



From the fringing islands of westernmost New Guinea, to the eastern verges of Polynesia, we bring you the latest conservation progress by Conservation International's Melanesia and Pacific Islands Programs. This issue launches our new e-newsletter. Thank you for your support in helping to make conservation possible. Please [email us](#) with any questions or comments. Happy Holidays!



Aerial view of the Mamberamo River, Papua. Photo by Nev Kemp/CI.

PAPUA, INDONESIA

The Mamberamo Basin, the largest forest block in the Asia-Pacific region, was visited by two Conservation International (CI) expeditions in 2007—a Rapid Assessment Program (RAP) of the Lower Mamberamo in May, and a return to the Foja Mountains with a film crew from CBS. Its popular show "60 Minutes" will air the Foja piece on December 16th 2007, including first-time footage of displays of the Golden-fronted Bowerbird and exclusive interviews in the Fojas with CI's Bruce Beehler.

On the conservation front, two Mamberamo communities from the foothills of the Foja Mountains, Kwerba and Papasena, pledged commitments to conservation. Trial Community Conservation Agreements have been secured for their customary areas, totaling more than 100,000 hectares.

In May 2007, the Raja Ampat regency and Indonesian government jointly declared seven new Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) covering 900,000 ha. This advances Indonesia's national goal of designating 10 million ha of MPAs by 2012. The Nature Conservancy (TNC), World Wide Fund for Nature-Indonesia, and CI's local and national government partners all contributed to this success.



Many readers may recall the excitement surrounding the announcement of the many marine species discovered by the CI-led survey team in the Bird's Head Seascape in 2006. The right to name the most remarkable of these species, including the famous *Hemiscyllium* "walking shark," has been won by the highest bidders at the recent [Blue Auction](#) held in Monaco in September 2007. Proceeds from this auction will support marine conservation in the Bird's Head Seascape, including four years of funding for the Kalabia initiative—a mobile marine conservation education program whose boat will cruise the waters of the Raja Ampat Islands. [Watch a video of the walking shark here!](#)

Above: *Hemiscyllium* sp., the walking shark. Photo by Gerry Allen/CI.

The *Ecology of Papua*, edited by Andrew Marshall and CI's Bruce Beehler, was [published in mid-2007](#). This two-volume book contains in-depth studies of the western half of New Guinea by over 75 scientists, and completes the *Ecology of Indonesia* series.



International and Papua New Guinean scientists collaborate during the RAP expedition to Kaijende Highlands, Papua New Guinea. Photo by Steve Richards.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Recently in Papua New Guinea (PNG), support has grown within both national and provincial governments to nominate the Nakanai uplands as a World Heritage site. CI is working with both levels of government to develop this proposal for Nakanai.

The discovery of 24 new species of plants and frogs in the highlands of Papua New Guinea has [led scientists to call for the protection of the biodiversity of the remote Kaijende Highlands in Enga Province](#). These species were discovered during a 2005 expedition led by CI's RAP team and PNG's Department of Environment and Conservation. Recently published, the report of the assessment provides an overview of the globally significant biodiversity resources of and conservation recommendations for the eastern terminus of the Headwaters region.



One of the most important and exciting achievements of the year was the submission to the PNG National Executive Council of the formal designation of the YUS Conservation Area totaling approximately 60,000 ha. The [Tree Kangaroo Conservation Program](#) (TKCP), led by Lisa Dabek, and supported by Conservation International, has designed this Conservation Area to ensure long-term protection for the endangered Matschie's Tree Kangaroo (*Dendrolagus matschiei*), endemic to PNG's Huon Peninsula. This will be PNG's first official Conservation Area under the 1978 Conservation Areas Act and will set an important precedent for future conservation in PNG.

Matschie's Tree Kangaroo. Photo by Ryan Hawk.



A Leatherback Sea Turtle is fitted with a satellite transmitter in the Solomon Islands. The largest of all the sea turtles, the Leatherback averages 5 ft long and 1100 lbs. Photo by John Pita.

SOLOMON ISLANDS

In November 2006, a Danish field team led a biological expedition to the Bauro Highlands on Makira Island in conjunction with local and international partners including the Makira Community Conservation Foundation, the American Museum of Natural History, CI, Bauro communities, and the Provincial Government. The survey documented that [Makira is one of the world's most important areas for biodiversity conservation](#), as it holds populations of more restricted-range bird species than any other area of comparable size in the world. CI is working on Makira with partners and local communities to help preserve and protect some of the remaining forest from logging.

Leatherback Sea Turtles, which have been an important part of tradition and culture in the Solomon Islands, are now in decline. CI along with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, TNC, and World Wide Fund for Nature- South Pacific, participated in surveys to fit sea turtles with satellite tracking devices, train local people in tagging and monitoring the sea turtles, and count Leatherback nests on various known nesting beaches in the Solomon Islands. This information is invaluable to the efforts to conserve this species, supported by the tri-national agreement that the Solomon Islands entered into with both PNG and Indonesia in 2006.

