

# Key Biodiversity Areas

## Biodiversity

Biodiversity is the variability among living organisms, including from all terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems. Highly biodiverse systems are more productive, that is the ecosystem services provided by the variety of life in an environment are greater, generating more benefit for humans and the ecosystem itself. In short, biodiversity keeps the natural environment healthy and provides resources for people, such as freshwater, healthy soils and medicinal cures.



Source: Ray Pierce Pacific

## Biodiversity Hotspots

Regions that have a high level of endemic vascular plants, those found nowhere else in the world, and have lost over 70% of their natural vegetation making them threatened, are known as Biodiversity Hotspots. There are 35 areas that qualify worldwide, including the East Melanesian Islands. These hotspots represent a very small percentage of Earth's land surface, but support more than half the world's endemic plant species, and 43% of bird, mammal, reptile and amphibian endemics.



## Protected Areas

Protected areas are clearly defined geographical spaces, recognised for their biodiversity, ecosystem services and cultural value. Protecting these areas through legal and community level means, achieves the long term conservation of these natural resources, protecting them for future generations. KBAs indicate regions of high ecological significance where community conservation bodies may implement protected areas using scientific and indigenous knowledge to manage them.

## Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs)

Global KBAs meet certain criteria including: threatened biodiversity; geographically restricted biodiversity; ecological integrity; biological processes; and, irreplaceability. These can be applied to species and ecosystems in terrestrial, inland water and marine environments, and must be confirmed by the KBA Secretariat. Vanuatu has 27 KBAs in total. Out of the 27 KBAs, six are prioritised by the CEPF including:

- Gaua
- Santo Mountain Chain
- Tongoa-Laika
- Green Hill
- Futuna
- Aneityum

