



EDITORS NOTE

FOCUSING ON THE LOCAL CONTEXT

As a local grassroots magazine, *Melanesian Geo* focuses on the future environment of the Melanesian region. Our priority is to raise environmental awareness amongst our local people in the region, that allows them to make informed decisions about their environment. Whilst scientific research on the environment is on going in our region, it is our effort as well to make this information relevant to the local context, by providing a text that is easy to understand and illustrations that tell a story.

Not everything we publish is about the environment or science. Melanesians love to tell stories or listen to stories being told. Our history has been passed down from generation to generation by local story tellers. Story telling is part of our legacy and is an important part of our life. McCoy's recounts of his travels in the Sepik is a great story, that shows aspects of our culture that is fast disappearing with the advancement of modern development and the loss of the social structures.

Yet, stories about science and research in the region mostly dominate the stories in *Melanesian Geo*. This issue is no different. New to this issue however, is a story on molecular systematics and its application to improving "the effectiveness of natural resource management, conservation, health, food and crop sustainability in the Pacific" on page 34.



No island in the Melanesian region perhaps outside of New Guinea has been studied more than the Fiji islands. Fiji has had extensive botanical and fauna surveys conducted here over many years. Yet the islands here continue to reveal new and amazing discoveries, of some species entirely new to science. For example the stick insects newly discovered in a recent survey in the mountains of Viti Levu.

A story of the Fiji long legged warbler rediscovered in the

mountains of Viti Levu after more than one hundred years gives us hope that perhaps there may still be other species still hanging on for survival in other remote forests in Melanesia.

Conservation is a very important message we at *Melanesian Geo* always like to convey to our local readers. No island in the Solomon Islands has received much attention for its conservation effort than has Tetepare Island. Tetepare is a special island, being the largest uninhabited island in the South Pacific. But more notably the islands descendents who organised themselves into the Tetepare Descendents Association have begun to realize the benefits of conservation and of managing the islands resources wisely. There are many lessons that can be learnt from this local organisation, and replicated elsewhere in Melanesia.

With the environment now at the forefront of almost all political and development agendas, it is vital that information about it is made available to local resource owners.

Finally I am sure you will find something interesting to read about this amazing region - Melanesia.

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Think regional, act local, implement village by village

For years scientists and anthropologists have been drawn to Melanesia, wishing to discover new species, and to understand Melanesian cultures and customs. Yet, even with all the data available, many of us who live in the region, still do not have access to up to date information. Many in the region are extremely ignorant of the amazing biodiversity that is around them, do not have an appreciation and understanding of the processes that are necessary to maintain the special ecosystems that sustain this biodiversity, and importantly do not know how to perhaps use this asset in a way that will benefit them in the long term.

MORE LOCAL CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT
To conserve Melanesia's environment is a

big undertaking. There are many NGOs and government agencies doing their bit to save this vast wilderness. At least in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, more than 80 percent of the land is customary owned and a form of private land ownership. In such a unique situation, a plenary vision to ensure that conservation is long term must include building strong relationships with local partners and empowering locals as conservation practitioners, planners, and scientists. In the past, we have had many scientists come to the region, undertaking research studies, and leave without a second thought to working with communities to conserving or managing their resources thoughtfully. Yet the exceptional realities in Melanesia in terms of its land tenure system are so arranged that understanding local capacities of villages and communities must be recognize before any conservation program may advance. This is the

key to conservation success in Melanesia.

IMPLEMENTING VILLAGE BY VILLAGE

While we must maintain a regional vision, through supporting partners, providing information and experience between countries, organizations and institutions, and building up local capacities across the region, the realization of our visions and efforts must be focused and felt on the ground or at the local level, even village level. Through wise planning, solid partnerships, and determined and sustained distribution of resources, conservation development can work. There are examples of this, such as Tetepare Descendents Association. Yet, the measure of which will determine the success and support of most projects will be its acceptance by local resource owners.

Melanesian Geo

www.melanesiangeo.org

DISTRIBUTION

Melanesian Geo is available in the following countries. **FIJI** University of the South Pacific Book Centre, Laucala Campus, Suva. **SOLOMON ISLANDS Honiara:** Ril Marketing; Lime Lounge; Nautilus Bookshop; Paper Plus; Honiara Post Shop. **Western Province:** Antech Internet Cafe, Gizo Town.

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.

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