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VANUATU ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE SOCIETY

Threatened Species Factsheet No. 26

SANTO KAURI

What are they called?

Scientific:
Agathis silbae
French: Kaori
Bislama: Kaori
Vernacular:
Khoe (Valpei village), Hoe (Penour village)in West Santo

A little bit about them:

This species is part of the conifers group. These trees are found on Santo, along the western side of the central mountain range. Santo Kauri grow at 450-760m elevation and where the rainfall is >4500 mm/yr. It is known in only 4 locations on Santo's west coast.

Note: This species is very similar to the Pacific Kauri (*Agathis macrophylla)* which prefers lower habitat elevation of 50-550m and is found on Aneityum, Erramango and in Fiji.

What do they look like?

This is a large tree, reaching up to 2m in trunk diameter, and typically 30-40m tall. They are usually the tallest trees in a forest, emerging above the canopy. The bark is smooth on young trees, and scaly when mature. It has leathery dark green leaves, very large, spherical seed cones and wide spreading root systems.

Source: Threatened conifers of the world. Image by Farjon & Gardner.

Did you know?

- This species is only found on Santo.
- Locals recognise two variations; "man kauri" with a large crown and reddish leaf, and "woman kauri" with shorter trunk and green leaf.

This tree is classified as Near Threatened (NT) on the IUCN Red List.

Why are they threatened?

- Santo Kauri timber was commercially logged during the late 1990's. There is currently no logging but if resumed, logging is a potential threat.
- Habitat destruction and fragmentation from cyclones and bushfires which may increase from climate change.

What do they do for us?

- *Agathis* functions as a keystone species due to its size and growth form as a canopy emergent tree.
- It has wide spreading root systems that help stabilize soils on ridges and slopes, preventing erosion.
- It is used in local /traditional medicine.
- The resin is used for lighting (fuelwood), canoe making and tattooing.

What can we do for them?

- ✓ Establish Community Conservation Areas that nationally protect Santo Kauri's natural habitat.
- ✓ Raise awareness of the threats to and benefits of this species in local communities.
- ✓ If harvested, make sure use is managed sustainably. That is, for every mature tree cut down, many new seedlings are planted to replace it and to be used in the future.

Want to know more?

- Visit: www.iucnredlist.org
- Contact Vanuatu's Department of Forests
- Book: *Remarkable plants of Vanuatu* by Ramon L. & Sam C., 2015

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