



THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON

CITATION

PARTNERS IN CONSERVATION AWARD

RAT ISLAND RESTORATION

In recognition of the successful cooperative effort to achieve the largest island rat eradication in the United States, and for striving to restore biological diversity to Rat Island in the remote regions of the Aleutian Islands archipelago.

In February, 2004, the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service sponsored an Island Protection and Restoration Summit to investigate controlling, preventing, and eradicating Norway rats on islands within the refuge. Participants included several federal agencies, international experts, and nongovernmental organizations interested in conservation of island biodiversity. Two organizations – The Nature Conservancy and Island Conservation – demonstrated particular interest in forming a partnership for the purpose of eradicating rats from islands where accidental introductions had occurred, particularly Rat Island in the distant Aleutian Islands archipelago. The remoteness of Rat Island (1,400 miles southwest of Anchorage) compounded the demanding logistics and environmental sensitivity, as well as the legal and policy requirements. Planning and coordination among the partners and the regulatory agencies required 17 different permits or authorizations. After five years of planning, including developing baits, investigating methodologies, and identifying funding, the partners successfully carried out the application of more than 100,000 pounds of rodenticide across the 6,861-acre island and documented the more than 600 aerial lifts to move equipment and bait to ensure complete coverage. Preparation required support for more than 30 personnel for 45 days of field operations concluding with the aerial application using New Zealand Department of Conservation pilots skilled in aerial application of baits over rough terrain in difficult weather conditions. This was the largest island rat eradication project in the United States and the third largest in the world. As a result of this successful conservation partnership, Rat Island will again provide a safe haven for fish and wildlife in their natural diversity in habitat that has long suffered the consequences of an introduced predator. For their dedication to the island ecology of Rat Island and its restoration, the partners of the Rat Island Restoration project are granted the Department of the Interior's Partners in Conservation Award.