

琉球大学学術リポジトリ

南太平洋の環礁の生物多様性

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Session 3: Biodiversity in spatio-temporal scales

Status of Pacific Ocean atoll biodiversity: the “cool spots” under threat

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The paper discusses the conservation status of the biodiversity and associated traditional knowledge (ethnobiodiversity) of Pacific Ocean atolls. It is based on in-depth studies of the biodiversity and ethnobiodiversity of the atolls of Tuvalu, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands and the Tuamotu Archipelago of French Polynesia.

Although atolls and their surrounding marine ecosystems have very few, if any, endemic species and would be considered “cool spots” by mainstream conservationists and scientists, this biodiversity inheritance is among the most limited, fragile, degraded and threatened on Earth. Because of limited terrestrial resources, scarcity of fresh water, high vulnerability to natural disasters, very high population densities and very limited prospects for export-oriented development, except in the fisheries sector, this very limited, highly fragile and culturally critical biodiversity inheritance is seriously under threat, due mainly to human activities, most of which appear to be unsustainable in the long run. Special emphasis will be placed on the identification of those atoll ecosystems and species that are currently endangered, under threat or seriously overexploited, the reasons that they are under threat, and possible actions that can be taken to protect and sustainably use them. The paper will also focus on the nature and status of atoll ethnobiodiversity, with particular emphasis on the types of knowledge that atoll peoples have and use, indigenous taxonomies for biodiversity, and ways that this rapidly eroding component of biodiversity can be preserved for the benefit of future generations.

The paper argues that, if we are really concerned about biodiversity conservation and sustainable use as a basis for the cultural, economic and ecological survival of people, in this case of atoll peoples, we must see as a global priority the conservation and sustainable use of the highly threatened biodiversity of “cool spots”, atolls and small low-lying islands, that have little or no endemic species of interest to the scientific and bioprospecting communities, but upon which local communities have an almost obligate dependence for their very survival. Stress is also placed on the importance of the protection, recording and application of indigenous ethnobiodiversity, along with good modern scientific knowledge, as perhaps, the most appropriate means of designing models for the conservation, sustainable use and equitable sharing of atoll terrestrial and marine biodiversity at the community, national and international levels.