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# Niugini Toksave

The Conservation Newsletter of WWF Papua New Guinea

## HISTORIC AGREEMENT to protect the endangered leatherback turtle

An official agreement, signed by each of the three governments on 29 August, is a great stride forward in the protection of the endangered leatherback turtle in the Pacific.

The partnership, supported by WWF, will allow the three countries to take joint steps towards the conservation of the endangered turtles. Plans to establish a breakthrough network of marine protected areas covering critical leatherback habitats will span significant parts of the western Pacific Ocean.

*“We strongly support the partnership for its shared responsibility to protect this migratory species.”*

- Mubariq Ahmad, WWF-Indonesia's Executive Director.

Already protected under a number of national laws and international treaties, population trends of leatherback turtles have shown alarming rates of decline in recent years. This is due to a number of factors including domestic

and commercial exploitation of eggs, development and destruction of nesting beaches, accidental capture and drowning in fisheries using long line and purse seining methods, ocean pollution and ingestion of plastic and other pollutants.

*“Sharing responsibility regionally and internationally will safeguard critical feeding areas, reproduction and nesting habitats. We hope it will also lead to improved fisheries management to reduce by-catch of these magnificent animals”,*

commented Miriam Philip, WWF-PNG's Marine Programme Manager.

Contact: [Miriam Philip](#), Marine Programme Manager



The countries of Papua New Guinea, Indonesia and the Solomon Islands have joined together in an historic conservation pledge.



IMAGE: © WWF Indonesia

WWF has been working in PNG since 1995. Our work focuses on linking community action, science and effective policy to ensure the protection and sustainable use of forests, freshwater and marine resources across the island of New Guinea.



**NEW SPECIES**  
of orchid discovered  
by WWF scientists

**A series of expeditions by WWF scientists into previously unexplored areas of tropical rainforest** has revealed up to twenty-eight new species of orchid. Eight of these are already confirmed as completely new plants and another twenty are currently being verified.

The exciting new discoveries were found in the Kikori region surrounding Lake Kutubu, internationally recognised for its biological importance.

*“It was recently predicted that some 70 species of orchid that used to exist in the forests of neighbouring Indonesia have become extinct because of illegal logging – so these recent discoveries are especially good news.”*

- Olo Gebia, WWF-PNG’s Forest Ecologist.

The findings mark the culmination of a long-term WWF study of the species within the

Kikori region. The expeditions, which took place between 1998 and 2006, have added significantly to the known floral diversity found on the island of New Guinea.

*“The sad reality is that many plants, including those which may contain cures to some of the world’s most deadliest diseases, may become extinct before they have even been discovered”,* said Mr Gebia. *“This gives even greater urgency to ensuring the long-term conservation of the remarkable Kikori region”,* he added.

Contact: [Olo Gebia](#), Forest Ecologist

## The panda bites back at logging giant and its spin-doctors

WWF has publicly hit back at PNG’s largest logging company Rimbunan Hijau and its spin-doctors in response to a report falsely alleging that WWF is obstructing PNG’s development.



Villages using timber are being encouraged to leave trees to grow to maturity, and to look further afield to select suitable timber for houses and canoes, rather than clearing younger, but more accessible forest.

*“Rather than providing constructive comments on the potential for indigenous communities in PNG to actively participate in supplying sustainable timber products to the international market, the report instead chooses to undermine WWF’s efforts to develop the capacity of local people to play on a level playing field.”*

- Michael Avosa, WWF-PNG’s Country Programme Manager.

Just one of a catalogue of errors in the report, funded by the Malaysian logging company, was the accusation that WWF was engaged in a global campaign to replace commercial forestry with eco-forestry. *“WWF successfully works with more than 300 major logging and timber consuming companies worldwide. The notion that we are somehow anti-commercial forestry is simply untrue. The facts speak for themselves”,* said Mr Avosa.

A recent World Bank report estimates that 70 per cent of PNG’s log exports come from illegal sources.

