

PACIFIC CURRENTS

WWF South Pacific Programme Office - Bi-monthly newsletter

POACHING NUMBERS HIGH



Recent research on poaching undertaken by WWF-SPPO in Macuata's combined fishing area, the Qoliqoli Cokovata, indicates an increase in the numbers of illegal fishing. The research which collated articles from local printed media reports on poaching, other media reports and where applicable the Fish Wardens reports of illegal fishing for assessment states the highest number of cases of illegal fishing were recorded in 2008 and 2010.

Several other issues highlighted by the research include the violence and threats that fish wardens face while attending to their duties and the vast difference between the number of people witnessed to be illegally fishing versus

those that are actually apprehended and charged. The research also found that the current fines and penalties that are imposed on illegal fishers are not enough to deter them from reoffending.

However due to improved cooperation with the Department of Fisheries and the Fiji Police Departments there is hope that illegal fishing will decrease. This may also happen due to the increased awareness and participation by communities in managing their traditional fishing areas. The Fisheries Decree which is currently being reviewed promises of harsher penalties or spot fines for illegal fishing which will also deter poaching.



REACHING THE GRASSROOTS

My experiences with communities in Macuata and Sawaieke in Gau during programme field visits has shown a need for more awareness at community level on national policies regarding sustainable natural resource use and management.

As the Policy Officer for the Coastal Management and Inshore Fisheries Programme (CMIFP), it is my responsibility to undertake policy advocacy at national and regional levels based on WWF South Pacific and WWF network positions. My responsibilities also include using lessons and outcomes from the field work conducted by our hard working field staff to influence national and regional policy outcomes.

WWF SPPO was part of the review for Fiji's Inshore Fisheries Decree and Aquaculture Decree on the 16th and 17th of November, 2010. This review has seen relevant Government departments, institutions and NGO's working closely with local communities in Fiji on issues of sustainability and natural resource management and develop and lobby for change in certain parts of the decree.

An information gap exists where landowners don't understand their rights, responsibilities and limitations which affect their resource use. All sorts of issues have arisen out of this; the illegal sale of fish, poaching in Marine Protected Areas, sale of restricted fish species and the use of illegal fishing methods. There were even reported cases of fish wardens taking the law into their own hands.

WWF South Pacific has been heavily involved in awareness workshops for the Qoliqoli Cokovata Management Committees (Marine Protected Area Committees), but there currently is a lack of communication filtering down to the common villagers. Targeting the common people in a more direct way by holding workshops at the respective community level could be a solution to this issue and WWF South Pacific is building the capacity of committee members and community reps on how to effectively communicate lessons learnt from workshops to the common villagers.



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WORKING IN THE FIELD: GAU, SAWAIEKE

The island of Gau, which the indigenous Fijian Petrel and famous rugby sevens wizard, Waisale Serevi call home, is the latest project site to a WWF Austria funded project in Fiji.

Getting to Gau from Viti Levu usually requires a two hour fibreglass boat ride. The WWF South Pacific team that undertook this trip found themselves enduring a stormy trip lasting well over three hours with strong winds of up to 25 knots.

Despite the rough travels the initial visit to the Sawaieke District in Gau was deemed successful by the WWF SPPO team. Community representatives from the eight villages within the district who are members of the Fish Warden, Land Care and Fundraising Committees drafted a Memorandum of Understanding, and their committee terms of reference. The Land Care and Qoliqoli committees also revised their respective terrestrial and marine action plans, accounting for emerging threats, concerns, issues and opportunities.

They also identified management actions for species culturally important to them such as the *dawadawa* (*Sapindaceae* family) and the *kacau ni Gau* (Fiji Petrel) along with expressing interest to include marine turtle conservation into their *Qoliqoli* action plans.

THINKING GLOBALLY ACTING LOCALLY

‘Lady Daunivonu’ is the latest Loggerhead turtle to be satellite tagged in Fiji, bringing the total number of Loggerhead species tagged in the country to four.

Community based turtle monitors, locally known as the “Dau ni Vonu”, officially took the lead and applied their globally significant satellite tagging training to tag Lady Daunivonu.

