



## Part 2

# Eradication of Invasive Species in Fernando de Noronha, Brazil

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## Report 2

### Fieldwork

Our work began with several interviews with the scientific community and local volunteers involved in the tegu eradication programme on the island.

Once we had understood the problem and grasped the importance of their work, we joined them across the island to see what their efforts involved.

The scientists' activity to eradicate the tegu consists of setting traps throughout the island to control the species—always ensuring the process respects the animal and minimises its stress as much as possible.

The traps are covered with dark fabric, so that once inside, the animal calms down because it can't see anything, there's no light, and—being a cold-blooded reptile—its metabolism slows down.

A qualified professional administers a first injection that acts as a muscle relaxant, followed by a second injection that sedates the animal, and a third that serves as euthanasia.

On the first day, we were given an introduction to the island: we were told about its ecology, the different species, and the problems arising from growing tourism and invasive species. Once we had this general knowledge of the island, we planned out our time there and everything we needed to do, see, and learn.

### First day in the field.

We began the day full of excitement for what was ahead. We got up and headed to a beach area where no traps had ever been set before—an area that also happens to be a key nesting site for sea turtles.

After a day of waiting with no results, we decided to leave the traps in place for another day just to be sure. That same day, we explored a more forested area in search of new spots to set additional traps.

The next morning, under a beautiful sunrise in Fernando de Noronha, we returned to check the traps we had set on the first day. To our surprise, they were still empty. What initially seemed like bad news actually turned out to be the opposite—the lack of captures suggested that this area is currently free of tegus.

We collected the traps and headed to an inland area where the day before we had seen two tegus roaming.

While the tegus were still moving around near our traps, we went to observe a scientific capture of a green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*).

There, the team explained the damage tegus cause to the hatchlings of these animals, and the vital role turtles play in the food chain in other parts of the continent.

The issue with the turtle population that nests in Fernando de Noronha doesn't only affect the island—it impacts every place the turtles travel to for feeding, as there are no other species that fulfil their role in these ecosystems.

At the start of the following day, we went out to survey the nests of coastal birds—fascinating creatures that, in most places, are shy and elusive, but here remained calm and still.

At one point, Tunan split off from the group to check the traps we had set in the new area—and the results surprised us. Despite having seen tegus roaming nearby, not a single one had been caught.

It was our last day in the field, and we still hadn't caught a single tegu. We thought we wouldn't be able to witness and film the full tegu control process, and we had already begun thinking of alternative ways to complete the project.

But in a last-ditch effort, Tunan decided to move the traps—and finally, one was caught. We were later told that the tegu nesting season was approaching, and in the weeks leading up to it, their activity levels drop significantly because laying eggs requires a great deal of energy.

Thanks to this turn of events, we ended up discovering some truly special areas of the island—places that had remained largely untouched by humans (at least directly)—and it wasn't long before we spotted the first tegus in these seemingly “pristine” zones.

The invasive species eradication project rests on two key pillars:

The scientific aspect, led by professionals and research, which aims to tackle the issue through evidence-based strategies; and the work of local volunteers, who, by understanding the problem, become actively involved in defending the ecology of their archipelago.



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