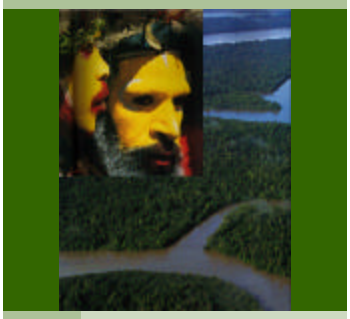
Issue 1

December 2003



CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL
MELANESIA CENTER FOR BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION

MelanesiaNews

Reaching Out: The CI Melanesia Program Launches Its Newsletter

Dear Friends of Melanesia,

Welcome to the first edition of *MelanesiaNews*! CI's Melanesia Center for Biodiversity Conservation (CBC) is pleased to bring you this periodic program newsletter in order to share updates about our projects and interesting facts about the creatures, cultures and ecosystems that exist in the region. The Melanesia CBC believes that the newsletter will help maintain transparency, inform those individuals who are interested in our projects, and educate people who have never visited Melanesia about the fascinating natural and cultural heritage prevalent throughout the region.

The Melanesia CBC is one of CI's programs that strives to decentralize conservation expertise away from its headquarters in the United States and build it within the region. To male this vision to succeed, the CBC is investing in building the capacity of governments, local NGOs, and communities throughout Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, New Caledonia, Fiji, and Indonesia's Papua Province to lead conservation efforts. Seeing that this is the first edition of MelanesiaNews, your feedback on how we can improve the newsletter and make it an effective communication tool is imperative.

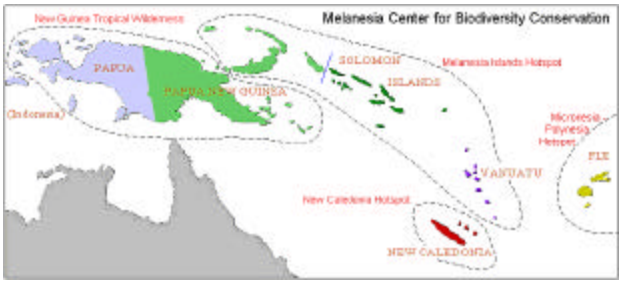
Please send us your comments, ideas, or suggestions on how you think we can strengthen our newsletter. Again, welcome to MelanesiaNews. We look forward to sharing our experiences with you!

Warm regards,
Gaikovina Kula
Executive Director
Melanesia CBC

The Four Heavenly Kings

At the heart of the Coral Triangle perched on the westernmost tip of the giant island of New Guinea lie the Raja Ampat Islands. The translation of this Indonesian name means "The Four Kings," and indeed, the splendor of the major islands of Waigeo, Batanta, Salawati, and Misool is unsurpassed—largely because of their magnificent coral reefs. Though the global significance of these islands is just beginning to be recognized, the region is also beginning to face major threats to its forests and marine life. This is the reason why CI is working with local and international institutions to help the region's communities plan a sustainable future for the Raja Ampats. This vast marine and insular ecosystem has thus become the Melanesia Center for Biodiversity Conservation's (CBC) third conservation corridor, where CI and partners must focus a range of resources to address the conservation needs of this environmental jewel. Our vision for the area consists of a network of community-managed and government-supported conservation areas. The path that CI will take to achieve this vision is a difficult one and demands the utmost sensitivity to ensure that all of our local

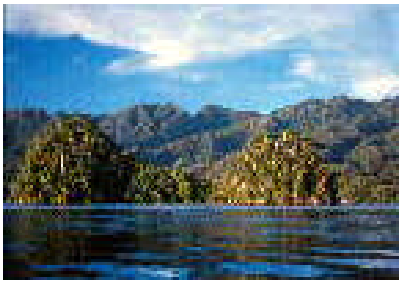
Inside this issue:



The Melanesia CBC spans over six political entities and is likely the most culturally diverse region on the globe.

The Four Heavenly Kings (continued from page 1)

partners—including village representatives, NGOs, university leaders, and government officials—are fully engaged in the process. Our Papua-based staff are currently liaising with representatives from successful, community-driven marine projects in Sulawesi and Papua New Guinea in order to learn the lessons of programs that have preceded us.



