



FEATURE

BirdLife Kadavu workshop yields results - 12-Jun-2009

BirdLife International has introduced a new conservation initiative on the island of Kadavu that could help protect forests in island countries around the South Pacific.

BirdLife International's Senior Technical Advisor for the Pacific Region, James Millett, said that the initiative was launched in a three-day workshop on the island that had focused on the introduction of a model farm and a forest restoration programme.

Twenty seven participants attended the workshop held in Lomati Village, in the tikina Nabukelevu that is home to Mount Nabukelevu, the largest area of mountain forest on the island. It supports significant populations of four bird species found only in Kadavu.

Protecting Mount Nabukelevu forests is one of the project's priorities. Millett says that unsustainable agricultural practices that have resulted in the degradation of farmed land particularly from erosion has often forced farmers to clear more forest, and is becoming a threat to the Mount Nabukelevu's important bird area.

The workshop organised by BirdLife's Conservation Officers Tuverea Tuamoto and Mere Valu with support from the Department of Forestry, the Land Use Section of the Department of Agriculture and Secretariat of the Pacific Community, was about addressing this concern by introducing sustainable agricultural practices through the development of a model farm as well as working with the villagers on forest protection and restoration. The goal was to safeguard biodiversity as well as protect community livelihoods.

The initial two-acre demonstration farm, located in Lomati Village, was created to show how soil conservation and productivity can be improved on land in the villages near Mount Nabukelevu thus reducing the pressure for further forest clearance for farming.

Modern farm practices have been introduced on the model farm. This included planting soil stabilising grass, the introduction of traditional taro varieties resistant to diseases.

"It is our hope that other villages will learn from this model farm enabling them to better utilise their land for sustainable farming," Millett said.

Through the workshop a forest restoration programme was also implemented. The Nabukelevu villages were encouraged to grow and replant native trees including sandalwood. It is expected that the replanting will not only provide increased protection from erosion but could generate future income through sustainable harvesting of valuable sandalwood.

In addition to the support of the Darwin Initiative, the project was co-financed by UNDP's Global Environment Facility Small Grant Programme and NZAID. Millett says that this is an exciting approach to forest conservation by addressing the causes of forest loss in a way that will improve village livelihoods.



NEWS

Birdlife Pacific commended for conservation work - 20-Feb-2009

THE European Commission (EC) Review Team has awarded Birdlife Pacific its 'highest marks' for conservation efforts to protect native forests through the identification and subsequent promotion of Important Bird Areas (IBAs), home to many of the region's threatened and rare birdlife.

Birdlife Regional Director for the Pacific, Don Stewart, said the IBAs were internationally recognised as key sites for conservation.

"They have proved to be a particularly effective way of identifying conservation priorities. They hold either significant numbers of one or more globally threatened, or restricted-range, or migratory, or congregatory species," Stewart said.

The EC assessment of the Birdlife project was part of a wider review of projects implemented by a number of other agencies in the region.

Birdlife's IBA project located and defined areas in the region where biodiversity conservation was globally important. It took four and half years to complete the project.

Stewart said that the objective of the project was to identify sites of global biodiversity importance in the Pacific and encourage their conservation.

He said Birdlife and its partners had researched and identified IBAs through field work in Fiji, Palau, New Caledonia and French Polynesia, and had compiled IBA inventories for an additional thirteen countries and territories in the region.

The EC assessment focused on each project's relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability.

Birdlife received the 'highest marks' in all of these assessed categories – the best results in the region. Stewart praised Birdlife's Partners responsible for the work on the project in French Polynesia, New Caledonia, and Palau and the staff of the Pacific Partnership Secretariat in Fiji.

"The challenge is now to work closely with governments and local communities to ensure that the IBAs we have identified continue to be sustainable and to encourage similar efforts in the region, using the IBA approach," he said.

Copyright © 2007, Fiji Daily Post



NEWS

Birdlife workshop promotes grassroots conservation - 10-Mar-2009

A BIRDLIFE International community conservation programme introduced in the remote Natewa Peninsula (Vanua Levu) in 2005 has become a demonstration project.

And according to James Millett, BirdLife International's Senior Technical Advisor for the Pacific Region, it is hoped to be a model for the protection of forests in the South Pacific,.

The programme was introduced to forty participants from Fiji, French Polynesia and New Caledonia at a two-day workshop held in the village of Navetau in the Tikina of Natewa recently.

"The purpose of the workshop was to provide training for our overseas participants in community oriented conservation techniques, less widely practiced by our regional neighbours. For locals it was an opportunity to showcase their community conservation skills," said Millett.

The BirdLife International initiative focuses on the Natewa and Tunulua Important Bird Area (IBA) that contain untouched forest and is home to rare birds such as Silktail and Orange Dove.

The community conservation programme started in 2005 convinced landowners, at that time, of the importance of protecting their forest and resulted in an agreement that bans commercial logging and other non-sustainable activities, as well as protecting the area from forest fires.

As a result of the workshop, eleven mataqali from the area agreed to protect over 6000ha OF their forest over a ten-year period reinforcing the 2005 agreement.

"The undertaking by the landowners means that they are also protecting their fresh water supplies, their food, their fisheries and through their efforts in protecting the land minimize flood damage and erosion. This is grassroots conservation at its finest," said . Millett.

The workshop was funded by the British Government's Darwin Initiative and by the Aarg V Jensen Foundation, active in funding forest sites in Fiji.

Copyright © 2007, Fiji Daily Post