

## GLOBAL ISLAND CONSERVATION

Islands and their surrounding waters cover **one-sixth** of the world's surface and provide habitat for more than half of the Earth's diversity of **marine** plants and animals. The Nature Conservancy is committed to **conserving** these precious places for now and for **future generations**.

- islands: conservation highlights**
- More than one-third of The Nature Conservancy's 28 country programs are in island nations.
  - The Conservancy is supporting conservation action in islands across North America, the Caribbean, Latin America, Asia and the Pacific.
  - The Conservancy works with a variety of partners from private organizations to government agencies to local communities to protect and sustainably use the precious natural resources of islands around the world.
  - In an effort to promote island conservation, the Conservancy in 2004 established a partnership with several island governments, non-governmental organizations and local leaders to create networks of marine and coastal protected areas that span the globe.
  - The Conservancy has pioneered innovative conservation projects to address some of the biggest threats to islands, including global warming, invasive species and habitat loss.



Exumas Cays Land and Sea Park, Bahamas ©Dan Campbell

Dragons roam the island of Komodo while devils dwell in Tasmania. The pygmy seahorse hides in Kimbe Bay, Papua New Guinea, as the four-eyed butterfly fish peers through the crystal waters of the Bahamas.

Islands are home to an extraordinary and sometimes bizarre collection of species. In fact, islands support an astonishingly high ratio of endemic species – plants and animals found no place else in the world. New science also suggests islands have a broader role to play and may contribute significantly to future diversity of life on Earth. But islands are also highly threatened.

The very attributes that make them havens of species diversity also make them extremely susceptible to species extinction. They contain more endangered, rare and threatened species than anywhere else in the world. Islands and their coastal areas are also a critical source of food, jobs and income for millions of people.

More than 500 million people live on the more than 100,000 islands around the globe. Island conservation must go hand-in-hand with sustainable economic development to find a balance where both humans and habitat thrive.



Russell Islands, Solomon Islands ©Louise Goggin, CRC Reef Research Center

Island resource conservation is a priority for The Nature Conservancy, which currently has projects in ten island countries — from small nations such as the Bahamas and Palau, to large island archipelagos such as Indonesia and Papua New Guinea. The Conservancy achieves results by working collaboratively and on the ground with local stakeholders to develop innovative strategies to protect critical island resources.

A highlight of the many Nature Conservancy island conservation projects includes:

- \$2 million in Early Action Grants launched in 2005 to advance marine protected areas in islands.
- A peer learning network to address the threats of invasive species on island nations throughout the Pacific.
- A collaborative project with the government of Palau to develop a network of marine protected areas to preserve coral reef systems and to build in measures that will help protect reefs from the ravages of coral bleaching.

- A \$16 million debt-for-nature swap with Jamaica that will protect the country's critical and threatened tropical forests, which are home to many species found nowhere else on Earth.
- The Rescue the Reef program, which was launched in 1992 and has helped protect reef ecosystems in Indonesia, the Dominican Republic, the Florida Keys and the islands of the South Pacific and the Caribbean.
- A pilot learning network in Micronesia where conservation leaders help one another to strengthen their organizational and technical skills so they can better protect their country's important natural areas.

In an effort to approach island conservation on a truly global scale, The Nature Conservancy supported the protected area commitments agreed upon by governments at the meeting of the Convention on Biological Diversity in February 2004. More than 188 countries agreed to create national and regional networks of ecologically representative and effectively managed protected areas on land by 2010 and in the seas by 2012. As a contribution to this historic commitment, the

Conservancy pledged and is now providing technical, financial and other forms of support to help governments meet these goals, with a special emphasis in island countries.

Building upon this effort, the Conservancy has worked with island nations and other non-governmental organizations to shape a conservation action plan to protect island biodiversity worldwide. This plan will be presented at the next meeting of the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2006. To generate global support for this plan, the Conservancy has partnered with a number of leaders in island biodiversity — countries who have made specific commitments to protecting their nations' unique natural wealth. The Nature Conservancy also supports the development of partnerships that catalyze island conservation through collaborative efforts at regional and global levels.

While The Nature Conservancy has a long and ambitious history of working to protect the unique and rich diversity of life on the planet's islands, it recognizes that a great deal more needs to be accomplished over the next decade to ensure the preservation of these precious, yet fragile, environments for generations to come. The future economic and ecological health of islands and their coastal areas depends on the collaboration, dedication and effective management practices of governments, local communities, individuals and private organizations from around the world.

**For more information**  
**Audrey Newman**  
**923 Nu'uuanu Avenue**  
**Honolulu, Hawaii 96817**  
**USA**  
**+1 [808] 567-6834**  
**anewman@tnc.org**  
**www.nature.org**