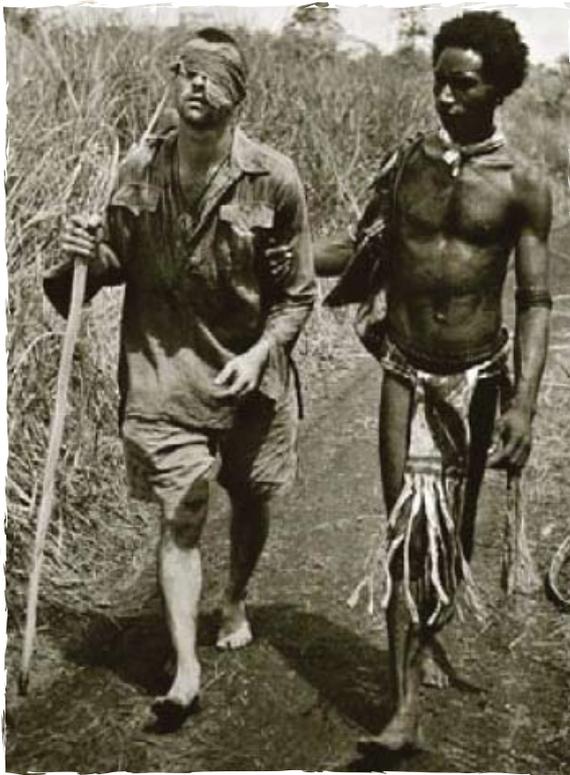
*“If PNG is going to make money from its forest resources, it absolutely must be in a position to supply certified timber to the world market. The sooner the PNG logging industry, or anyone else in denial realises this, the quicker both industry and communities in PNG will benefit economically”,* Mr Avosa added.

Contact: [Ted Mamu](#), Sustainable Forestry Officer

# The Kokoda Track

## WWF calls on governments to get behind development strategy

IMAGE: © Kokoda Track Foundation



**Political tensions have arisen this month** between the governments of Australia and Papua New Guinea over the proposed mining of part of the Kokoda Track. The Track, located in the Owen Stanley Ranges, is an important cultural treasure to Australians because of its

symbolic role in World War II.

*“A plan already exists to safeguard the Kokoda Track and WWF calls on both governments to drop their differences and get behind it”*,

- Michael Avosa, Country Programme Manager for WWF PNG.

The plan, Eco-Trekking Kokoda Strategy, launched on Anzac Day (25th April), aims both to develop a World Heritage listed sustainable eco-trekking destination across the Kokoda Track and to also support community management in reducing the possible future impact of mining and logging. The strategy was prepared by WWF, the Kokoda Track Foundation, the Kokoda Track Authority, and the University

of Technology in Sydney, following consultations with over 500 landowners, trekking operators, government and community groups.

Iconic in the history of Australia, the Kokoda track was the site of a major battle during WWII and is synonymous for its role in turning the tide of war in the Pacific. As well as its historical significance, the Track passes through some of the richest rainforests in Asia Pacific containing almost two thirds of all New Guinea bird species and with more plant species on the single mountain range than in the entire wet tropic rainforests of North Queensland.

Contact: [Michael Avosa](#), Country Programme Manager

## PNG has highest number of freshwater turtle species in Australasia

**A field study has shed new light** on the diversity, distribution, habitat and reproductive biology of freshwater turtles in the Southern region of PNG. A new species of freshwater turtle has also been discovered during the survey, which concluded that the region has the highest number of freshwater turtles in Australasia.

The area has ten turtle species, seven of these were identified as being endemic to the region, and possibly an eighth species also, the New Guinea Giant Softshell (*Pelochelys bibroni*). Although lacking red patches, the new species closely resembles the New Guinea painted turtle (*Emydura subglobosa*).

The survey was conducted in September last year in the Fly River and Bensbach River by the WWF TransFly project in collaboration with the University of Canberra

Applied Ecology and Research Group. Until then, the turtle species of the region had been poorly studied in terms of their physiology, zoogeography and ecology.

Contact: [Biatius Bito](#), Deputy Project Manager - TransFly



IMAGE: © WWF PNG

# Newsire

## **70 per cent of PNG exports of timber illegal says World Bank**

A new World Bank report estimates that 70 per cent of total logging production in PNG is illegal, a proportion exceeded by only four other nations including Indonesia, where between 70 and 80 per cent of logging is illegal. The findings contradict a report funded by Malaysian forestry giant Rimbunan Hijau, which claims that any "irregularities" in the industry had been corrected. (Source: The Australian, 27 September 2006)

## **'Mind-blowing' underwater wonderland discovered off coast of Papua**

Scientists from Conservation International (CI) have discovered 50 new species of fish and coral in the Indonesian Archipelago. The Bird's Head region off Papua's northwest coast may be the most biologically diverse in all the oceans, say the researchers, with more species of coral than the Great Barrier Reef in one-tenth of the area. Bottom-dwelling "walking" sharks and "flasher" wrasse, which feature colourful male courting displays, were among the new astonishing discoveries. (Source: BBC, 18 September 2006)

## **Loggers push Papuan butterflies to brink of extinction**

Butterfly populations in Karora forest, Papua, are being destroyed by loggers operating in the area, says the



deputy head of Kaimana District, Matias Mairuma. "A number of previously abundant species of butterflies in the forest are now rarely seen due to the

impacts of the logging activities by PT. Irma Sulindo and its subsidiary PT. Marindo", Mairuma said. (Source: Antara News, 31 August 2006)

