Introduction – Why these animals?

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

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

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

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”


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Thank you for your attention

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Turtle and shark: www.mesa.edu.au.