



PRESS KIT

Noumea, October 20, 2010

Summary:

Launch of www.biodiversite.nc, the biodiversity portal in New Caledonia: "A world first"

- **New Caledonia, a research laboratory for an exceptional biodiversity**
 - Terrestrial Ecosystem: An endemism to 82%
 - Marine ecosystem: World biodiversity hot spot
 - A living research laboratory for scientists and researchers
- **Biodiversity website/portal project originated by the CCE and the CCR**
 - The Consultative Committee for Research (CCR)
 - The Consultative Committee on the Environment (CCE)
- **Genesis of the www.biodiversite.nc website/portal**
 - Uniting Biodiversity actors
 - New Caledonia: Naturally exceptional!
 - Thanks to the actors/partners in Biodiversity
 - Presentation of the www.biodiversite.nc website/portal
- **Appendix: Biodiversity and institutional organization of New Caledonia**



A world first: Launch of www.biodiversite.nc The biodiversity portal in New Caledonia

This site is a first because it brings together and unites multiple initiatives in New Caledonia encouraging biodiversity, its knowledge, its preservation and its valorisation.

This site is **unique** because it was created with the collaboration of more than thirty Caledonian Biodiversity **actors**, institutions and communities, research organizations and observatories and the voluntary sector, ranging from local associations to international NGOs.

Thus all of the texts on www.biodiversite.nc have been written personally by the biodiversity actors in New Caledonia.

They therefore emphasize knowledge, experience and passion.

Each actor was also able to collaborate in the creation of the site extensions and to be inspired by the comments of the other actors involved.

This site aims to be a dynamic medium, showcasing the Caledonian ecosystems and all of those who contribute to its knowledge, its valorisation and its preservation.

In July 2008, the lagoons and reefs of New Caledonia were recognized by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee. Today and in continuity with this new responsibility towards humanity, Caledonians shine the spot light on the extraordinary richness of its marine and terrestrial ecosystems as well as the activities and the actors with www.biodiversite.nc.

New Caledonia, a research laboratory for an exceptional biodiversity.

Some 55 million years, tectonic forces raised the oceanic floor that covers Grande Terre, thus creating the Central Range which extends the entire length of the main island. Rainforest, known as sempervirent or evergreen, stretches intermittently from the south to the north along the ridge that separates two coasts, West and East, with a contrasting climate and geography.



Marine ecosystem: World biodiversity hot spot

The coral reef of New Caledonia is recognized by the international community as a "hot spot" of world biodiversity, one of the three most extensive reef systems in the world in an excellent state of preservation.

New Caledonia alone represents nearly 75% of the entire reef and lagoon surface of all of the French territories. Their inscription as a UNESCO world heritage site in 2008 is an international recognition of the richness of its lagoons.

Terrestrial Ecosystem: An endemism to 82%

The West Coast, with its vast savannah plains, is a transitional space between the dense forest and the mangroves of the shoreline. It shelters the dry forest, which occupies only 1% of its original area. The mountains of the East Coast plunge directly into the lagoon, creating lush green valleys. The vegetative formations on ultramafic rocks (peridotite and serpentine, magmatic origin), which cover nearly a third of New Caledonia, are home to an exceptionally rich biodiversity (more than 2150 native species), endemic to 82%.

A living research laboratory for scientists and researchers

Thanks to the extraordinary diversity of its fauna and terrestrial flora, its richness in numbers of species that inhabit its coral reefs, New Caledonia is now recognized as one of the world's biodiversity hotspots. This exceptional heritage imposes an important duty on it for management and preservation. Thus, numerous public bodies and other associations, with environmental mandates, contribute through their activities, to improve knowledge, public awareness and to the preservation of this natural heritage.

The CCE and CCR originated the biodiversity website/portal project.

The Consultative Committee on Research (CCR), established by Resolution No. 082 of the Congress of New Caledonia on July 25, 2000, is composed of six institutional members: The President of the Congress of New Caledonia, the Government delegate, the High Commissioner of the Republic in New Caledonia, a member of the Government of New Caledonia, one member from each of the three provincial assemblies, as well as 5 scientific members: the President of the University of New Caledonia, the representative of the Director General of the Institute for Research and Development (IRD), the representative of the Director General of the French Research Institute for Exploitation of the Sea (IFREMER), the Director of the Caledonian Institute of Agronomy (IAC), the Director of the Pasteur Institute of New Caledonia (PNC).

