

## Celebrate the unique and wonderful nature of the world's islands

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IUCN joins its member organizations and partners around the world in celebrating the International Day for Biological Diversity, advocating the role of islands in addressing pressing global issues through ingenuity, innovation and use of traditional knowledge.



The United Nations proclaimed 22 May as International Day for Biological Diversity (IDB) to increase understanding and awareness of biodiversity issues. This year's theme of Island Biodiversity was chosen to coincide with the designation by the United Nations General Assembly of 2014 as the International Year of Small Island Developing States.

Islands are a very special case in terms of biodiversity conservation, being particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, tourism and invasive alien species, as well as the over-exploitation of natural resources. On the Goat Islands of Jamaica for example, the introduction of **Small Indian Mongoose** (*Herpestes javanicus*) caused the local extinction of **Jamaican Iguana** (*Cyclura collei*). The mongoose predated both young iguanas and iguana eggs, and today the Jamaican Iguana survives only in a small area of the Hellshire Hills, Jamaica. A proposed port development in the surrounding Portland Bight Protected Area will further threaten this Critically Endangered species and negate any future conservation plans to reintroduce the species to the Goat Islands, which would be destroyed if this development goes ahead.

In Europe, islands are popular tourist destinations and the impacts of development on native species have to be carefully mitigated and when assessed, threatened species are given legal protection. The **Sardinian Long-eared Bat** (*Plecotus sardus*) was first identified on the island of Sardinia, Italy in 2002, and is listed as Vulnerable on The IUCN Red List. The species' forest habitat is declining in quality due to forestry management activities and roosting sites are being disturbed by tourism. Thankfully, the Sardinian Long-eared Bat is protected by

### RELATED LINK

- [International Day for Biological Diversity 2014](#)
- [IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™](#)
- [IUCN SSC Iguana Specialist Group](#)
- [IUCN Oceania - Mescal Project](#)
- [BIOPAMA](#)



Kayangel Atoll, Palau  
Photo: Kevin Davidson



Nordeste Azores  
Photo: Chris Zielecki



Chichijima Island, Japan. In 2011, IUCN recommended that the Ogasawara Islands in Japan be inscribed on the World Heritage List, due to their outstanding example of on-going evolutionary processes in an oceanic island ecosystem.  
Photo: Japan\_Ippe & Janine Naoi



Matareva, Upolu Island, Samoa.  
Photo: Stuart Chape



View from Mount Gower  
Photo: Lord Howe Island Board

national legislation in most range states and is also protected through the Bonn Convention (Eurobats) and Bern Convention, as well as being included in Annex IV of the EU Habitats and Species Directive.

Isabela Island in the Galápagos is home to one of the world's rarest bird species, the **Mangrove Finch** (*Camarhynchus heliobates*) listed as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™. The main threats to this species are predation by introduced black rats and a blood-sucking parasite (*Philornis downsi*) which kills nestlings. Thanks to funding from IUCN's partnership initiative SOS - Save Our Species, the species is benefiting from a head-starting programme through a project implemented by the Charles Darwin Foundation and Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust. Earlier this year, the project grantees were successful in hatching and rearing the first ever Mangrove Finch chicks in captivity, these birds will be released back into their mangrove forest habitat and will hopefully establish populations in new areas. This is just one of several projects which SOS – Save Our Species funds to improve the conservation status of island-restricted species.

About 30,000 islands lie across the vast expanse of the Pacific Ocean and 12% of this region is under protection, mostly Community Managed Protected Areas. The **Biodiversity and Protected Areas Management** (BIOPAMA) programme is committed to engaging with and supporting the Pacific islands, particularly in building the capacity of local conservation practitioners to improve protected area management in the region. In addition, through BIOPAMA, IUCN is promoting the use of best available science and knowledge to address information gaps and strengthen policy and decision-making for protected areas in African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries.

The Mangrove Ecosystems for Climate Change Adaptation & Livelihoods (MESCAL) project is coordinated by IUCN Oceania. The project has sought to increase the resilience of Pacific islands communities to the potential impacts of climate change by strengthening the conservation and management of their mangroves. Mangroves play an important role in coastal protection, sediment accretion, food security and biodiversity conservation. Floral and faunal inventories have been conducted in demonstration sites in Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Samoa and Fiji. These biodiversity surveys, mapping activities, carbon assessments, economic valuation and policy and legislation reviews have fed into the development of decision-support tools for policy makers in all five countries including a national mangrove management plan for Fiji.

The challenges facing Small Island developing states are challenges that confront us all, and the **UN Conference on Small Island Developing States**, which will be held in September in Apia, Samoa, will focus on building partnerships for sustainable development.



Vavau Islands  
Photo: google



Galapagos Islands, Ecuador  
Photo: Pedro Rosabal



Mangroves, Tetepare, Solomon Islands  
Photo: IUCN



Choizils Islets, North of Mayotte  
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Bazaruto National Park (Mozambique)  
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