

Protected areas by country

There are a number of protected areas but only a few contain forest.

In the **Cook Islands**, two reef areas totalling 250 ha were established as national parks in 1972.

In **French Polynesia** there are no National Parks, but two areas on Tahiti Island (Mount Marau and Pari Coast) are at present under consideration. French Polynesia has a number of small reserves.

In **Fiji Islands**, eight nature reserves and an animal sanctuary have been established:

RESERVE	FEATURE
Tomaniivi (Mt Victoria) 1,350 ha	sub-montane cloud forest
Nadarivatu, 93 ha	tropical rainforest
Naqaranibuluti (Mt Lomalagi) 280 ha	rainforest
Draunibota Island, 2 ha	small island
Labiki Island, 0.3 ha	small island
Vuo Island, 1.2 ha	small island
Vunimoli, 20 ha	tropical rainforest
Ravilevu, 4,000 ha	tropical rainforest
Yadua Taba Island, 60 ha	crested iguana sanctuary

In **Kiribati** (formerly the Gilbert Islands) there are no national parks but there exist bird sanctuaries on Christmas, McKean, Birnie and some of the Phoenix Islands.

In **New Caledonia**, conservation action was started in the 1950s and has resulted in several types of protected areas. Some of these are open to mining activity. The major achievement is the *Parc Territorial de la Rivière Bleue*, a substantial forested area east of Noumea.

Papua New Guinea is a leader in protected area systems among the developing countries of the Pacific:

Varirata National Park: situated about 40 km from Port Moresby, the park covers an area of about 1000 ha. It comprises both rainforest areas and open savannas typical of the Port Moresby area.

McAdam National Park: situated near Bulolo, the park covers an area of approximately 200 ha. It contains one of the last virgin stands of *Araucaria*.

In addition to these areas, negotiations are at an advanced stage for the establishment of a national park at Mt Wilhelm, Mt Kemeagi and other areas. There are also several Wildlife Management Areas where the wildlife resource is harvested in accordance with conservation practices agreed to by local people.

The **Solomon Islands** has one national park, the Queen Elizabeth Park (6,080 ha) which is subjected to traditional rights by inhabitants within the park boundaries. There are seven bird sanctuaries on small islands.

Tonga will soon have a major terrestrial park on the island of 'Eua, which lies 19 km south south-east of Nuku'alofa. Being the geologically oldest island in Tonga, having considerable altitudinal variation and being lightly settled and developed, 'Eua possesses the most extensive undisturbed habitats in the Kingdom. The proposed national park on the east side of the island encompasses 1,400 ha and four major habitats: the ringing reef; the coastal region; the eastern ridge; and the ridge summit.

In 1974 **Western Samoa** passed legislation to provide for a National Parks and Reserves system. A year later a comprehensive approach was undertaken through a study by IUCN and UNDAT, which recommended the reservation of 6 percent of Western Samoa's land area (38,220 ha in national parks). The following is the present situation in Western Samoa:

Tusitala Historic and Nature Reserve: 128 ha on the outskirts of Apia.

O Le Pupu — Pu'e National Park: This area of 3,000 ha was set aside by the Government as the country's first National Park in March 1978. The land was previously government land and stretches from the southern coast to the dividing ridge at Mt Fito on Upolu Island, thus providing a range of ecotypes found on the island. It is hoped that O Le Pupu — Pu'e will serve as a demonstration area and thereby foster wider public and political support for the concept of National Parks and Reserves.

Togitogiga Recreation Reserve: this reserve was set aside by Government in 1978. It is a small riverside area containing 2 waterfalls and a very popular swimming hole.

There are a number of other areas currently under consideration for reservation in Western Samoa.

needs and aspirations, but present exploitation tends to be on a "grab what I can now" basis with little or no concern for the future. The point is not to stop utilization of resources but to ensure there is a wise use so that the balance of nature is maintained.

Problems and prospects

In the Pacific one of the most important features in planning for protected areas is the question of land tenure and traditional rights. On most of the island nations a large percentage of the land is owned by the communal owners. The ownership of this land passes from one generation to the next and it cannot be alienated. A majority of the existing protected areas are on land already alienated to the government in the past. Today almost all areas that are in dire need of protection lie within customary ownership. It is a very slow process to convince the customary owners of the importance of conservation areas and the long term benefits associated with such designations.

The other problem faced by a lot of the island nations is finance to establish and

manage protected areas. The economies of the nations are such that protected area systems are not recognised as being of high priority because the returns from these areas cannot be counted in dollars.

In Fiji we have realised that if forest areas are to be protected then the communal owners must be compensated with the same amount of money that they would receive if their timber had been logged. To raise this amount of money within this country is a very massive task.

The smaller nations in the Pacific are faced with further problems of employing personnel to manage areas. The management costs involved if the islands are widely scattered are fairly high and almost all nations other than Papua New Guinea lack trained personnel or funds to train their manpower needs.

Conservation education vital

One of the major factors that encourage the creation of protected areas in the Pacific is conservation education, which has been included in almost all school curricula. Also the attendance at seminars, workshops and conferences has enlight-

ened many decision makers towards protected area concepts.

At national levels the renewed interest in traditional cultures and lifestyles has given rise to rethinking about the traditional conservation practices and methods of resource use.

The interest of industrialized countries in keeping island nations in this region as "islands in sun with white sandy beaches fringed by coconut palms and with a backdrop of tropical forests" has meant that some funds are available from tourist ventures for protected area systems.

Also the pressures from the scientific community in relating the extinction of species to man's impact on island ecosystems has contributed towards an increased awareness of protected area systems.

Finally, the rapidly depleting resources of the island nations should give rise to thoughts of the use of national parks and reserves as key mechanisms in maintaining the life support systems necessary for human survival. The governments in the region should recognize that parks and reserves are basic elements in balanced resource management. ♀