

From South Pacific/ Niue

A complete documentation

Fieldwork in the small island of Niue aims to identify and document the important marine species collected by women

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In November 2000 the Community Fisheries Section of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) completed fieldwork in Niue, a small Polynesian island located in the centre of a triangle made up of Tonga, Samoa and the Cook Islands. The work was requested by the Niue government as part of ongoing SPC assistance to Niue in the area of sustainable development and management of its marine resources. The aim of the fieldwork was to identify and document the important marine invertebrate species collected by women in Niue, to look at potential management measures for those species, and to ensure that species collected by women are included in an inshore fisheries management plan being developed by Niue Fisheries and SPC.

Although Niue has only a small fisheries section, they recently created a new position—Women's Fisheries Development Officer—and they remain committed to seeing that the entire community is consulted and included in their work.

Niue, with a total land area of only 258 sq km and a circumference of 65 km, is reputedly the largest upraised coral atoll in the world. The population is less than 2,000, with nearly 10 times that number of Niueans now residing in New Zealand. Niue has no lagoon and only a narrow fringing reef surrounds most of the island. The former reef and lagoon is raised to about 60 m above sea level, descending to depths of over 1000 m within 5 km of the shore.

Although a number of studies have been done on the marine resources of Niue, none have resulted in a clear idea of exactly what, or how many species of invertebrates are utilized in Niue. At first glance the rugged coastline and small reef flat area, accessible only in calm weather and at low tide, would appear to have few species that could be utilized. However the

women gather a surprisingly large number of invertebrates for food and shellcraft.

By the end of the two-week fieldwork 92 Niuean invertebrate names had been recorded. 55 of those were actually observed on reef trips, 29 of them are used for food, and around 10 species or groups of species are used for shellcraft. Over 70 species have been definitely or tentatively identified. The list is by no means exhaustive but will be a useful guide to the most commonly utilized species. Once the work has been completed a report will be submitted to Niue with recommendations for management of the most important species.

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