

The Third Regional Bird Meeting,

20 October 2007,

Alotau, Papua New Guinea



Introduction and background

1. The following report summarizes the work being carried out by parties to the Pacific working group for bird conservation. This group has voluntary membership and is chaired by Ian Karika, President, Te Ipukarea, with secretarial support from the Regional Director of BirdLife International's Pacific Programme, Don Stewart, and Island Biodiversity Programme Officer, Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, Ana Tiraa. Implicit in this is that once the report is agreed as an accurate as possible record of the meeting then there is some commitment from the members to place a priority on these actions both in their own work programmes and facilitating and promoting other's. This would include advocating the priorities to funding agencies. The recommendations have been carefully considered and effectively represent the collective view of the bulk of those in the Pacific regional community working on bird conservation and as such are intended to serve as a guide for practitioners and donors within the next five years until the next Conference is held or other meeting such as the Pacific Round Table.
2. The Third Regional Bird meeting¹ was convened prior to and in association with the 8th Nature Conservation Conference on 20 October 2007 in Alotau, PNG. BirdLife International, the Roundtable Bird Working Group and SPREP jointly conducted the meeting. It was identified as a joint work activity under the MoU between SPREP and BirdLife International that was adopted in February 2007.
3. The purpose of the meeting was to review the conservation status of all Pacific birds, based on studies conducted by BirdLife International and Government agencies, to determine threats, what work has been undertaken and what still needs to be done, and to use this information to contribute to the development of the new Action Strategy.
4. An open invitation for this meeting was extended to the Roundtable Bird and NBSAP Working Groups along with the rest of the Round Table².
5. Approximately forty participants representing government, inter-governmental agencies and NGOs attended the meeting. Annex one provides a draft list of participants.
6. Participants had been requested to prepare a 5-minute presentation on bird conservation work being carried out in their countries or by their organisations. Presentations were made by the BirdLife International Pacific Partnership represented by Te Ipukarea Society (Cook Islands), Birds

¹ The first Regional Bird Meeting was held in Rarotonga in 2002, the second was in Suva in 2005. In addition, a series of sub-regional bird workshops were held for Polynesia, Melanesia and Micronesia between 1999 to 2000 which resulted in the development of the "Bird Conservation Priorities and a draft avifauna conservation strategy for the Pacific Islands region"

² The Round Table for Nature Conservation was established in 1997/98. It consists of a number of working groups that monitor certain objectives of the "Action Strategy for Nature Conservation in the Pacific Islands Region, 2003-2007".

Australia (Australia), Société Calédonienne d'Ornithologie (New Caledonia), Manu (French Polynesia), O Le Siosiomaga Inc. (Samoa) and the Palau Conservation Society (Palau). The Conservation Society of Pohnpei (Federated States of Micronesia), United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Guam Department of Agriculture Division of Aquatic and Wildlife Resources, New Zealand Department of Conservation, BirdLife International Pacific Partnership Secretariat, Dave Butler (independent consultant) and SPREP also made presentations.

7. Ian Karika, as Chairman of the Roundtable Bird Working Group, chaired the meeting.
8. The programme was divided into three main sessions. Session one consisted of presentations on key achievements in-country. Regional presentations by BirdLife International Pacific Partnership and SPREP made up session two. Session three consisted of an open discussion on how to support bird conservation efforts in the region.

Summary of presentations

9. Ian Karika, on behalf of Te Ipukarea Society, Cook Islands, presented on bird conservation achievements in the Cook Islands.
10. Dean Ingwersen of Birds Australia presented on Birds Australia's (BA) Threatened Bird Network (TBN). He also touched on other projects that BA is engaged. The TBN has a number of functions such as Field Research, planning and operation of volunteer-based surveys, and developing bird related publications. Other BA projects include Atlas (and its electronic version – Birdata), IBAs, production of the 'State of Australia's Birds' reports, Shorebirds 2020, Coexistence of recreationists and beach-nesting birds, habitat modeling of mainland for Orange-bellied Parrots and the production of a number of publications.
11. The delegate from Société Calédonienne d'Ornithologie (SCO), Vivien Chartendrault presented on "Birds and People in New Caledonia: Progress report on the action for bird conservation". The presentation outlined current work being undertaken on New Caledonia's rich avifauna.
12. Patterson Shed from the CSP gave an account of FSM birds, threats to them, achievements and priority bird needs.
13. The representative from MANU, Philippe Raust reported on the status of threatened birds in French Polynesia and current efforts underway to improve their status.
14. Liz Mathews of the Palau Conservation Society (PCS) presented on bird achievements and future directions in Palau.
15. The Guam Department of Agriculture representative, Celestino Aguon, highlighted the status of threatened native birds in Guam, the invasive threats and efforts in progress to help save critically endangered species.

16. Toni Tipamaa from O Le Siosiomaga Inc. presented on bird activities in Samoa.
17. In addition to bird achievements in countries, PCS, Manu and SCO enlighten the meeting on the Important Bird Areas work in their respective countries.
18. Nanette Seto from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Division of Migratory Birds and Habitat Programs presented on their bird work. The work consists of Population Monitoring & Assessment, Conservation Management, Oceania – Bird Conservation, Collaboration, Bar-tailed Godwit Migration and Migratory Bird Flyways project.
19. Dave Butler, environment consultant presented on behalf of Glen Holland on a proposed avifauna tourism venture for the Pacific region.
20. James Millett from the BirdLife International Pacific Partnership Secretariat provided a statistical analysis on globally threatened birds in the Pacific, including the countries and habitats they are found and the main threats to them.
21. Ana Tiraa of SPREP presented the paper 'Bird Conservation: A regional Perspective', which outlines past efforts, suggestions to facilitate conservation progress and recommendations.
22. All available presentations, which were made, will be posted on the web – to be advised.

