



Ngchesar State Protected Areas | PAN Site Mesekelat and Ngelukes Conservation Area

January 2016 | Fact Sheet

Ngchesar State

Ngchesar, also known as "Oldiais" is one of the sixteen states of Palau. It is the sixth largest state in terms of land, with an area of roughly 40 square kilometers, and is located on the eastern side of Babeldaob Island. It is also northwest of Airai State, and southeast of Melekeok State, where the Palau Government Capitol is situated. The sacred totem of Ngchesar is the Stingray. Ngchesar is famous for its war canoe *kabekel* named "bisebush" which means "lightning".

Vision

"We, the people of Ngchesar desire to protect and conserve Mesekelat, Ngelukes and Ngchesar in its entirety to ensure that these natural assets are sustained for the benefits of the people of Ngchesar today and into the future."

The Ngchesar State Protected Area System was created with the support from the Ngchesar State Conservation Management Action Plan Team who identified a system of state protected areas in and around Ngchesar and with full endorsement by the community and the leadership of the State. In 2002, Ngchesar State Public Law NSPL No. 146 established Ngchesar State Protected Area System consisting of the following two conservation areas:

Ngelukes Conservation Area

Ngelukes Conservation Area is a 1km patch reef in front of Ngersuul village. Ngelukes's substrate is mostly sand and rubble. Its interior is characterized by sea grass beds. Most of the corals in this patch reef are found along its outer edges along with macroalgae covered rubble. It is a shallow reef, however at its edge there are depths that reach 20 feet at maximum high tide. Numerous fish species can be found in Ngelukes, as it is known locally as a site for aggregations of rabbit fish, *meas* (*Siganus argenteus*) and lined rabbit fish *kelsebuul* (*Siganus lineatus*). Invertebrates such as *ngimes* (*Stichopus hermanni*), *cheremrum* (*Actinopyga miliaris*) and *ibuchel* (*Tripneustes gratilla*) are plentiful in this reef. Ngelukes is also a well known habitat for two species of endangered turtles, the green turtle, *melob* (*Chelonia mydas*) and the hawksbill turtle, *ngasech* (*Eretmochelys imbricata*). Additionally, *Acropora pichoni*, a rare coral species has been found in Ngelukes and nowhere else in Palau.

Management and Rules

Ngelukes Conservation Area is designated as a "no entry- no take" area. This designation is intended to remove fishing pressure on the patch reef so that it can maintain and increase its historical fisheries productivity. It is envisioned that increased productivity will result in a spillover effect to nearby reefs. This will benefit the communities who rely on nearby fishing grounds for their livelihood. Ngelukes Conservation Area falls under **IUCN Category IV Habitat/Species Management Area**; *Protected Area managed mainly for conservation through management intervention. Area of land and/or sea subject to active intervention for management purposes so as to ensure the maintenance of habitats/or to meet the requirements of specific species.*

Mesekelat Conservation Area

Mesekelat Conservation Area is home to a variety of endemic and native trees such as *chersachel* (*Horsfeldia palauensis*), *blacheos* (*Gmelina palauensis*), *btaches* (*Calophyllum inophyllum*), *udeuid* (*Manikara udoido*), and *chelsau* (*Trichosperma ledermanii*). Bird species found within the conservation area include the famous Palau fruit-dove, *biib* (*Ptilinopus pelewensis*), Palau bush-warbler, *wuul* (*Cettia annae*), Palau flycatcher, *chermelachull* (*Myiagra erythrops*) and the nearly threatened Micronesian imperial pigeon, *chieb* or *belochel* (*Ducula oceanica*). Like the endemic fruit-dove, the Palau fruit-bat, *Olik* (*Pteropus pelewensis*) is regularly hunted for subsistence as well as for commercial purposes.

Management and Rules

The Mesekelat Conservation Area is designated as a "no entry- no take" area. This designation aims to protect Ngchesar State's water source as well as to conserve the rich biodiversity found in the upland and riparian forests that comprise the conservation area. The Mesekelat Conservation Area falls under **IUCN Category 1b Wilderness Area**; *protected area is managed mainly for wilderness protection. Large area of unmodified or slightly modified land, and/or sea retaining its natural character and influence, without permanent or significant habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural condition.*

Source: 2011-15 NSPAS Management Plan



For permit and tour information contact Ngchesar State Governor's Office at tel. (680) 622-2967.
For more information, email Palau Protected Areas Network Fund at info@palaupanfund.org or visit www.palaupanfund.org.

Other information can be obtained from the following partner agencies:
Palau International Coral Reef Center at tel. (680) 488-6950
Palau Conservation Society at tel. (680) 488-3991

