



# Merger completes in Fiji

## Title

BirdLife Pacific has officially transferred its Fiji program to NatureFiji-MareqetiViti - Fiji's leading local conservation organisation. The merger sees NatureFiji-MareqetiViti assume responsibility for projects and staff until now managed by BirdLife's Fiji Country program. Speaking at an event to mark this occasion, the Minister for Local Government, Urban Development, Housing and Environment, Colonel Samuela Saumataua, said, "This is a wonderful achievement which both organisations have been working towards for the past two and a half years". Don Stewart, BirdLife International Director has overseen BirdLife's Pacific operations and its Fiji Country Program since 2004, while Dr Dick Watling has led NatureFiji-MareqetiViti since its inception in 2007.

When BirdLife Partners in the Pacific first established a regional presence in Fiji, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed with the Fiji government in 2002 allowed for the simultaneous creation of a Fiji Country Programme as at that time there was no Fijian conservation NGO that met the criteria for BirdLife membership. "One of our ambitions, when we set up an office in Fiji was to help establish a national NGO, so I am delighted that this has been achieved and in such a short space of time", Mr Stewart said. "Transferring the work program to NatureFiji-MareqetiViti is good for the organisation, good for the country and good for the environment," he said. Mr Stewart concluded that the BirdLife International Pacific Partnership was now focusing on developing and expanding its regional program, which tackles issues such as invasive species, deforestation, species extinctions and climate change. "BirdLife International will continue to concentrate on developing resources and programs that deliver benefits to the Pacific's environment and its peoples," he said.