## **Endangered turtles to be returned back to Papua**

On 28 August, some 2,930 endangered freshwater pig-nosed turtles, confiscated from smugglers and rehabilitated at the Indonesian Wildlife Rescue Centre, were returned to their original habitat in Papua's Lorentz National Park. It is believed that these rare turtles had been destined for consumption in Hong

Kong restaurants. (Source: Suara Pembaruan, 28 August 2006)

## **Community groups lodge formal complaint against ANZ Bank for illegal logging ties in PNG**

Community groups from Australia and PNG have filed a formal complaint against the ANZ Bank over its financial support of logging companies that are allegedly engaging in human rights abuses and environmental destruction in PNG. The complaint alleges that ANZ is "actively supporting" the PNG operations of Malaysian logging giant Rimbunan Hijau, a company whose operations are said to involve "serious human rights abuses, environmentally devastating logging practices and repeated, serious illegal conduct." (Source: BankTrack, 23 August 2006)

## **Chinese plan for timber investment in Papua opposed**

Environmental and business groups are opposing a Chinese company's plan to establish a timber-processing factory in Papua. Bogor-based environmental group Telapak and the Indonesian Furniture Industry & Handicrafts Association say the US\$1 billion scheme poses a serious threat to Papua's remaining pristine forests, as well as potentially harming the country's revenues from furniture exports. (Source: The Jakarta Post, 17 August 2006)

## **Greenpeace scale UK government building over use of illegal timber from PNG**

Once again Greenpeace have exposed cracks in the UK government's timber procurement policy. In July, protestors occupied Admiralty Arch in London, home to prominent government departments, claiming that the UK government was using plywood made from illegal timber from Papua New Guinea. Two months later in September, similar plywood was found being used in the refurbishment of the Houses of Parliament. (Source: Greenpeace).

## **UK timber body decides PNG timber too risky**

The UK Timber Trade Federation (TTF) issued a recent statement advising its members that "sourcing wood products made from timber from Papua New Guinea (PNG) or the Solomon Islands was 'high risk'", and should be avoided due to the lack of credible evidence of legality. The move by the TTF further demonstrates that major timber markets such as the UK, the fourth largest importer of wood products in the world, are increasingly demanding certified timber. (Source: TTF, 28 June 2006)

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**welcome**

**Enoch Ontiri** appointed TransFly Manager - Natural Resources and Community Development based in Daru

**Lydia Kaia** appointed Communications Officer based in Port Moresby

**Felix Kinginapi** appointed Species Officer for the Kikori River Programme based in Moro, Southern Highlands Province

**goodbye**

**Michele Bowe** – TransFly Ecoregion Coordinator, has left the Madang office. Michele had worked for WWF for the past 15 years.

**meet the team**

**Joy Herea**, Administration Officer

*"I started working with WWF as a casual employee and now look after all of WWF's administration in the Port Moresby office."*

*"I really like the way WWF works to help local communities to preserve their environment. WWF impresses me with its modern technologies. I like working with WWF because the job is interesting. The networking connections we have are very good and I enjoy working with new people every day. There are always new things each day"*



IMAGE: © Brent Stirton/Getty Images / WWF-UK

IMAGE: © WWF PNG



East New Britain students from the University of Papua New Guinea getting ready for their cultural presentation during the festivities.

**HAPPY 31st Birthday PNG!**

Papua New Guinea celebrated 31 years of independence on 16th September. Many throughout the country marked the event with the staging of cultural singings. To celebrate the occasion, Port Moresby held the Hiri Moale Festival. Independence celebrations began with the flag raising ceremony at Independence Hill.

**Coming**

- 19-22 Oct** - Visit of WWF Australia CEO, Greg Bourne to PNG
- 21-22 Oct** - Community singings (celebrations) to launch Sulamesi, Hose and Arisai Wildlife Management Areas in Mt Bosavi, Southern Highlands and Western Province.
- 23 October** - Exchange visit by six Transfly women to Kakadu National Park, and Australia to share management approaches with aboriginal communities.
- November** - Turtle nesting monitoring in Kamiali WMA, Morobe Province
- 5-6 Dec** - New Guinea Initiative meeting
- Feb 2007** - Sustainable Wildlife Trade Conference with Cambridge University, Moresby

**Acknowledgements:** Prepared by the WWF PNG Team of WWF South Pacific Programme. This work is possible because of the generous support given by AusAID, Darwin Initiative, DfID, EU, Kutubu Joint Venture Partnership, MacArthur Foundation, Packard Foundation, WWF Australia, Indonesia, Netherlands, Switzerland, UK, US, International and WWF members worldwide.



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