**Region: Polynesia**

Countries Include: The Cook Islands (NZ.), Easter Island (Chile), Niue, Samoa, Tokelau (NZ), Tonga, Tuvalu, Wallis & Futuna (Fr.)

**Biodiversity and Global Environmental Benefits Regional Highlights:**

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| Country | Country-level biodiversity significance |
| The Cook Islands (New Zealand) | * The Cook Islands are a small island group spread over an oceanic EEZ of 2 million square kilometers. Due to the spread distribution of the Northern and Southern group of islands, the country controls a significant proportion of high conservation priority marine landscapes in the Pacific. The ecosystems and species of the Northern group are limited in terrestrial diversity, but abundant in marine fauna; while the Southern group has relatively rich terrestrial diversity—as well as lagoonal and marine diversity on the atolls of Manuae and Aitutaki.[[1]](#footnote-0) Inshore marine habitats are predominantly fringing/barrier reefs, and both shallow/deep lagoons.[[2]](#footnote-1) * Species biodiversity is moderate, with a high level of endemism (while some species are not documented, they primarily are corals/sponges, plants, insects and birds). The geographic scope of species range-size rarity is continuously high throughout the group of islands. * Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) within the country are protected along two regimes, but are most recently preserved through the Marae Moana Act 2017 which requires all economic activities within the Cook Islands EEZ to be consistent with the objective ‘to protect and conserve the ecological, biodiversity, and heritage values of the Cook Islands marine environment.’ The map for the Marine Park can be found [here](https://www.maraemoana.gov.ck/about-marae-moana/marine-park-map/).[[3]](#footnote-2) * While the Marae Mona Act has indicated government support for conservation exists, the following UNDP capacity needs assessment has found that the reality as of September 2019, was a ‘paper park with substantial capacity gaps in planning, zoning, financing, field staff, compliance, enforcement and communications.’[[4]](#footnote-3) An extensive, and up-to-date summary of these needs are included in the executive summary of the document. * Prioritization mapping efforts of the Polynesia-Micronesia Hotspot (though dated), identified three priority sites for investment including: Atiu, Mangaia, and the Takitumu Conservation Area on Rarotonga. The full report is found [here](https://www.cepf.net/sites/default/files/final.polynesiamicronesia.ep_.pdf). * The full (Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme) SPREP site for the Cook Islands is [here](https://cookislands-data.sprep.org/). * Stores of irrecoverable carbon are low on the Cook Islands, though some exist in marine ecosystems. * The Cook Islands perform at the global average of ocean health, with strong performance in coastal protection, clean waters, biodiversity, and artisanal fishing opportunities. There are gaps in coastal livelihoods and economies, sustainable food provision, and carbon storage. |
| Easter Island (Chile) | * Species biodiversity is relatively high, with one-fourth of species being endemic in all of Chile. The geographic scope of species range-size rarity is continuously high throughout the Island. Easter Island has a high level of endemism and is of high biodiversity importance. * The marine environment of Easter Island is a KBA and within Chile’s PA system. * At a national level Chile has emphasized the restoration of degraded ecosystems, buffer zones, and connectivity. While several iterations of national biodiversity prioritization exist, the current database of these efforts are found [here](http://bdrnap.mma.gob.cl/buscador-rnap/#/busqueda?p=1255) (Designación on this site allows the user to identify which prioritization effort the areas were mapped under. Tensions between national priorities, the influence of Private Protected Areas (PPAs) and Indigenous Peoples Organizations have a long history in Chile. Future PPA and conservation work more broadly needs to be cognizant of how private property regimes inhibit park–people partnerships.[[5]](#footnote-4) * Stores of irrecoverable carbon low on Easter Island with the majority being grassland or volcanic. * Chile and Easter Island rank just below the global average of ocean health, performing poorly in terms of its wild caught fisheries food provision. Chile has a high number of marine species at risk, relative to the world. The Chilean marine-coastal ecosystems; however, have high productivity conditions due to coastal upwelling along most of the Chilean coast. This system was highlighted in WWF’s Global 200 prioritization effort. |
