

FACT SHEET:

Trees of Babeldaob Island

BABELDAOB'S NATURAL TREASURES

THE DENSE FOREST OF PALAU'S LARGEST AND MICRONESIA'S SECOND LARGEST ISLAND CONTAINS APPROXIMATELY 186 SPECIES OF TREES FROM MORE THAN 50 DIFFERENT FAMILIES. ECOLOGISTS ESTIMATE THAT 70% OR 131 OF THE 186 SPECIES IDENTIFIED ARE NATIVE, MEANING THEY ARRIVED HERE ON THEIR OWN BY FLOATING ON THE SEA OR WERE BROUGHT BY BIRDS. MANY OF THEM CAME FROM THE NEIGHBORING ISLANDS OF SOUTHEAST ASIA.

INCIDENTALLY, 44% OR 57 SPECIES OF THE NATIVE TREES ARE BELIEVED TO BE ENDEMIC, WHICH MEANS THEY ONLY OCCUR IN PALAU AND NO WHERE ELSE IN THE WORLD. THESE ENDEMIC TREE SPECIES HAVE BEEN ISOLATED FOR SO LONG, THAT THEY HAVE EVOLVED SEPARATELY IN THEIR NEW ENVIRONMENT, APART FROM THEIR DISTANT RELATIVES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA AND BECAUSE THEY ARE NOW SO DIFFERENT FROM THEIR DISTANT RELATIVES, SCIENTISTS HAVE CATEGORIZED THEM AS 'NEW' SPECIES.

THE REMAINING 30% OR 55 SPECIES OF THE 186 TREES IDENTIFIED BY PLANT ECOLOGISTS ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN INTRODUCED. THESE ARE TREE SPECIES BROUGHT IN, ACCIDENTALLY OR DELIBERATELY BY MAN OR HIS AGENTS (CANOES, PLANES, DOMESTICATED ANIMALS, ETC.). FURTHERMORE, TREE SPECIES OF BABELDAOB CAN BE FOUND IN FIVE MAIN VEGETATION COMMUNITIES: (1) MANGROVE AND FRESHWATER SWAMP FORESTS; (2) STRAND AND LOWLAND VEGETATION; (3) INTERIOR UPLAND FOREST; (4) RAVINE AND RIPARIAN FOREST; AND (5) SAVANNA.

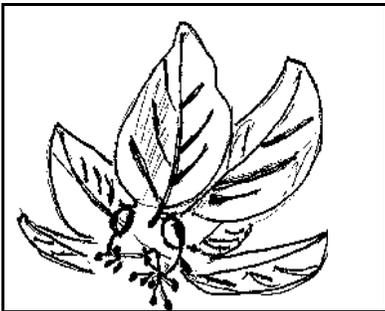
WHY PROTECT THE TREES?

TREES HAVE BEEN AN ESSENTIAL RESOURCE FOR PEOPLE EVER SINCE HUMANS FIRST ARRIVED IN THE ISLANDS OF PALAU. SEVERAL TREE SPECIES WERE CARRIED ON THE LONG VOYAGING CANOES THAT BROUGHT THE EARLY IMMIGRANTS TO THE ISLANDS MANY CENTURIES AGO. THE USEFUL INTRODUCED TREES HAVE LONG PROVIDED FOOD, FIBER, MEDICINES, AND OTHER NATURAL PRODUCTS. THE EARLY HUMAN COLONIZERS ALSO LEARNED HOW TO UTILIZE THE NATIVE WILD GROWING SPECIES THAT THEY FOUND IN THE VARIOUS ENVIRONMENTS OF THESE ISLANDS. OVER MANY CENTURIES OF EXPERIENCE, A LARGE BODY OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THESE TREES HAS BEEN GATHERED AND PASSED ON FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION. THIS TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE TREES INCLUDES THEIR RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE, CULTURAL HISTORY, ECONOMIC VALUE, MEDICINAL USE, AND OTHER RESOURCE APPLICATION. PRESENTED ARE JUST FEW OF THE ECOLOGICALLY, CULTURALLY AND ECONOMICALLY IMPORTANT TREES THAT COULD BE FOUND ON THE ISLAND OF BABELDAOB.



CALOPHYLLUM INOPHYLLUM (BTACHES)

FOUND ON COASTAL PLAINS OF BABELDAOB, THIS MEDIUM SIZED TO LARGE, SLOWLY GROWING NATIVE TREE CAN REACH HEIGHTS OF 20 M (65 FT). IT TYPICALLY HAS A BROAD, LOW BRANCHING, SPREADING CROWN. THE WOOD OF CALOPHYLLUM IS USED FOR CANOES, HOUSES, AND CARVED OBJECTS. IN OTHER PARTS OF PACIFIC, THE OIL FROM THE SEED IS USED IN TRADITIONAL MEDICINES.



GMELINA PALAWENSIS (BLACHEOS)

FOUND IN THE INTERIOR UPLAND FOREST OF BABELDAOB, THIS LARGE ENDEMIC TREE IS KNOWN TO BE GOOD FOR LUMBER. IT IS SAID IN PALAUAN LEGEND THAT THE SUN AND THE MOON.

MANILKARA UDOIDO (UDEUID)

FOUND IN THE INTERIOR UPLAND FOREST OF BABELDAOB, THIS LARGE ENDEMIC TREE IS USED IN SOME PLACES IN PALAU FOR TOOL HANDLES AND CONSTRUCTION POSTS. IT IS SAID THAT THE SPANISH USED THIS TREE TO MAKE BEAMS FOR FORTS THAT HAVE LASTED FOR 500 YEARS.



PARINARIUM LAURINA (ERITEM)

THIS MEDIUM SIZED TO LARGE NATIVE TREE WHICH CAN REACH THE HEIGHTS OF 9-30 M (25-100 FT) IS FOUND IN THE INTERIOR UPLAND FOREST OF BABELDAOB. THE FRUIT OF THE PARINARIUM PRODUCES OIL USED FOR PAINTING. IN OTHER PARTS OF PACIFIC, THE OIL FROM THE FRUIT IS USED IN TRADITIONAL MEDICINES.

SERIANTHES KANEHIRAE (UKALL)

COMMONLY FOUND IN THE UPLAND FOREST OF BABELDAOB, THIS ENDEMIC TREE CAN GROW VERY LARGE. SERIANTHES PRODUCES A VERY STRONG WOOD USED FOR LUMBER AND WAS TRADITIONALLY USED TO MAKE CANOES AND PADDLES.