Points and recommendations made in open discussion

Points:

- Bird conservation initiatives are being tackled by an increasing number of individuals and groups including, NGOs, governments, community-based organisations and interested persons.
- There is room to expand partnerships to address bird conservation issues.
- Birds are the best indicators of terrestrial biodiversity on the Pacific Islands and should be used in planning biodiversity policy and strategy. Birds act as excellent flagship species for the promotion of wider conservation values.
- PNG, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and FSM requested assistance in assessing the conservation status of their avifauna (for example by adopting field research for Important Bird Areas – IBAs) and protection of their avifauna
- It was noted that unsustainable logging is presenting a grave threat to birds and other species in many countries, particularly in Melanesia.

Recommendations:

1. Coordinated work is urgently required to conserve the most endangered species in the region, particularly Critically Endangered species, to prevent further extinctions.
2. Ecotourism was recognised as an activity that can support and sustain bird conservation objectives. New initiatives in bird eco-tourism should be taken whenever possible and should be encouraged where appropriate.

3. Data deficiencies still remain a constraint in the region. However, IBAs, especially field research IBAs, can redress this issue well and form the basis for planning site and species based conservation
4. The Round Table Bird Working Group should lead and/or initiate a regional bird conservation newsletter, secondments (such as skill-sharing exchanges) and other skills and information sharing techniques, should be used as mechanisms for exchanging and/or facilitating conservation projects (especially at a practical level).
5. Regional agencies and countries should consider a regional bird conservation campaign as part of a coherent regional bird conservation programme.
6. Training for practitioners was discussed including the need for this to include the basics of biosystematics and scientific methods
7. Studies are required which quantify the current and potential value of eco-tourism and other ecosystem services, especially in countries subjected to intensive logging, in order to leverage arguments for protecting forests threatened by development.
8. The Bird Round Table Working Group should continue and include the issue of trade in endangered species in its next meeting agenda
9. Continue to foster NGO and government collaboration and cooperation at the national level, and through the SPREP and BirdLife MOU, and the Birds Roundtable Working Group at the regional level
10. The meeting tabled the recommendations in Annex Two to the new Chair of the Roundtable for Nature Conservation to be considered for inclusion in the development of the new Action Strategy.

Annex 1: List of participants

Name	Organisation
Roger James	Conservation International (CI)
Josef Hurutauru	Solomon Is Govt
Greg Sherley	DoC, NZ
Maureen Ewai	CI, PNG
Faleafaga Toni Tipamaa	O Le Siosiomaga Society Inc.
Ian Karika (Chair)	Te Ipukarea Society, Cook Islands
Patterson K. Shed	Conservation Society of Pohnpei, FSM
Touasi Tiwok	Senior Biodiversity Officer, Vanautu Environment Unit
Vivien Chartendrault	Société Calédonienne d'Ornithologie
Liz Mathews	Palau Conservation Society
Philippe Raust	MANU, French Polynesia
Celestino Aguon	The Guam Department of Agriculture, Guam
Nanette Seto	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
James Atherton	CI
Dave Butler	Consultant
James Millett	BirdLife International Pacific Partnership Secretariat
Don Stewart	BirdLife International Pacific Partnership Secretariat
Faumuina Pati Liu	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Samoa
Manoa Malani	Department of Environment, Fiji
Dean Ingwersen	Birds Australia
Joe Huratarau	Solomon Is
Pepe Clark	IUCN Oceania
Jill Key	Pacific Invasives Learning Network (PILN)
Alan Tye	SPREP
Ana Tiraa	SPREP
Stuart Chape	SPREP
Gai Gowae	PNG
Alivereti Naikatini	USP
Umai Basilius	Palau Conservation Society
Viola Digwaleu	Conservation International, Melanesia
Kristen J. Williams	CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems
Naamal De Silva	Conservation International – DC
Gretta K. Todurawai	Napatana Lodge
Harry Sakulas	PNG UNITECH
Navu Kwapena	Environment and Conservation Dept, PNG

Annex 2:

Recommendations from the Birdlife-SPREP Birds Meeting Alotau, Papua New Guinea 20 October 2007

Background

The Pacific region holds the world's highest proportion of Critically Endangered and Endangered birds and the risk of extinction is increasing. The main threats to the region's avifauna are invasive alien species and habitat loss, especially from deforestation, which also threaten island ecosystems and sustainable livelihoods.

The first Birdlife/SPREP Birds Meeting in Fiji in 2005 welcomed initiatives taken for stronger collaboration between BirdLife's Pacific Partners and SPREP member countries, recommended that bird conservation actions be integrated into the Action Strategy for Nature Conservation at the regional level and NBSAPs (or similar plans) at the national level, acknowledged the contribution made to the implementation of SPREP's Regional Bird Conservation Strategy by BirdLife's Pacific Regional Strategy, and in particular BirdLife International's Important Bird Area and Globally Threatened Species Programmes and requested the Roundtable for Nature Conservation to establish a new working group within the Threatened Species and Ecosystems working group focusing on improving collaboration and coordination of bird conservation activities in the region and on monitoring progress.

The second Birdlife/SPREP Birds Meeting in Alotau in 2007, having reviewed the conservation status of Pacific birds based on studies conducted by BirdLife International, SPREP and Government agencies, makes the following recommendations for inclusion in the new Action Strategy:

1. Urgent, coordinated action against invasive alien species is required to prevent imminent extinctions of threatened birds.
2. Networks of protected and sustainably managed areas are critical for the conservation of the region's avifauna and wider biodiversity; Important Bird Areas (IBAs) and Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) should be used to set priorities to guide the development of such networks.
3. Because of their traditional, cultural and economic values, birds should be used to promote conservation and engage communities.