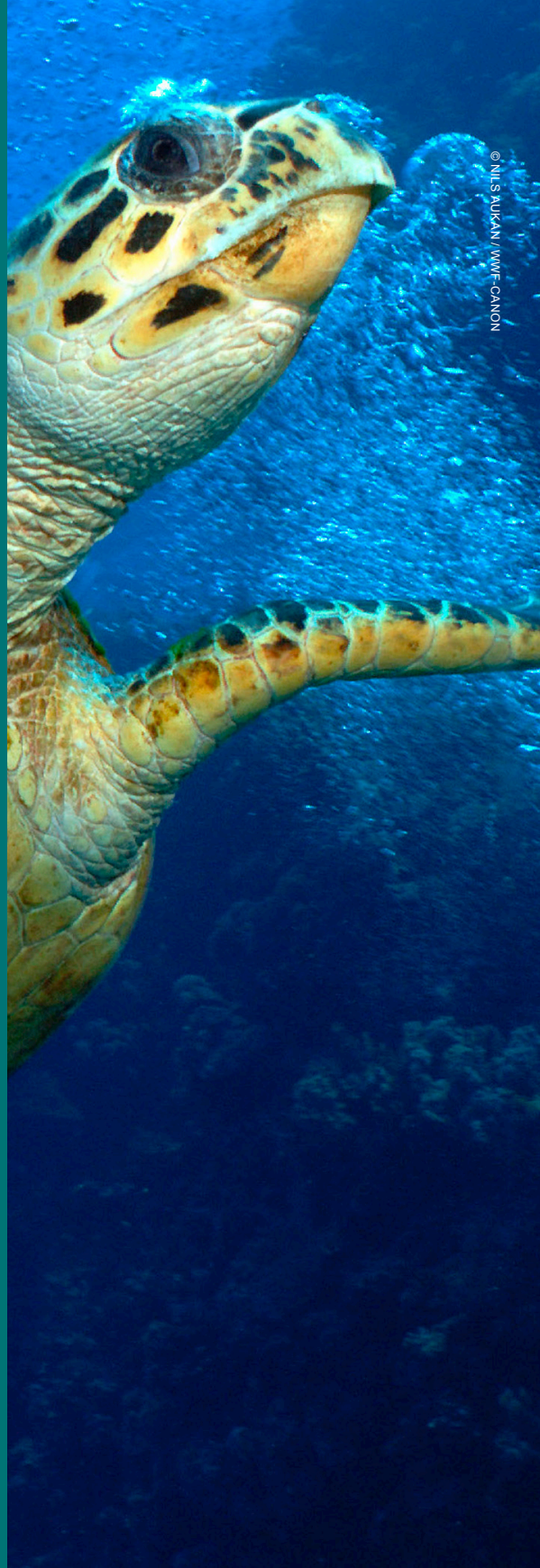
The turtle monitor from Yadua Island, Pita Qarau said he was grateful that the villagers were able to do the tagging themselves so they could take ownership of the tagging activities.

Qarau further added that members of the community present during the process of tagging felt a deeper appreciation for turtle conservation in the country after releasing Lady Daunivonu.

WWF South Pacific’s Marine Species officer, Merewalesi Laveti emphasises that community ownership encourages everyone to participate in the protection of sea turtles and is the responsibility of every person, regardless of age or rank.

All signals from the satellite antenna attached to the turtles back is picked up by the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) based in Hawaii and the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) in Samoa.

The feed received is then plotted on a map to maintain the information on the movement and migration pattern of Lady Daunivonu.



HATCHLING FRENZY SURPRISES DAU NI VONUS

It was a pleasant surprise for a team of community based turtle monitors and WWF South Pacific's Marine Species Officer, Merewalesi Laveti when they witnessed baby turtles scrambling out of their nests, while the team were conducting a nesting beach survey on Yadua Taba Island.

The team counted a total of 136 hawksbill hatchlings which is the first reported incident for this nesting season.

"I had been expecting the hatchlings around December, 2010 but it took longer than I expected," said Yadua Taba's turtle monitor, Pita Qarau.

Fiji had been experiencing a relatively cooler nesting season – due to predominantly overcast weather and a hovering depression. This weather is typically associated with Fiji's cyclonic season (November – April) and is thought to have contributed to the delayed hatching of the eggs.

