

Updating and  
Strengthening  
Information for  
Developing a  
Regional

# IUCN Red List Of Threatened Species™

in the Pacific



Fijian Crested Iguana - *Yadua Tabu*, Fiji  
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## What is the IUCN Red List?

The IUCN Red List provides taxonomic, conservation status and distribution information on taxa that have been globally evaluated using the IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria. This system is designed to determine the relative risk of extinction, and the main purpose of the IUCN Red List is to catalogue and highlight those taxa that are facing a higher risk of global extinction i.e. those classified as "Critically Endangered," "Endangered" or "Vulnerable".



## Why the IUCN RedList?

There is strong support for updating and improving the information in the Red List as a foundation for conservation work in the region. However, given the limited resources and capacity available to Pacific island countries, there's an urgent need for assistance with this task.

The IUCN Red List is widely recognized as the most comprehensive, apolitical approach for evaluating the conservation status of plant and animal species.



## The Challenge

The Pacific islands region covers nearly 15% of the world's surface and is characterised by a high degree of ecosystem and species diversity; and an extraordinary level of endemism (often over 90% for particular groups). The people of the region also has a high degree of economic and cultural dependence on the natural environment and face a wide range of conservation and development challenges such as: rapid population growth and the need for economic development often leading to over-harvesting of natural resources and habitat destruction; high levels of threats by invasive species in island ecosystems; and vulnerability to the impacts of climate change.

Sound knowledge of species found in the region and information on their conservation status and distribution is needed to provide the foundation for making informed decisions to deal with these challenges and conserve biodiversity at local, regional and global levels. However there are currently many gaps in knowledge of species in the Pacific region. For example the *Ecosystem Profile of the Polynesia-Melanesia Hotspot* prepared by Conservation International in collaboration with Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Program (SPREP) and other partners in 2003 found that:

*The current population and threat status of endangered species is particularly lacking, even for fairly well known species. Furthermore, there are many candidate threatened species for the Red List that urgently requires assessment of population and conservation status. Even the biodiversity and management effectiveness of protected areas, which have been better studied than most areas, is poorly known. The taxonomic data deficiency is particularly pronounced with fish, plants and invertebrates, while the geographic data deficiency is most serious with the more isolated islands especially in the less developed countries of the hotspot.*



Fiji Banded Iguana - Kula Eco Park

Cyathea lunulata - South Pacific Regional Herbarium



Long-legged warbler - from Birdlife International

### The Initiative

The initiative proposes to develop a partnership of key biodiversity-focused organizations to take action to develop a regional Red List for Oceania and to support Pacific island countries and territories in using this information effectively. It will build on work already underway by experts from organisations such as IUCN, Conservation International, the Bishop Museum, the University of the South Pacific and others, in order to update information that can contribute to the global assessment whilst meeting the needs of the Pacific.



### The project will:

- Develop a preliminary list of priority species groups in need of research and conservation for Pacific Islands Countries and Territories (PICTs);
- Identify existing IUCN specialist groups relevant to Oceania (and especially Pacific Island Countries and Territories) and determine if any new groups are needed. This should include identifying Oceania-based members of IUCN and IUCN specialist groups so that gaps can be targeted;
- Encourage the establishment of mentoring relationships involving young Pacific Islanders in IUCN Red List activities;
- Undertake an audit of the availability of Red List information in Pacific island countries and where possible, identify current gaps;
- Review current uses and future needs for information on threatened species in Pacific Island Countries and Territories and identify priorities for filling the information gaps;
- Undertake regional assessments by priority species groupings and incorporate information in the global database;
- Raise awareness and capacity in the region on how to most effectively access and use Red List information to meet conservation objectives; and
- Work with experts from partner organisations to use the assessments to contribute to regional/national biodiversity conservation priority-setting exercises.

### Financial Support

To date, 30,000 € from Fonds Pacifique has been secured to commence this initiative. The project will begin in the later half of 2008 with a review of Red List information for the Pacific. This will be followed by a workshop bringing together experts working on the identified (through the review) priority geographical areas and taxonomic groups and provide an opportunity for the findings of the review to be presented and discussed.

Financial support is currently being sought by conservation partners to continue work on this initiative in the Pacific.



### For further information

Contact: **SPREP** on [sprep@sprep.org](mailto:sprep@sprep.org) or **IUCN** at [oceania@iucn.org](mailto:oceania@iucn.org)

