

# Birdlife: Protect forests, birds

**BIRDLIFE** International Conservation manager Vilikesa Masibalavu said the protection of 59 different bird species in the country would depend on how the environment was maintained.

He made the comments as Birdlife International tried to raise awareness on the importance of maintaining forests during Arbor week.

"Birdlife uses birds as an indicator of how well the environment is protected or maintained," he said.

He said if there were many birds (excluding the mynah birds and the bulbul), that indicated the environment was intact but a decrease in the bird population meant otherwise.

"To protect our forests, we need to protect our trees because birds disperse seeds from which trees in forests grow."

Mr Masibalavu said it was important for Fiji to protect its environment and especially trees because out of the 59 bird species, 27 were endemic to Fiji.

"Out of these 27 species found only in Fiji, 11 are now under critical status and we should work hard to protect them because tourists also come to look at these birds," he said.

But, he said, the threats to these birds came in the form of logging, fires and agricultural extension and the introduction of invasive species like mongooses, rats, mynah birds as well as the bulbul.

Suva Mayor Ratu Peni Volavola said a clean village, town or city was a source of pride for its residents and there was a need for its protection.

"Nothing so beautifies a city more and lifts the spirits of its residents as trees do," he said.

"The spirit of Arbor Day is unique in that it looks forward, never backwards. The planting of tree symbolises life and the benefits



**Lusia Vere of Vunivaivai, Nakelo, displays the various orchids which are available at her stall in Suva during Arbor week.**

□ Picture: ELIKI NUKUTABU

it brings to all of us in future," he said. "It directs the minds and the hearts of participants to high goals

which can only be attained through personal involvement, sacrifice, planning and responsible action.