

# DOES THE TRADITIONAL RELEVANCE OF ANIMALS INFLUENCE THE INCENTIVE OF LOCAL PEOPLE TO PROTECT THEM?

A case study on marine turtle, shark and the Fiji petrel conservation in Fiji

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## Introduction – Why these animals?

- Traditionally important
- Endangered (IUCN Red List)
- Totem animals of Fijian villages/clans

	Turtle	Shark	Fiji petrel
<b>Relevance</b>	Chiefly/ traditional food	Legends → vu (god) “protector”	Endemic to Gau Island Not known in the past
<b>Protection</b>	Moratorium since 1996		
<b>Major threats</b>	Taking turtles and eggs / ghost fishing	Shark finning	Introduced animals Burning down the forests

Thomson (1908), Watling (1986), IUCN (1995), Fisheries (1997), Batibasaga (2002), Craig (2002), Morgan (2007), Shirihai (2009), Morgan (2010), Watling (2011)

## Aims of the study

- Investigate:
  - Level of awareness
  - Strength of traditional bonds
  - Perception of local people towards the animals
- Examine the attitude and the willingness of the people to protect these animals
- Discover whether the local people currently respect restrictions for harvesting turtles





## Methods

- 3 Islands → 8 villages
- Face to face interviews: assistance of translator
- Questionnaire: open- and closed questions

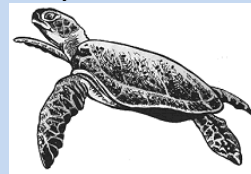


## Results & Discussion – Marine Turtles

- Biology and eating turtles
- No knowledge about their ecological function
- All villages caught and eat turtles
  - For traditional ceremonies and daily protein source
- Disregard of the law

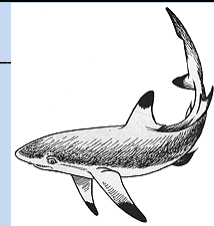
### But

- Protection of turtles was considered as very important
- High willingness to protect turtles



## Results & Discussion – Sharks

- Occasionally caught
- Sharks regarded as dangerous
  - Reduces the willingness to protect them
- Protection was not seen as important as for the turtle
- Biggest threat: fishing and finning



## Results & Discussion – Fiji petrel

- Conservation projects showed success
- Good knowledge about the bird and its threats
- High willingness to protect the bird



Fiji Petrel 2011, Photo: S. Caunivalu



Fiji Petrel 2009, Photo: H. Shirihai

## Conclusion

Does the traditional relevance of animals influence the incentive of local people to protect them?

- All three animals are of great importance for indigenous Fijians
  - Traditional bonds are not a conservation tool but may increase the incentive to protect them
  - Willingness to get involved in conservation projects is high
  - Laws are not always successfully implemented
    - Lack of understanding and enforcement

## Conclusion

### ■ Management & Conservation

- What is needed?

- Main drivers for utilization apart from traditional values
  - Livelihood reasons?
- Community-based management
  - Awareness rising
  - Education
  - Involving communities
    - “Turtle protectors”



Taylor & Topalian (1995), Ratu (2004), Laveti & MacKay (2009), Nasome (2010), Ralogaivau (2011)

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## **Pictures:**

[www.ezilon.com](http://www.ezilon.com)

[www.worldatlas.com](http://www.worldatlas.com)

Turtle and shark: [www.mesa.edu.au](http://www.mesa.edu.au).