In unearthing the hatched shells, 16 eggs had yet to hatch while two were unsuccessful. Just a few meters from the first nest, the team encountered a second nest containing 81 empty egg shells which indicated a successful hatchling.

In total four nests were encountered and marked along two of Yadua and Yadua Taba's 18 recorded nesting sites.

NEW PLAN FOR DATA COLLECTION

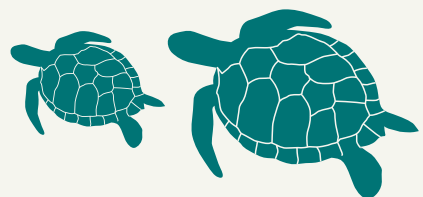
A monitoring plan for the community based turtle monitors in the Bua and Macuata Province has been developed so as to streamline the data the monitors will be collecting throughout the year.

The main purpose of the monitoring plan is to establish a database that will allow for the storage of all information collected from monitoring and tagging sea turtles. This includes information on the number of nests, the number of eggs per nest, the number of surviving hatchlings, the species nesting in the area, the main nesting areas and the identified threats to the nests.

To familiarise the monitors with using the plan, Yadua Taba Island's nesting sites were used as the practical part of this exercise. During this session, they were able to witness the hatchling frenzy of 180 baby turtles and managed to flipper tag and release two sub adult hawksbill turtles.

With the establishment of the monitoring plan, WWF South Pacific's marine species programme hopes to improve the sea turtle monitoring system in the project area. This means an improvement in the knowledge on the population and species of turtle nesting in the different areas and reducing the number of illegal activities within the nesting sites.

Most illegal activities are associated with the destruction of nests, theft and killing of nesting females. The monitoring plan will also provide findings for a publication that is to be produced.



FISHBASKET LESSONS

Interpreting fish catch per unit effort for Qoliqoli Cokovata, Great Sea Reef communities

The attention of traditional leaders of Macuata were captured when traditional fishing grounds part of the *Cakau Levu* were highlighted to be the longest, most complex Fiji reef system and ranked third longest barrier reef system in the world. This effected the set up of network of protected areas in these shared fishing grounds for districts of Macuata, Dreketi, Mali and Sasa. There are at least 890 households with over 5,000 lives that continue to depend heavily on the *Cakau Levu* to fish for food and income. The way of life, traditional beliefs and customary practices is evidently linked to the unique mangrove islands and the expanse of patch reefs-shores and seagrass meadows. Based on a 2006 socio-economic survey the average income recorded per household interviewed ranged from \$592 per month mainly sourced from farming (35%) and fishing (33%) with an average 7.7 hours of fishing daily.

WWF in collaboration with FLMMA initiated a pilot exercise in 2008 at 4 of the 37 villages within the shared fishing grounds to monitor patterns of fishing and marine resource use. Given the complexity of such resource management, interpretation of catch per unit fishing effort data to assess the status of resource is a critical component of managing elements that influence MPA management in the locality. The Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE) data recorded from fishing by households, were interpreted

with caution due to the accuracy and limited participation of households to be representative of local fishing effort with the assumption that CPUE is proportionate to abundance of fish resource. Preliminary results suggests that the fish resource must be 'abundant enough' for fish biomass recorded to be relatively high. Two of the monitored villages Nakalou and Naduri (adjacent to the mangrove islands) recorded an average fish landing weight of 9,087kg and 6,223.72kg respectively, for 10 fishing trips logged.



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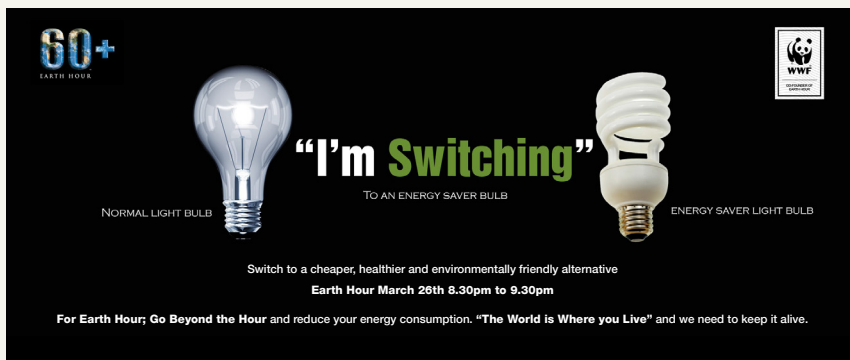
MAKE THE SWITCH!