The board is kept up to date by academic institutions and research organizations on the orientation of their activities in New Caledonia and the status of their work. The CCR is chaired by the President of the Congress of New Caledonia, Mr. Harold Martin.



The Consultative Committee on the Environment (CCE), established by Resolution No. 155 of the Congress of New Caledonia on January 9, 2006, includes the same five institutional members as the RCC and the President of the Customary Senate, the President of the French Association of Mayors and the President of the Association of Mayors of New Caledonia, five representatives of a registered association whose stated purpose is the protection of the environment, a representative of an association for the defence or protection of consumers, the representative of the French Environment and Management Agency (ADEME).

The CCE has responsibility, on any subject or project related to the environment and sustainable development, for a general and permanent mandate to study, advise, mediate, coordinate, and to make recommendations to public authorities and to provide information to the public. It must be consulted on draft or proposed laws for the country and deliberations of the Congress of New Caledonia that could affect the environment and sustainable development in New Caledonia.

The CCE has a revolving presidency which is successively filled, for periods of one year, by the president of the government of New Caledonia or his representative, then by the presidents of each of the three provinces or their representatives.

Until the end of 2010, the CCE is chaired Mr. Nidoish NAISSELINE (second vice president of the Loyalty Islands Province)

Genesis of www.biodiversite.nc

The year 2010 was declared International Year of Biodiversity by UNESCO. As such, Ms. Chantal JOUANNO, Secretary of State for Ecology, polled the institutions of New Caledonia to gain knowledge of the activities, relative to biodiversity, planned for New Caledonia.

Under the leadership of Mr. Harold Martin, President of the Congress of New Caledonia, the members of the Consultative Committee on Research as well as those of the Consultative Committee on the Environment, both bodies of the Congress of New Caledonia, created a working group to develop a valorisation program for activities in biodiversity in New Caledonia in May 2010, and at the same time, to respond to the requests of Ms. Chantal JOUANNO.

The inscription of the lagoons and coral reefs of New Caledonia as a World Heritage site by UNESCO in July 2008 helped to enhance an aspect of its exceptional biodiversity in the eyes of the general public and internationally. The objective of the Working Group is to expand this valorisation in 2010, by extending it to all New Caledonia ecosystems, a unique heritage which represents a major richness scientifically, culturally, economically and with respect to tourism.



Uniting Biodiversity actors

The first step consisted of bringing together the actors of: institutional bodies and collectivities, observatories and research organizations, associations. They were asked to indicate the activities they were undertaking to encourage biodiversity by filling out two tables: marine ecosystems and terrestrial ecosystems, and to classify their activities according to three entries: increasing knowledge, preserving, valorising.

These tables have, for the first time, provided a clear picture of the abundance of activities being carried out across New Caledonia, and allowed bridges to be built between the many actors who are often isolated, and sometimes even in competition with one another.

These tables have emerged to become the starting point for a communications dynamic. The creation of a website appeared to all as the most appropriate media, responding to today's practices and allowing for a reaching out to an international audience. In addition, the interactivity of such a tool perfectly satisfies the need for exchanges between actors to feed the site as well as the need for the continuous updating of the data.

New Caledonia: Unique by nature !

This website thus has a mission to raise awareness of the tremendous biodiversity of New Caledonia, "**naturally exceptional**" and "**unique by nature**" as displayed on the label created for this occasion. It unites and illustrates activities, it arouses the attention of the general public, scientists and the media, it communicates on the news, making it one of the events. It is also a showcase for the actors and, as such, is positioned as a portal that refers back systematically to their sites or directly to the specific activity pages.

This website/portal was funded by the Congress of New Caledonia, the Government of New Caledonia and the Department of State for Agriculture, Forestry and the Environment (DAFE) with the participation GIE New Caledonia Tourism South Point.