CI has implemented a range of activities in the Raja Ampats to establish a presence over the last several years. Our field-based staff, including Yance de Fretes, Muhammed Farid, and Suer Suryadi, led a marine Rapid Assessment Program, conducted a preliminary socioeconomic survey, distributed several Student Research Awards, and engaged community members in a series of discussions on the biodiversity assets and economic needs of villagers. In December 2003, we hosted a major Stakeholder Workshop that brought together representatives of all local and regional partners for the first time. In this forum, we introduced our long-term vision for the Islands, discussed the infrastructure developments that the local government is planning and their potential impact on the region's biodiversity, and encouraged stakeholders to initiate a dialogue on these issues that will hopefully lead to a general agreement to factor conservation issues into development planning. The Stakeholder Workshop is just the step in a series of activities will that build upon each other.

The way ahead is filled with challenges, in large part because of the ever-changing Indonesian context. With the proper multi-year support, we are looking to bring on a dedicated local team to work full time on Raja Ampat conservation issues and who will be fully integrated with a range of within-region partners. Grants from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation and the Packard Foundation have helped us to develop technical capacity, but now we need the field staff to turn the technical analyses into results on the ground that will ensure the protection of the Raja Ampat Island's coral reef and terrestrial splendor.

Assessing Feasibility in the Solomon Islands

The Solomon Islands are renowned for having some of the Pacific's most biodiverse ecosystems and are home to many unique species that exist nowhere else on Earth. As CI's first conservation project in Melanesia, Makira Island has been a model community-based conservation project where sustained efforts to thwart the ever-present threat of logging operations are the norm. Recently a team of economists from CI's Center for Applied Biodiversity Science, led by Dr. Dick Rice, ventured to Makira to evaluate the feasibility of establishing a conservation incentive agreement. A conservation incentive agreement offers customary landowners incentives to set aside land for conservation purposes. Once an area for conservation is identified, CI leases the development rights to the land from the landowners and compensates them for the missed opportunity costs for other potential land investments. This process is often used by the extractive resource industry for establishing a logging or mining concession. According to Dr. Rice, the evaluation was a success. In addition to receiving support from the customary landowners and the Solomon Islands government, New Zealand and Australian government officials have expressed interest to support the initiative; however, it is anticipated that further financial support will be required for successful implementation.

Photos by D. Rice: Makira's shoreline and distant highlands, and local child in traditional dress.

CI Assists Communities with Establishing New WMA

On September 1, 2003, the Papua New Guinea Minister for Environment and Conservation officially recognized the newly created Klampun Wildlife Management Area (WMA). CI's Melanesia team has been working with local communities over the last eight years to protect this 5,200-hectare area located on the eastern seaboard of East New Britain Province, Papua New Guinea. Although the WMA is small in size, it is large enough to capture a representative sample of the area's biodiversity. The Klampun WMA is home to a variety of endemic flora and fauna, including the New Britain Sparrow Hawk, Kauri pine and several flying foxes. The commitment from the communities who live in the Klampun area has been astounding, as they have taken ownership of the WMA process and are not solely relying on government assistance. In collaboration with New Britain Sosel Eksen Komiti, a local NGO, CI recently assigned staff member Maureen Ewai to lead the conservation efforts for this region and to expand the extent of the WMA over the next few years.

> "*The commitment from the communities who live in the Klampun area has been astounding*."
> Maureen Ewai

Additional financial and technical support will be required to ensure that the designed and implementation of linking the Klampun WMA with proposed neighboring protected areas is successfully executed.

The Forest's Golden Inhabitants

CI recently produced a beautiful display poster featuring Goldie's Bird of Paradise. The global range of this beautiful species is restricted to two islands, namely Fergusson and Normanby islands located in the D'Entrecasteaux Archipelago, Milne Bay, Papua New Guinea. David Mitchell, CI's Milne Bay terrestrial corridor Manger, is studying Goldie's Bird of Paradise with a grant from the Beneficia Foundation.