This year, the world will celebrate Earth Hour on March 26th from 8.30pm-9.30pm but in Fiji we want people to go beyond the hour for Earth Hour and **Switch** practices in their daily lives that will benefit the planet. To encourage people to do this WWF South Pacific has launched its '**I'm Switching**' campaign. The campaign is encouraging all Fiji Islanders to **Switch** to a cheaper, healthier and environmentally friendly alternative to reduce energy consumption and do what is better for the environment.

For example WWF SPPO is encouraging people to switch off their air conditioning units and open the windows, or take a bicycle instead of driving a car, or to switch normal light bulbs that use a lot of electricity to energy saver light bulbs. This will not only save them money on their electricity bill but is better for the environment. WWF SPPO is also encouraging people to change other common practices like using environmentally friendly cloth bags instead of plastic bags or buying and growing locally produced food instead of

imported foods. Fresh bele on the plate is not only healthy but cheaper too and you can grow it in your own backyard.

The I'm Switching campaign is about changing practices and mindsets so our future generations have a home. It's about making a change. WWF SPPO is demonstrating that personal commitments to changing lifestyle to reduce personal impact on the planet is easy to do, through staff making changes to their homes and the way they live. WWF SPPO is changing the way it operates, by changing fittings to the building, instituting best practice to reduce environmental damage. It is also using the media as a tool to send out these messages and in doing so is profiling individuals and organisations who are successfully making the Switch. WWF SPPO believes that in showing that it works and how it does it, it can influence other organizations and their staff to follow suit. It is through the collective action of individuals and organisations that we will be able to truly make a difference, which is why we are urging people across the country to switch their practices.



GROWING THE PANDA FAMILY



Fisheries Advocacy Officer
Josua Turaganivalu

Josua Turaganivalu, commonly known as Josh is the new inclusion to the WWF South Pacific's Offshore Fisheries Programme as the Fisheries Advocacy Officer. Josh is no stranger to the Tuna issue in the region as he held the Oceans Campaigner position in GREENPEACE for more than four to five years.

Here, Josh opens up on his new endeavour with WWF.

Why did you decide to join WWF?

I believe that there are still areas in our national and regional fisheries policy, legislation that needs our support not only from regional organisations but from NGO's and CSOs that can provide technical and scientific assistance to fisheries. WWF is one such an

organisation that supports national programmes and also on a regional front works very closely with a diverse number of stakeholders in bringing about innovative solutions that will help assist in the preservation and conservation of our natural resources in a sustainable way.

What are you looking forward to in terms of conservation goals with your new position?

I am looking forward to provide assistance to all stakeholders for the better protection and management of our fisheries resources. For instance, better tuna management plans that address gaps in fisheries issues implemented by national and regional Pacific Island governments.

I envisioning a holistic approach to the fisheries issues and effective solution being implemented with all stakeholders support and one whereby fisheries awareness understanding is not only limited to Pacific Islands Fisheries, CSOs, fishing industry but to the ordinary Pacific Islanders first.

What motivating factors give you the drive to continue with this work?

The realisation that my contribution will help make a difference through the protection and conservation of our natural resources for our children and their future, not a month from now but in years to come.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS



Vulnerability Assessment of Coastal Mangroves to Impacts of Climate Change
Fiji Case Studies September 2010



**The Ono-I-Lau Cluster Of Islands:
Marine Biological Survey 2008
Report**

This report is a summary of findings for marine biological surveys led by WWF South Pacific Programme and trained community PADI Open Water Divers of Ono-i-Lau.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Earth Hour

Saturday March 26th
8.30pm-9.30pm

Turtle Ball

Friday 3rd June, 2011

Great Sea Reef Sevens Tournament

Friday November 11th and
Saturday November 12th, 2011



Why we are here

To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

www.wwfpacific.org.fj