Title

Fiji's first ever State of Birds report 'Fiji: State of Birds 2013' has been launched by NatureFiji-MareqetiViti with the assistance of BirdLife International, the Department of the Environment and local ornithologists.

Birds are by far Fiji's most conspicuous form of terrestrial wildlife – they are inspirational, they sing, they are fairly easy to observe and identify, and there is a limited number of species.

Biodiversity conservation in Fiji requires the support of landowners and the populace, who can better understand, participate in and support conservation if they are familiar with and knowledgeable about the species of concern.

The new report provides an overview of the issues and critical considerations facing Fiji's birds and emphasises how useful birds are as flagships for other elements of our biodiversity. Birds have long been used as indicators of the state of the world's ecosystems, providing insights into habitat loss, deterioration, pollution and, increasingly, for climate change.

All of Fiji's birds are special but some are particularly important. These are our endemic birds – those that are found only in the Fiji Islands. Fiji has 27 endemic birds, comprising nearly half of our landbirds. There is just one endemic seabird, the Critically Endangered Fiji Petrel.

To emphasise how special our avifauna is, there are few countries in the world with a higher proportion of endemic birds than Fiji. Indeed the island of Kadavu, with four endemic birds, has the highest number of endemic birds per land area in the world.

"While our state of knowledge of Fiji's birds is better than for many other groups, it is still relatively poor, and we have yet to introduce any form of national monitoring", said Dick Watling, the report's author.

"Some species such as the Fiji Petrel and the Red-throated Lorikeet [both Critically Endangered] remain amongst the rarest birds in the world. We have a good idea of the reasons why they are so rare – largely due to invasive predators but there are no national resources to undertake conservation action".

Migrant shorebirds and voyaging seabirds are a distinctive and culturally important component of the Fijian avifauna. In September each year, the Bar-tailed Godwits arrive at Suva Point. As far as we know, they fly direct from Alaska to Suva, a non-stop journey of eight to nine days. Some fly direct from Alaska to New Zealand, an 11-day non-stop flight.

The migrations that our dilio (Pacific Golden Plover), Bar-tailed Godwits and other shorebirds undertake twice a year are marvels of the natural world.

"Unfortunately, one of the most important feeding sites for these shorebirds – the mudflats of Suva Point are under consideration for reclamation", noted Dr Watling. "Where then will these shorebirds rest and prepare for their return journey?"

'Fiji: State of Birds 2013' is the latest in a growing collection of national BirdLife reports from around the globe. These publications draw on national survey and monitoring data to provide a detailed and authoritative insight into the status of and pressures faced by birds and biodiversity in specific countries, with inspiring examples of conservation actions being undertaken by BirdLife Partners and others.

Download **Fiji: State of Birds 2013**. Find out more about BirdLife's State of the nation's birds report.