



State of Palau's Birds report launched

The Palau Conservation Society (PCS - BirdLife in Palau), is pleased to announce the release of a new publication entitled *State of the Birds 2010: A conservation guide for communities and policymakers*. The guidebook was also released with a poster that highlights the plight of the Micronesian Imperial Pigeon *Ducula oceanica* ? known locally as Belochel ? which is a culturally important bird that is in decline. A special message from Senator Surangel Whipps, Jr. opens the PCS guidebook and highlights the importance of birds to Palauan culture and notes that Palau has existing conservation mechanisms that can be strengthened to protect birds.

The PCS guidebook also notes that Palau has high bird diversity and endemism for such a small island and that birds are important to Palau's culture, environment, and tourism. However, many highly valued species, such as the Belochel and the Biib (Palau Fruit Dove *Ptilinopus pelewensis*, Palau's candidate National Bird) declining. It provides information showing that hunting, fueled by illegal consumption, is a major cause of these declines. Habitat degradation and destruction, alien invasive species, and climate changes are also causing population declines.

It also includes clear recommendations for responses that can be carried out by policymakers and communities to stop the decline of important birds. These include passing laws and regulations, enforcing existing laws, management planning, controlling invasive species, and protection of Important Bird Areas. Both the book and poster were released during a launch held recently at the Belau National Museum. Invited guests at the launch included many of Palau's elected and traditional leaders and representatives from community groups. The guidebook was written with these two audiences in mind, with the hopes of influencing policies and practices which may be contributing to population declines in many of Palau's most cherished birds. PCS's Chairman, Dr Caleb Otto, opened the launch ceremony with welcoming remarks. He was followed by a presentation on birds as biodiversity indicators by Dr Alan Olsen, the Head of the Belau National Museum's (BNM) Natural History section. PCS's Director of Conservation and Protected Areas Program, Anu Gupta, gave a short presentation on the history and purpose of the State of the Birds reports, followed by closing remarks by the BNM's Chairman Demei Otobed. The new PCS guidebook complements the *State of Palau's Birds, 2010 Technical Report* produced by the BNM. Both reports were produced in partnership with each other and both feature sections on state, pressure, and response. During research for the PCS guidebook, the authors discovered that the Belochel decline was far more distressing than commonly believed. Thus, PCS also released a poster on the Belochel to coincide with the release of the guidebook. The poster features Mr. Steven Victor, a respected local conservationist, and his family. The poster encourages Palauans to

refrain from eating Belochel now so that they are available in the future for important cultural customs. Funding for the guidebook and poster was provided by the Aage V. Jensen Charity Foundation through BirdLife International. Hardcopies of all materials are available at the PCS office. The guidebook may be downloaded from by **clicking [here](#)**. Please visit www.palauconservation.org for more information about PCS or Palau's birds. **Subscribe to The BirdLife Pacific [Quarterly E-Newsletter](#)**