



*Fijian kauri, Agathis macrophylla, a close relative of the New Zealand kauri, is the dominant forest tree in the Wabu Creek catchment. Much of the kauri now used in New Zealand is from Fiji and logging pressure threatens the few remaining kauri forests.*

*The endemic orange Fijian tree frog is one of the many native animals threatened by logging in Fiji's forests.*



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could be shared by his children. A woman, however, is unable to do this as her children (if she is married) inherit the land owned by her husband's mataqali. The mataqali that owns Wabu faces extinction because its last surviving member is a woman. That woman's name is Litiana. When she dies, Litiana's land will revert to the State or be subject to claim by a neighbouring mataqali.

A tin and thatch shack no bigger than the average New Zealand garage is home for Litiana and her family. In recent years she has been courted by a number of prospective logging companies wishing to gain access to the valuable kauri timber within her forest. Such a development in the Wabu Creek catchment would have a great impact on the life of the landowner as well as the forest itself. A massive improvement in the landowner's wealth and standard of living would occur but Fiji would lose yet another magnificent forest.

Through an interpreter (as she speaks no English) Litiana explained how she wished to derive an income from her forest inheritance and use it to build a new house and help provide for her family. These were not grandiose aspirations by any standards, but they comprise a key to the fate of the Wabu Creek forest. In their natural state the majestic stands of Fijian kauri that sit beside Wabu Creek and adorn the flanks of Mt Tomanivi are a long way from providing Litiana with an income. She would prefer not to have the forest felled but logging would provide a simple way to translate her legacy into a livelihood.

An agreement was reached some years ago between Litiana and a logging company. The arrangement involved a housing project in addition to the payment of royalties on timber extracted from the forest and rent on the land. An application for a logging licence was then lodged with the Fiji Native Lands Trust Board, and the Ministry of Forests in 1988. In the same year, however, both these government bodies were approached jointly by Forest and Bird and the Maruia Society with proposals for the protection of the forest as a national park. The Fijian departments were interested but insisted that the landowner be able to receive ongoing economic benefits from the forest.

Here lies the problem. The area cannot simply be confiscated and the landowner wishes to use this forest to gain an income. The task for those seeking the protection of the Wabu Creek forest has been to find a way for this landowner to make a living from the forest without logging it.

In the eyes of Litiana this forest is a commodity and her interest is essentially