| Niue | * Niue is one island in the South Pacific, formed by the world’s largest uplifted coral atoll. The island has three ecosystems: agricultural, forest, and marine/ocean. The island’s EEZ is relatively large for its land area, at 390,000 Km2, but does not have abundant fish stock. Instead the freshwater supply from underground and rain catchments, provide necessary water access for agriculture and human consumption. * Niue has low biodiversity and endemism due to its age and isolation. More than 56 endemic plant species are threatened on the island. While Niue has low biodiversity, the geographic scope of species range-size rarity is still continuously high throughout the island. * Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) within the country are protected nearly in full, and well above the global average, 95.28 to 44 percent, respectively. One KBA outside of Protected Areas (PAs) is found on the East of the island: [Huvalu and environs](http://www.keybiodiversityareas.org/site/factsheet/27469). PA protection of KBAs was the same in 2000. * Due to its relatively low biodiversity significance, few prioritization mapping efforts exist. [This report](https://niue-data.sprep.org/system/files/Exploring%20the%20Marine%20Ecosystems%20of%20Niue%20Island%20and%20Beveridge%20Reef.%20Scientific%20report%20to%20the%20government%20of%20Niue%202016.pdf) provides extensive mapping of the current health and status of Niue’s marine ecosystems. * The full (Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme) SPREP site for Niue is [here](https://niue-data.sprep.org/). * Prioritization mapping efforts of the Polynesia-Micronesia Hotspot (though dated), did not identify any areas in Niue as priority sites for investment. The full report is found [here](https://www.cepf.net/sites/default/files/final.polynesiamicronesia.ep_.pdf), which includes additional context to Niue. * Stores of irrecoverable carbon are low on Niue. * Niue performs just below the global average of ocean health, with strong performance in coastal protection, clean waters, biodiversity, and artisanal fishing opportunities. There are gaps in coastal livelihoods and economies, sustainable food provision, and carbon storage. |
| Samoa | * Samoa is a small island group, consisting of two main islands and seven smaller islands, in the South Pacific. The island group’s topography is mainly mountainous, with external steep volcanic faces, and interior montane (or cloud) forests. While the EEZ of Samoa is the smallest of the Pacific Island Countries at 120,000 Km2, it contains among the richest fish fauna in the world.[[6]](#footnote-5) Due to the isolated nature of Samoa, there is a relatively high proportion of species that are endemic, with many tied to the large and vulnerable coastal reefs along its coastline.[[7]](#footnote-6) * Samoa, along with the Samoan archipelago has high biodiversity and endemism due to its isolation. The geographic scope of species range-size rarity is still continuously high throughout the island group. * Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) within the country are protected below the global average, 36.53 to 44 percent, respectively. Large KBAs outside of/or partially within Protected Areas (PAs) are found on both main islands; and include: [Central Savaii Rainforest](http://www.keybiodiversityareas.org/site/factsheet/27481), [Saanapu-Sataoa Mangrove Forest / Safata Marine Protected Area](http://www.keybiodiversityareas.org/site/factsheet/23808), [Aleipata Marine Protected Area](http://www.keybiodiversityareas.org/site/factsheet/23805), [Lake Lanotoo National Park](http://www.keybiodiversityareas.org/site/factsheet/23806), and [Uafato-Tiavea Forest](http://www.keybiodiversityareas.org/site/factsheet/23810). PA protection of KBAs has risen from 2000, from 16.3 percent. * District level Community Integrated Management Plans and maps are included [here](https://samoa-data.sprep.org/dataset/community-integrated-management-plans), the full (Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme) SPREP site for Samoa is [here](https://samoa-data.sprep.org/). * Prioritization mapping efforts of the Polynesia-Micronesia Hotspot (though dated), identified three priority sites for investment including: Lake Lanoto’o, O Le Pupu-Pu’e, and Savai’i Lowland and Upland Forest. The full report is found [here](https://www.cepf.net/sites/default/files/final.polynesiamicronesia.ep_.pdf). An additional more updated biodiversity assessment for Upland Savai’i is included [here](https://www.cepf.net/sites/default/files/59745_technicalreport_rap_upland_savaii.pdf). * Stores of irrecoverable carbon are moderate within the internal montane and cloud forests of the main islands. * Samoa performs just below the global average of ocean health, with strong performance in coastal protection, clean waters, carbon storage, and biodiversity. There are gaps in coastal livelihoods and economies, sustainable food provision, artisanal fishing opportunities, and carbon storage. |
