

[<- Return to site.](#) This content © BirdLife International.

News » News Stories »

Communities protect Fijian forests

10-03-2009

A conservation initiative on the beautiful and remote Natewa Peninsular in Fiji is being used as a demonstration project for community conservation, to train conservationists from other Pacific Island countries.

The project to develop a community managed protected area was initiated in 2005, after the peninsular, on the Northern Fijian Island of Vanua Levu, was identified as the Natewa and Tunaloa Important Bird Area (IBA). This IBA contains untouched old growth forest, and is home to the subspecies *kleinschmidti* of the endemic Silktail *Lamprolia victoriae* (Near Threatened), Shy Ground-dove *Gallicolumba stairi* and Black-faced Shrikebill *Clytorhynchus nigrogularis* (both Vulnerable), and many other Fijian endemics.



Paddy Aryan

Landowning clans agreed to protect their forest from degrading activities including commercial logging and agriculture.

[Zoom In](#)

In 2005, a Site Support Group made up of landowning clans was formed, and agreed to protect their forest from degrading activities including commercial logging and agriculture.

Recently, a workshop was held in Navetau Village on the Natewa Peninsular. The meeting was attended by over 30 local people, and during the meeting 11 landowning clans or *mataqali* agreed to sustainably manage over 6000ha of land for ten years. They also agreed an interim management plan.

"Working with communities is central to every conservation project in Fiji"

—James Millett, Senior Technical Advisor with the Birdlife International Pacific Partnership

"This is a really exciting grassroots initiative", said Tuverea Tuamoto, Conservation Officer with the Birdlife Fiji Programme. "The landowners are taking the initiative by developing the protected area, and we are working in partnership with government departments to support them."

The workshop was also a training course for conservationists from other Pacific islands. Participants from Société Calédonienne d'Ornithologie (SCO, BirdLife in New Caledonia), the New Caledonian community conservation initiative Dayu Biik, the Provincial Government of New Caledonia's South Province (Province Sud), and La Société d'Ornithologie de Polynésie (MANU, BirdLife in French Polynesia) attended lectures and took part in the community workshops.

James Millett, Senior Technical Advisor with the Birdlife International Pacific Partnership, explained: "Working with communities is central to every conservation project in Fiji, and Fijian conservationists are well practiced at traditional protocols, as well as the modern social tools for assessing community needs, such as Participatory Rural Appraisal. However, community conservation needs more support in most Pacific countries and territories."

He added, "Our partners have been very enthusiastic over this workshop, and have been impressed by the knowledge and skills of young Fijian conservationists, and equally impressed by the commitment of landowners to manage forest sustainably. The best way to appreciate how important it is for communities and traditional landowners to lead conservation projects is to see a Site Support Group at work."

The workshop was funded by the British Government's Darwin Initiative, and by the Aage V. Jensen Charity

Foundation, which has been funding the development of conservation groups at several important forest sites in Fiji.

Don't miss a BirdLife news story!

Subscribe

[Read more about how to receive BirdLife news.](#)

[<- Return to site.](#) This content © BirdLife International.