CI has recently been supporting a regional publication entitled [Melanesian Geo](#), developed by its Solomon Islands staffer. It contains many interesting stories on regional issues ranging from Fijian entomology to Important Bird Areas of New Caledonia, and many more about the Solomon Islands.

NEW CALEDONIA

In collaboration with New Caledonia's Province Nord, New Caledonia Development Agency ADECAL, and a team of expert scientists, CI is [currently carrying out a marine RAP](#) of the northwestern coast, from Poum to Koumac. The project will bring together local and internationally renowned biologists to produce a baseline assessment of the area's marine biodiversity - the first step toward the development of a network of marine protected areas in the region. This data will also support the proposed listing of New Caledonia's lagoon as a UNESCO Marine World Heritage site.

Two tracts of endangered sclerophyll forest totaling 233 ha in the Pindai-Nékoro peninsula have been put under protection, in partnership with WWF, Province Nord, and local owners. This represents 5 percent of New Caledonia's remaining dry forest and includes the only known living individual of the critically endangered endemic vine *Turbina inopinata* (Convolvulaceae). In the Mont Panié Botanical Reserve, botanical surveys identified two new plant species, further confirming the status of the reserve as a source of significant floristic diversity.

Two workshops co-organized by CI, Province Nord, and numerous other partners produced a draft 5-year management strategy and workplan for the Mont Panié project and a draft invasive species control plan for the reserve. The New Zealand Department of Conservation also worked with the Mont Panié team finding solutions to control invasive species in the Reserve. Invasives are the biggest single threat to Mont Panié's endemic species and local peoples' traditional lifestyles.



Aerial view of the Sovi Basin, Fiji. Photo by Haroldo Castro/CI.

FIJI ISLANDS

[The Fiji Water Foundation has recently announced its support](#) for the Sovi Basin Endowment, work on the Viti Levu Conservation Corridor, and the creation of a conservation area in the Nakauvadra and Nakorotubu ranges. The center of CI's terrestrial work in Fiji, the Sovi Basin is home to 19 endemic bird species and is the largest intact forest

tract in the entire Polynesia-Micronesia Hotspot. CI currently holds a 5-year lease over the 20,700 ha Sovi Basin area, which expires in December 2009. This lease allows us to put in place the necessary arrangements to secure a 99-year lease for conservation over the Basin - the longest permissible under Fijian law.

The Marine Managed Area Science (MMAS) Program has taken off in Fiji with the recruitment of the local MMAS coordinator. The MMAS program aims to socialize aspects of current scientific work and results in order to translate this work into conservation on the ground.

SAMOA

Work has begun on the Mount Vaea Restoration Project. This two-part, five-year program of work aims to eradicate invasive plant species from the reserve and restore its native flora. Mt. Vaea is a popular visitor destination just outside Apia, and the final resting place of author Robert Louis Stevenson.



CI President Russell Mittermeier presents Kiribati's President Anote Tong with a Conservation Leadership Award during a visit to CI's main office in Arlington, VA. Photo by Sterling Zumbrunn/CI.

KIRIBATI

[The nation of Kiribati is in the process of formalizing the third largest marine protected area in the world, behind the Great Barrier Reef and the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands.](#) The Phoenix Islands Protected Area (PIPA) is in the process of applying to World Heritage listing, which will attract much-needed attention to this remarkable part of the world.

In May 2007, when he visited the Virginia office, CI [gave Kiribati's President Anote Tong a Conservation Leadership Award](#) for his strong leadership in creating the PIPA.

AUSTRALIA

Our Technical Team based in Atherton, North Queensland, Australia provides the scientific backbone to all of our work in the region. Recently, they have finished detailed habitat mapping for 50 Endangered and Critically

Endangered species of New Guinea. They engage with governments, NGO partners and field projects to integrate this information into conservation priorities and activities. They also provide technical consulting to CI's field programs, training field officers in PNG and the Solomon Islands in best practice GPS usage. The Technical Team developed educational and promotional materials for the High Level Meeting on Forests and Climate in Sydney 23-25 July at which CI presented its role in Biodiversity, Forests, and Climate Change.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

In Recent News

['I'm a big name underwater'](#) Marketplace, Los Angeles, CA, USA, 20 September 2007

['The most compelling talk of the evening highlighted CI's global efforts'](#) New York Social Diary, 4 November 2007

['Rare butterfly named after Indonesian first lady'](#) AFP, 13 November 2007

['Possible new gold and copper mine on Fiji's Viti Levu'](#) Radio Australia, 6 December 2007

['CI joins Climate Talks in Bali'](#) CI, 3 December 2007

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