and experience to biologists, tourists, and school groups. This project has helped APHIS build international collaboration and participation in global and regional conservation organizations, where the technology used to make this project a success can be shared with broader island conservation communities. The Cocos Island project represents a major step forward in wildlife management capabilities in the tropical western Pacific region and represents a significant accomplishment for APHIS and project partners in furthering migratory bird conservation.

