

## Mapping Important Bird Areas (IBA) in Fiji and the Region

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IBAs are internationally recognized sites which are vital for the conservation of birds. They are identified using a standard set of four global selection criteria: 1. Globally threatened species; 2. Restricted-range species; 3. Biome-restricted assemblages; and 4. Congregation. To qualify as an IBA the site must meet or exceed one or more of the criteria and thresholds indicated. The sites are large enough to support viable populations of the species for which they have been identified but small enough that site-based conservation is practicable. IBA designation is not a legal one, nor does it oblige the land-owner or other users to conserve the site or change their behaviour. IBA designation only identifies the area as globally important for its birds (and other biodiversity), and provides information upon which government, NGOs and other people can, and are encouraged to act.

The IBA identification process for Fiji has been completed and the boundaries have been mapped. Altogether 14 sites have been identified as IBAs.

### Location of Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in Fiji

The IBA process has commenced in other countries around the region. Palau, New Caledonia, French Polynesia and other Pacific countries have adopted

the IBA process and this data will be mapped very soon.

Another project that has just started in the region is identifying Seabird IBAs. This project is funded by the David & Lucile Packard Foundation. This project will lead to a major improvement in understanding of seabird breeding colonies in two of the most significant island groups for seabirds in the Pacific, French Polynesia and Fiji. The project will analyse historical information, gather new ethno-biological information from local people – fisherfolk in particular – and investigate the use of remote imagery to identify existing and historically important islands for breeding seabirds in both countries. The up-to-date information will be made available mapped showing distributions and numbers of breeding seabirds. An action plan will be produced identifying islands to be restored for breeding seabirds. The culmination of this work, alongside the ongoing advocacy, education and provision of information to national and local governments and people, will be a significant first step for the development of a coherent regional seabird conservation initiative. Conservation prioritization becomes a hassle if data is not ready available. With limited resources we have to make every cent count. The IBA process helps identify sites of national significance and thus allowing stake holders to put

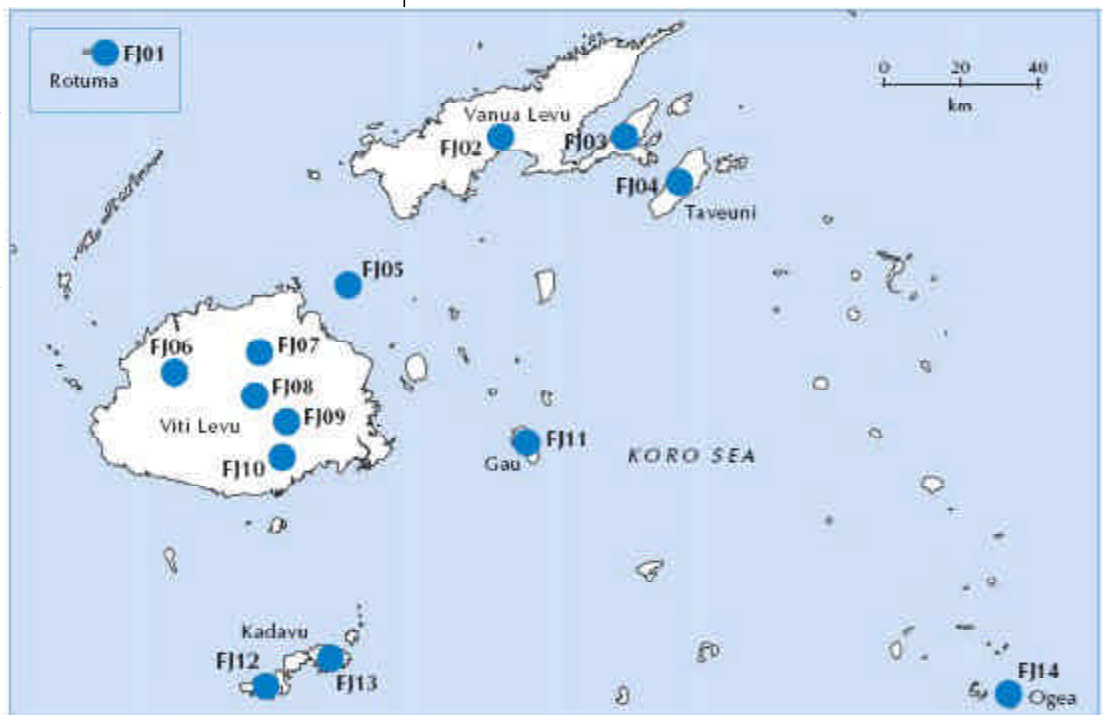


Figure 1: Location of Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in Fiji.

their resources to best use. Having mapped data readily available will help government, NGOs, people and other organization adopt conservation on these sites.