| Tokelau (New Zealand) | * Tokelau is a small archipelago in the South Pacific comprising three atolls: Atafu, Nukunonu, and Fakaofo. Until a [survey](https://www.tokelau.org.nz/site/tokelau/CONSERVATION%20SURVEY%20OF%20TOKELAU.pdf) by CEFP and Conservation International in 2011, there was relatively limited documentation of species diversity. The aforementioned survey contains detailed prioritization mapping efforts conducted by CI scientists, along with additional background information on the archipelago. There is moderate to low species diversity, and the terrestrial landscapes are primarily coral sand overlying limestone (which are exposed to coastal tides)—limiting vegetation.[[8]](#footnote-7) * Tokelau has relatively low species diversity, indicated by the geographic scope of species range-size rarity which has no areas of importance throughout the archipelago. * Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) within the country are nearly completely unprotected, well below the global average, 1.95 to 44 percent, respectively. All KBAs identified are not within Protected Areas (PA). PA protection of KBAs has remained at the same level since 2000, from 1.95 percent. * The full (Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme) SPREP site for Tokelau is [here](https://tokelau-data.sprep.org/). * Prioritization mapping efforts of the Polynesia-Micronesia Hotspot (though dated), did not identify any areas in Tokelau as priority sites for investment. The full report is found [here](https://www.cepf.net/sites/default/files/final.polynesiamicronesia.ep_.pdf), which includes additional context to Tokelau. * Stores of irrecoverable carbon are low on Tokelau. * Tokelau performs just below the global average of ocean health, with strong performance in coastal protection, clean waters, and coastal livelihoods and economies. There are gaps in coastal livelihoods and economies, sustainable food provision, and carbon storage. |
| Tonga | * Tonga is a large island group in the South Pacific, comprising 171 islands and approximately 700,000 km2. The volcanic islands of Late and Tofua have relatively high remaining diversity in their native forests, primarily of birds and reptiles. There are information gaps in baseline marine biodiversity, though the population is highly dependent on fisheries for food provision and exports.[[9]](#footnote-8) * Tonga has relatively high species diversity and endemism, indicated by the geographic scope of species range-size rarity which is homogeneously high throughout the island group. * Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) within the country are nearly completely unprotected, and well below the global average, 5.92 to 44 percent, respectively. Large KBAs outside of/or partially within Protected Areas (PAs) are found throughout the island group; and include: [Fonualei Marine](http://www.keybiodiversityareas.org/site/factsheet/31014) and [Ata Island Marine](http://www.keybiodiversityareas.org/site/factsheet/31012). PA protection of KBAs has risen since 2000, from 0.45 percent. * The Marine and Coastal Biodiversity Management in Pacific Island Countries (MACBIO) has provided a spatial marine planning atlas [here](https://www.dropbox.com/s/94wy31nr9wuhrel/TongaAtlas_final.pdf?dl=0), with accompanying [webmap](http://macbio-pacific.info/Interactive-Atlas/Tonga/Tonga.html) (report is more useful). * The full (Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme) SPREP site for Tonga is [here](https://tonga-data.sprep.org/). * Prioritization mapping efforts of the Polynesia-Micronesia Hotspot (though dated), identified two priority sites for investment including: ʻEua and Niuafoʻou Lake. The full report is found [here](https://www.cepf.net/sites/default/files/final.polynesiamicronesia.ep_.pdf). * Stores of irrecoverable carbon are high on the island of ‘Eau. * Tonga performs just below the global average of ocean health, with strong performance in coastal protection, carbon storage, and coastal livelihoods and economies. There are gaps in sustainable food provision and clean waters. |
