

Cook Islanders decide next steps for their IBAs

The Pacific islands of Mauke and Mangaia have been identified as Important Bird Areas (IBAs) and Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) by Te Ipukarea Society (TIS; BirdLife in the Cook Islands) and BirdLife International. TIS Programme Manager Jacqui Evans recently travelled to the two islands to raise awareness in the community about the importance to the world of their unique and threatened species. Jacqui first travelled to Mangaia where the Island Secretary organised a meeting of the Island Council. Mangaia is identified as an IBA because of its endemic Mangaia Kingfisher, the Tanga'eo (*Todramphus ruficollaris*), the Cook Islands Warbler (*Acrocephalus kerearako*) and because the Bristle Thighed Curlew (*Numenius tahitiensis*) visits the island. Mangaia is 5,200 hectares and is an upraised island with encircling limestone cliffs. "They were really interested in the fact that they had species of global significance," said Jacqui. "They loved the photos of each species which came from the Cook Islands Natural Heritage database. These photos helped to stimulate discussion about where species were seen and what their local names were".



Mauke and Mangaia and in the Cook Islands in the centre of the South Pacific.

Jacqui then visited Mauke where the Island Secretary and Mayor organised a community meeting. Mauke has six terrestrial species of global importance. Both communities were left to decide what they wanted to do about their island's important status. "I told them that it is up to them if they want to do conservation work there, but we could help them if they wanted to go ahead", said Jacqui. TIS work on IBAs and KBAs is supported by the Critical Ecosystems Partnership Fund (CEPF) and managed by BirdLife International. CEPF is a joint initiative of Agence Francaise de Developpement, Conservation International, the Global Environment Facility, the Government of Japan, the MacArthur Foundation and the World Bank. A

fundamental goal is to ensure civil society is engaged in biodiversity conservation. The focus of CEPF is the conservation of threatened species and other globally important species.

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