For the CCR and the CCE, the interest in biodiversity will not cease in 2010. An awareness program is in the process of being developed for 2011 and beyond. The site will inform you of future initiatives.

To continue the momentum generated by the creation of this website/portal, financial resources, from all the collectivities in New Caledonia and private or institutional sponsors, will be needed.



Thanks to the actors and partners in Biodiversity

If the CCE and CCR have launched a strong dynamic that has managed to unite all of the players around a single project: valorising the biodiversity of New Caledonia, it is also these actors, institutions, research facilities, observatories and associations who, through their commitment and their activities, have enriched this portal and thus revealed to all, as much on a local, regional, national as well international level, the rich biodiversity of New Caledonia, as well as the importance of the activities undertaken to gain knowledge of it, to preserve it and to valorise it.

The presentation and the main initiatives of the different partners and actors in Biodiversity in New Caledonia are presented on the site under the heading "partners and actors".

This site is intended to be translated into English and to be a major tool as New Caledonia reaches out to the world.

Presentation of the www.biodiversite.nc website/portal

www.biodiversite.nc: is organized around three universes: "marine ecosystems" and "terrestrial ecosystems", and "Actors and Partners".

The activities of the actors and partners are taken from the tables filled out by the actors and partners themselves.

The site offers a dual reading: "discovery" and the "scientific approach"

The "discovery" approach is more intended for the general or non-scientific public; an internet user can discover the diversity and the uniqueness of Caledonian biodiversity through both the marine and the terrestrial ecosystems.

A more specialized approach is offered by the "scientific approach".

Navigation in each of the three universes is done by way of "drop-down menus".

A system of "hot" tags allows all of the items relating to a universe, an ecosystem, a genre or an actor to be viewed with a simple click.

This site, designed as a communications media, will showcase Caledonian biodiversity and inform internet users on a daily basis of the progress of activities, discoveries, and news about the actors. The site rebuilds itself day after day and is enriched by the contributions of each actor.

Design, production of website/portal

Press contact:

Antipode Productions

Frédéric Dhie and Florence Dhie-Le Guénédal

+687 798698 - email : f.dhie@biodiversite.nc - www.antipode-productions.nc

High resolution photos available on request from the following address: f.dhie@biodiversite.nc



Appendix: Biodiversity and institutional organization of New Caledonia

Addressing the unique biodiversity of New Caledonia requires presentation of the different actors in charge of managing its protection, its conservation, its valorisation as well as its knowledge. It is particularly important to present the institutional actors and their respective areas of expertise, which are organized by Organic Law. No. 99-209 of March 19, 1999 relative to New Caledonia, the legislative embodiment of the Noumea Accord.

New Caledonia itself has several institutions which are the Congress (deliberative assembly), the Government (collegial executive), the Customary Senate, the Economic and Social Council and the customary councils.

Territorial collectivities of the Republic are also in place: - 3 provinces: North, South and Loyalty Islands - 32 communes (16 in the Northern Province, 13 in the Southern Province of which Noumea is the capital, and 3 in the Province of the Loyalty Islands)

Finally, the High Commissioner of the Republic is the depository of the powers of the French Republic - the State - and represents the Government of France.

The Organic Law allocates matters between the areas of competency of these diverse institutions. It provides in particular that each province has jurisdiction in all matters that are not assigned by it to the State or to New Caledonia or, by legislation, to the communes.

With respect to biodiversity, the major institutional actors are the 3 provinces, with each being fully responsible in matters of the environment and economic development.

It is as such that the provinces have each enacted their own Provincial Code of the Environment (environmental assessment, protection of natural heritage, natural resource management, pollution prevention, hazards and nuisances,...). The provinces create protected areas, both marine and terrestrial; they develop them and manage them or assign these tasks to operators such as associations or public institutions.

Each of the provinces has a right of ownership to its public maritime domain (historical 50-pace protection zones, seashore, soil and subsoil of inland waters, soil and subsoil of territorial waters); they regulate and exercise the rights of exploration, exploitation, management and conservation of biological and nonbiological resources for their public maritime domain and the overlying waters of the territorial sea.