

Graduate Research Assistant interviews villagers about their medicinal uses for local Fijian botanicals

Research conducted: Five undergraduates and one graduate research assistant conducted participant observations, ethnographic research, and spot checks about local Fijians to learn about their uses of the coral reef system and other marine resources available to them in Natewa Bay. Additional side research conducted by graduate research assistant, Kendra Hein, was to learn how some of the villagers use their local botanicals for medicinal uses.



Figure 1 - Para grass

Impacts/Benefits: Acquiring knowledge on what species are being used can impact the world as a whole, being that if some species are overused it could in turn affect an entire ecosystem. For example, if the coral reef system is affected in Nasinu village, it can have a large effect on other areas within the bay, thus leading to possible spreading to areas outside the borders of Fiji. Learning what marine species locals over fish for can also provide data on why a specific species may be threatened to extinction or why another species thrives.

Learning how local botanicals are used for medicinal purposes can prove to be beneficial both if spending extensive periods of time in Fiji and developing one's own ailment, as well as, trying to decide how this information is passed on from generation to generation. Have any of the botanicals changed over time with some species being introduced, some becoming extinct or hard to find, or some just not growing on every part of every island of Fiji.



Figure 2 - Giant clam

Background/explanation: After several years of NSF funded archaeological excavations (performed by students at University of Alabama Birmingham and Northern Kentucky University), the final year for funding on this project was used to conduct ethnographic interviews about the uses of marine resources in Natewa Bay, Fiji. Once data was analyzed from preceding excavation years, the information gathered was used to create ethnographic research questions to ask villagers about how they use their marine resources; what species are the most abundantly searched for, had any shown a decline or abundance, and who did the fishing in the villages and where.



Figure 3 - Guava leaves