

# Community and Local Participation in Conservation in Melanesia

There are varied and seemingly insurmountable challenges that face the governments and communities of Melanesia today. Not surprisingly, the root of many of these problems is financial. Economic and political instability in the region places pressure on the governments of the day to increasingly rely on natural resource extraction industries, such as forestry and fisheries. In addition to the legalized plunder of our natural resources, illegal trade is occurring at an unknown rate.



in an effort to clarify its status. Sunil Prasad and co-authors discuss the need for such efforts, and were major players in bringing the species to attention of the Fiji government.

Other conservation programmes involving local scientists and communities include the Marine Protected Area network on Gau Island,

championed by Dr. Joeli Veitayaki and colleagues. The use of fish larvae to restock local reefs in Fiji is described by Julien Grignon, whose project includes valuable input by local fishing communities. The role of communities in the creation of conservation concessions in the Solomon Islands is emphasized by Chris Filardi of the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) and Patrick Pikacha (CI).

And last but not least, we have Lisa Choquette of the Solomon Dive Adventures Scuba School, writing about the school's role in increasing the awareness of the marine environment in the Solomon Islands. The school has produced local dive instructors, whose employment within the tourist industry boosts the coffers of local communities. In addition to increasing appreciation for the beauty of the Solomon Island reefs and their conservation.

These stories illustrate how local communities and scientists are actively participating in the conservation of our environment and its biota. For those outside the region, this issue is an introduction to our brand of conservation. For the people of Melanesia, it's a reminder of how important local research is. Melanesian Geo encourages those involved in conservation in the region to persevere in the face of economic hardship and political strife.

- Tamara Osborne  
(Assistant Editor)

Yet despite the ignorance of the policy makers and regulators, efforts to conserve the environment and biota of our beautiful islands are ongoing and gaining in momentum. Many of the conservation projects discussed in the current issue are taking place in Fiji; however there are similar stories of collaborations between local communities and scientists throughout the region.

We start off with a look at the work of Conservation International (CI) in the Solomon Islands under the guiding hands of Melanesian Geo's editor, Patrick Pikacha. This is followed by an article on the internationally recognized Kula Eco-park, located on the west coast of Viti Levu Island, Fiji. The Kula Eco-park is currently collaborating with the University of the South Pacific (USP), in creating a captive breeding programme for the endangered Fiji ground frog. A more detailed discussion by the USP scientists involved in this project follows on from this article.

Also in the current issue are two articles by USP graduate student researchers, outlining for our readers the ongoing studies of insect species in Fiji. A particular emphasis is placed on the rare and highly endangered Longhorn beetle, which has recently come into focus of the Ministry of Environment

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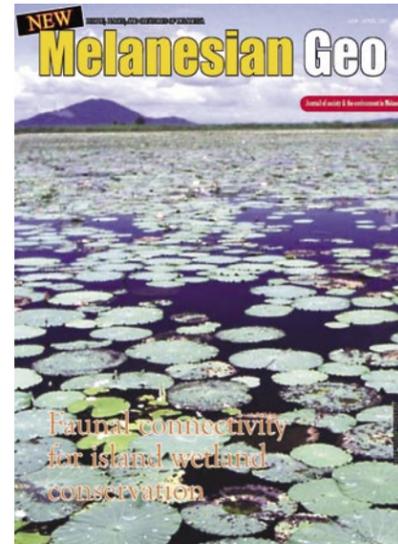
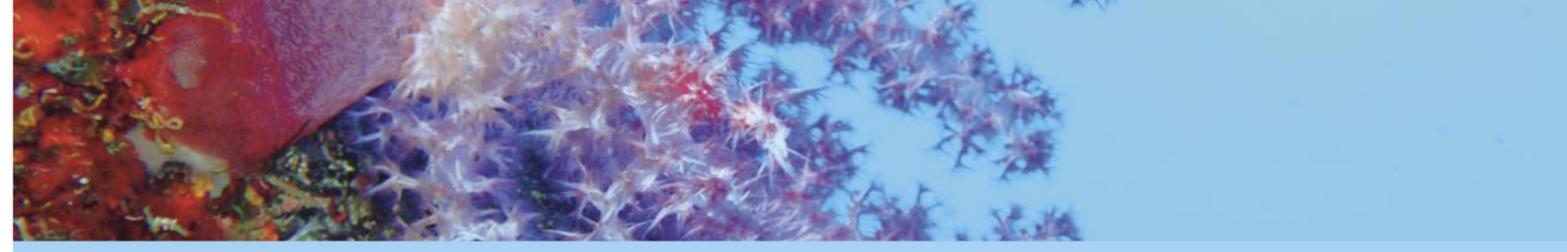
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MELANESIAN GEO is published at least three times a year for the purpose of dissemination of important issues affecting society and the environment throughout Melanesia.

Printed in Fiji



Bula Melanesian Geo Team

On behalf of the regional PACINET (Pacific Island Partnership in Taxonomy) Program I would like to say how much we admire your magazine. For us the excellent article in Issue 4 by Senilolia, which holistically combined her cultural heritage with her systematics research on the evolutionary history of *Syzygium* in Vanuatu, was a particular pleasure to read. Such positive outputs by the

regions young people in the face of mounting pressure on our precious environment is inspiring and uplifting to us all. Congratulations on your efforts to date and best wishes for a bright future.

