Communities continue to promote forest protection

Title Two communities in Fiji are now reaping the benefits of protecting their forests for the sake of birds and other biodiversity, and have vowed to promote the message of conservation to other communities as well. BirdLife International worked with four villages in the district of Nabukelevu in Kadavu and six villages in the Natewa Tunuloa peninsula and these communities are now managing livelihood projects that will both provide a sustainable income for them as well as protect their forests. The projects include sustainable modern farm practices that minimise soil erosion, the establishment of tree nurseries (and the replanting of native trees); handicraft, beekeeping and other income-generating activities that now offer options for the landowners. The communities were part of a 3-year program funded by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund and was carried out in close partnership with Departments of Environment, Forestry and Agriculture and the respective Provincial Councils. The landowning clans in these villages have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with BirdLife International and have established community-declared and community-managed protected areas. The signing of the MOUs is the result of a successful continuing awareness programme on the importance of birds and their habitats and the exciting thing about the signing of the MOUs is the ownership that the landowning clans have taken in preserving their forests. Landowners are now aware of the negative impact that unsustainable agriculture and logging practices have upon the forests, the land, the watershed, and the birds but also on their own future. They are now generating income from alternative livelihood projects so their natural resources are used in a more sustainable way and are available for future generations to enjoy. Local conservation community groups called Site Support Groups established at the two sites are now working with their respective communities and provincial councils to promote the conservation message to other communities.

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