| Tuvalu | * Tuvalu comprises three reef islands and six atolls in the Central Pacific. Tuvalu’s EEZ covers approximately 900,000 km2, due to the significant geographic spread of the island group. Because the island is relatively young, there are few endemic or indigenous species, with the existing species primarily plants and sea birds. The marine environment can be separated into six major ecosystem types: oceanic, outer reef, lagoonal, back reef, lagoon floor, patch reefs, and natural channels between the ocean and lagoon.[[10]](#footnote-9) * Tuvalu has relatively low species diversity, indicated by the geographic scope of species range-size rarity which has no areas of importance throughout the island group. * Tuvalu does not have mapped KBAs or PAs within the dataset maintained by Birdlife International or NatureServe. * The full (Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme) SPREP site for Tuvalu is [here](https://tuvalu-data.sprep.org/). * Prioritization mapping efforts of the Polynesia-Micronesia Hotspot (though dated), identified no sites for investment. Tuvalu was also ineligible for investment under CEFP criteria when the document was produced. The full report is found [here](https://www.cepf.net/sites/default/files/final.polynesiamicronesia.ep_.pdf), which includes some species distribution mapping for Tuvalu. * Stores of irrecoverable carbon are low on Tuvalu. * Tuvalu performs at the global average of ocean health, with strong performance in coastal protection and coastal livelihoods and economies. There are gaps in artisanal fishing opportunities, sustainable food provision, and clean waters. |
| Wallis & Futuna (France) | * The territory of Wallis and Futuna are located in the South Pacific, and consist of several groups of islands. Wallis and Futuna have relatively low diversity and quality of flora and fauna. The island group due to its geological age and isolation also has low endemism, though there is more endemism in Futuna than in Wallis.[[11]](#footnote-10) The marine environment of the island groups includes degraded and preserved barrier and fringing reefs, lagoons, and isolated patches of mangroves and seagrass.[[12]](#footnote-11) * Wallis and Futuna have moderate to low species diversity and endemism, indicated by the geographic scope of species range-size rarity which is homogeneously distributed, but low throughout the island group. * Wallis and Futuna do not have mapped KBAs or PAs within the dataset maintained by Birdlife International or NatureServe. * This [INTEGRE Project document](https://integre.spc.int/images/pdf/INTEGRE/telechargements/Action_Plan_WallisFutuna.pdf) for Wallis-and-Futuna contains additional biodiversity and conservation governance context. * Prioritization mapping efforts of the Polynesia-Micronesia Hotspot (though dated), identified no sites for investment. The full report is found [here](https://www.cepf.net/sites/default/files/final.polynesiamicronesia.ep_.pdf), which includes some species distribution mapping for Wallis and Futuna. * Stores of irrecoverable carbon are low on Wallis and Futuna. * Wallis and Futuna perform above the global average of ocean health, with strong performance in coastal protection, clean waters, biodiversity, and coastal livelihoods and economies. There are gaps in artisanal food production. |

1. <https://www.cbd.int/countries/profile/?country=ck#status> [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. <https://www.cbd.int/doc/world/ck/ck-nr-05-en.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. Based on consistent sources which exclude this area: Key Biodiversity Areas within the country are protected at a rate well below the global average, 28.22 to 44 percent, respectively. Large KBAs outside of/or partially within Protected Areas (PAs) are found throughout the island group, with concentrations in marine areas, though nearly all islands have some gap in protected areas. PA protection of KBAs has risen from 2000, from 6.36 percent. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
4. <https://www.pacific-r2r.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/R2R%20CNA%20Report_FINAL.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
5. Christopher Serenari, M. Nils Peterson, Tim Wallace, and Paulina Stowhas "Indigenous Perspectives on Private Protected Areas in Chile," Natural Areas Journal 37(1), 98-107, (1 January 2017). https://doi.org/10.3375/043.037.0112. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
6. <https://www.cbd.int/countries/profile/?country=ws#facts> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
7. <https://www.cbd.int/doc/world/ws/ws-nbsap-v2-en.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
8. <https://www.tokelau.org.nz/site/tokelau/CONSERVATION%20SURVEY%20OF%20TOKELAU.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
9. <https://www.cbd.int/doc/world/to/to-nr-05-en.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
10. <https://www.cbd.int/countries/profile/?country=tv> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
11. <https://www.sprep.org/att/IRC/eCOPIES/Countries/Wallis_and_Futuna/2.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
12. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)