



British Government launches BirdLife project in Fiji

Title

The British Government have launched a new BirdLife project to conserve Fiji's forest.

"It is a great pleasure for us at the High Commission, together with our partners at BirdLife International, to launch a new three-year project here in Fiji," said Mr Dan Salter - Deputy High Commissioner of the United Kingdom to Fiji. "BirdLife International have a fantastic track record of success in protecting endangered species of birds and in working alongside communities to help develop more sustainable approaches to the management of their natural resources - not just in Fiji, but across the Pacific and throughout the world", said Mr Salter.

The launch, held at the private residence of the High Commissioner of the United Kingdom to Fiji, celebrated the start of the project entitled *Delivering sustainable forest management for Fiji's people and wildlife*. Fiji's forests are home to the large majority of its native wildlife, whilst also benefitting local people by providing valuable fresh water, fuel, medicine and food. However, half of the native forests have been lost due to unsustainable logging. The new three year project is being funded by the UK Darwin Initiative, with additional support provided by Aage V. Jensen Charity Foundation, and seeks to protect at least 26,000 ha of woodland for the benefit of nature and people.

Led by BirdLife International, it will work with NatureFiji-MareqetiViti, the Department of Forestry and the Ministry of the Environment. "The project will empower local communities to better manage their forests", said Nunia Thomas - Director of NatureFiji-MareqetiViti. BirdLife International works with its Partners around the globe to conserve biodiversity and give local people a voice through our Local Empowerment Programme.

"We recognise that effective, long-term conservation must be achieved at grass-roots levels, by local communities", announced Donald Stewart - BirdLife Director for the Pacific Partnership. "Tonight we hail the British Government for again recognising our efforts in achieving community conservation by the award of yet another valuable grant from its Darwin Initiative", concluded Mr Stewart. A full transcript of the speech of High Commissioner's speech from the event can be read by clicking [here](#).