During field investigations over the least year, Mitchell located a new population of this species.
In the recent past, Mitchell led several biologists from the Bernice P. Bishop Museum in Honolulu on a reconnaissance trip into the mountains of Fergusson. This trip allowed him to better understand the Goldie's range into the mountainous uplands. In parallel with the field research, CI is working with local communities to develop a management plan for this little-known but spectacular restricted-range species. CI hopes to expand its studies and conservation programs on Fergusson Island, where local interest in the bird and its conservation is growing.

If you are interested in receiving a Goldie's Bird of Paradise poster, please contact the program.

Streamlining Conservation Efforts Through Partnerships

In 2002, CI and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to work together to promote conservation in regions where both institutions are working. Although this initial MOU had a marine focus, the staff members from both organizations have taken this lesson to heart and are now cooperating on both marine and terrestrial efforts. TNC's South Pacific program and CI's Melanesia CBC are working collaboratively to generate good regional analyses for conservation priorities in New Guinea. In addition, the two organizations are compiling a comprehensive biological and physical dataset on the region so that conservation priorities can be clearly delineated. The two groups have been sharing geographic and species data and are engaged in substantive discussions about partnering with a key Australian government agency to assist with additional data collection and analysis. Although there are occasional differences in opinion between the two organizations, the willful breaking down of barriers has made this collaboration a mutually fulfilling investment for both sides. The CBC envisions additional partnerships with other large conservation organizations as a necessary vehicle for streamlining conservation efforts throughout Melanesia.

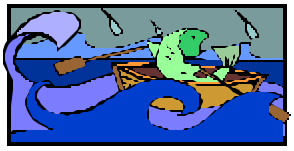
CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL
MELANESIA CENTER FOR BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION

1919 M Street, NW, Suite #600
Washington, DC 20036

Phone: (202) 912-1343
Fax: (202) 912-1046
Email: bbeehler@conservation.org

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE MELANESIA CBC, PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE:
WWW.CIMELANESIA.ORG.PG

Addressing Global Climate Change in Melanesia



Global warming will alter the distribution and characteristics of major terrestrial and marine ecosystems in the New Guinea region this century. Climate change will fragment New Guinea's major forest tracts, alter the health of the shallow-water coral reef assemblages, and put at risk extraordinary amounts biodiversity. Needless to say, this will otherwise sound conservation strategies that are based on a "static" view of the region's ecosystems.

The island of New Guinea is home to the Earth's only tropical montane "high biodiversity wilderness" and also houses some of the most extensive tropical reefs in the Coral Triangle. Both will suffer serious impacts from changing conditions (e.g., rising sea levels, seawater warming, atmospheric warming, erratic wind patterns, and altered precipitation). In addition, changes in terrestrial upland ecosystems will impact nearshore marine systems through increased runoff and siltation. Inappropriate land-use decisions will magnify these changes, however, wise conservation strategies will mitigate their severity. The challenge facing conservation planners is to quickly identify the at-risk areas and to take appropriate and timely action consistent with the capacity of the communities and governments that must engage in these proactive interventions.

CI and The Nature Conservancy are collaborating to address these climate challenges that face New Guinea. Led by Dr. Earl Saxon, of TNC's Global Climate Change Initiative, a team of conservationists will be the first to apply state-of-the-art computing to model likely climate change scenarios for vulnerable ecosystems in New Guinea. The team will identify "sentinel ecosystems" that can serve as in-the-field early warning systems. Soon after the ecosystems have been identified, local monitoring programs that will allow conservationists and their supporting institutions to detect early change and to develop mitigation and adaptation responses will be implemented. Finally, to reduce the need for eventual mitigation and adaptation, we will employ the modeling data in a number of ways to educate key decision makers and stakeholders within the region and globally, so that proactive interventions can be put forward before major climate change impacts begin.

This is an exciting new initiative that addresses a critical issue that is under-appreciated in most parts of the developing world. With adequate funding, CI, TNC, and partners can lead the way in fighting the negative impacts of climate change in places where biodiversity and natural ecosystems are most at risk. The Melanesia CBC takes this issue seriously, and is actively developing this initiative with seed funding from CI's generous grant from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation Moore Foundation. Additional resources can keep this cutting edge program alive.