Dr Gilianne Brodie  
Program Coordinator  
PACINET (SPC/USP/SPREP)  
Fiji Islands

## Melanesian Geo

Melanesia, Rare Pride

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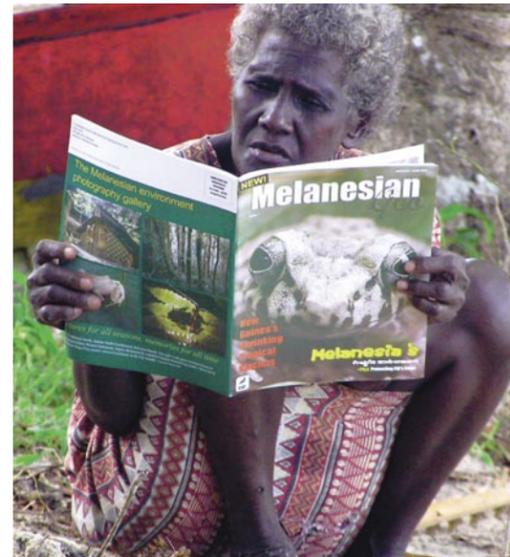
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### AWARENESS AND EDUCATION SUBSCRIPTIONS

Limited quantities of Melanesian Geo are also available at Conservation International Solomon Islands Program.

Melanesian Geo can be found onboard the following flights for your reading pleasure;



Melanesian Geo read by village communities in rural Solomons.

We would like to acknowledge the assistance of those who have supported the printing of this issue of MG. Your continual collaboration and support in the printing of this grassroots publication makes a difference.

## New Caledonia releases new Important Bird Areas (IBA) Book

by Jérôme Spaggiari



Top: New Caledonia has many islands which are sanctuary to many bird species. Above: Crow Honeyeater (*Gymnomyza aubyana*)

The 6th of April 2007 at the Cultural centre Jean-Marie Tjibaou, was a great day for the Société calédonienne d'ornithologie – SCO, the BirdLife International affiliate in New Caledonia. On this date the IBA directory was launched in the presence of a delegation of the Pacific BirdLife Secretariat and some institutional representatives, a 213 full-color page book presenting the New Caledonian situation and each individual IBA.

For our organisation, the oldest in New Caledonia, it was the end of a two and half year project dedicated to the identification of the Zone importantes pour la conservation des oiseaux de Nouvelle-Calédonie. During that period and under the direction of a steering committee including all the institutions, research institutes and majors NGOs involved in biodiversity conservation, we gathered all the available data on birds,

habitats, people and threats. A wise partnership with the Institut agronomique néo-calédonien – IAC – allowed us to use a huge amount of data (i.e. more than 4000 point counts and more than 60 reports or articles) enhancing the IBA network with strong scientific support. These data will also help us to revise the IUCN categories for the New Caledonian globally threatened birds.

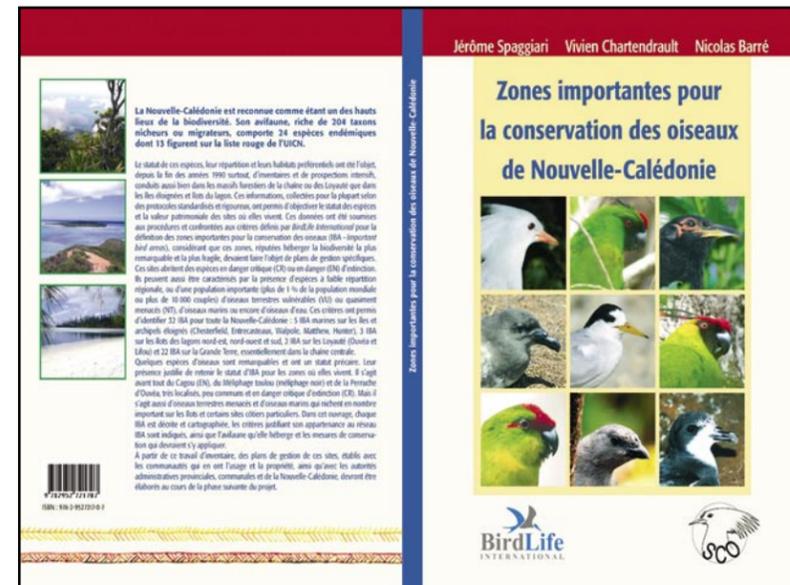
We identified eight IBAs for the presence of colonial seabirds; five are on remote islands for important populations of Bobbies, Terns, Frigatebirds and Tropicbirds and three are within the lagoon for Tern colonies (specifically the rare Fairy Terns *Sterna nereis*). Two IBAs were identified in the Loyalty Islands including the Ouvéa Island for the Ouvéa Parakeet (*Eunymphicus waensis*). The remaining 22 IBAs are on the Grande Terre and were identified for the Cagou (*Rhynochetos jubatus*), the Horned

Parakeet (*Eunymphicus cornutus*), the New Caledonian Parakeet (*Cyanoramphus saisseti*) the Crow Honeyeater (*Gymnomyza aubyana*) and some colonial seabirds (*Pterodroma leucoptera neocaledonica*).

The 6th of April 2007 was also the beginning of a new era for bird conservation in New Caledonia because from this priorities identification step, we are now about to start the implementation of conservation actions in the field and in collaboration with the communities. In 2007, with the support of the province Nord, the Packard foundation, the British Birdwatching fair and Conservation

International, we will be able to work on several IBAs within the New Caledonian lagoon, two forested IBAs of the Grande Terre and the Ouvéa Island.

Jérôme Spaggiari works for the program of Conservation International in New Caledonia.



Above: New Caledonia's new IBA book. Below: Map of New Caledonia's IBA sites.

