



# VATU-I-RA COMMUNITY BULLETIN



Ni sa bula vinaka! Welcome to the fifteenth edition of the VATU-I-RA COMMUNITY BULLETIN. The bulletin brings together news and results from ongoing activities by the Wildlife Conservation Society within the Vatu-i-Ra group.

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## KEY EBM MESSAGES:

*Preservation of functional integrity of Fiji's ecoscapes through community based management.*

- Successful 'ridge-to-reef' management depends on broad stakeholder input
- Inland and coastal communities need to manage their actions and resources together
- 'Ridge-to-reef' management protects habitat for all stages of life
- The success of protected areas for conservation and livelihoods relies on combining bottom-up community engagement with top-down planning
- Public health and livelihoods depend on environmental health
- Healthy ecosystems are the best defense against climate change impacts to livelihoods

## COMMUNITY EDUCATION NETWORK TRAINING (CENT)

The second workshop in the Train the Trainers series took place in late September in Savusavu. The workshop was co-ordinated by the Coral Reef Alliance and supported by WCS, SeaWeb, Partners in Community Development, WWF and the Fisheries Dept.

Members of the Kubulau Resource Management Committee (KRMC), Tui Kubulau, Vakatawa of Namalata, Turangi ni Yavusas of Kilaka, Nakorovou and Namalata attended the workshop.

Participants were trained on various areas of the marine and terrestrial environment, including the ecology of marine animals ranging from cetaceans, marine turtles and invertebrates. Sustainable forest management and alternative sources of income were other training topics.

The workshop continues to focus on the concept of empowering the community members and specifically the KRMC representatives to be able to carry out awareness training in their own communities. The importance of environmental conservation and being aware of the impacts of aquatic and terrestrial activities that threaten the health of the ecosystem and subsequently livelihoods are messages to be discussed at the community level.



Fiji's IYoB theme for September was 'protected areas'. In October, there was the Conference Of Parties meeting in Japan where the Department of Environment and WCS-Fiji launched the EBM Guide showcasing the lessons learnt from our work in Kubulau.

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## FLMMA PROVINCIAL MEETINGS

The Cakaudrove, Bua and Macuata Fiji Locally Managed Marine Areas (FLMMA) Provincial Lesson Learning & Sharing Workshops were held from 22<sup>nd</sup> September to 1<sup>st</sup> October, 2010. The meetings covered three provinces, starting with Bua which was held in Bua village, then Korotubu village for Macuata and Vanuavou for Cakaudrove province.



The objective of these meetings was to create greater awareness and understanding of resource management and to strengthen communities work with local partnerships in the provinces.

Meeting participants began the process by answering about 40 questions about their MPA site and management. The results were used to discuss the current issues and formed the basis of lessons sharing and learning. Information about sites that were performing well and those sites that are not performing as well were identified and action plans made about how to move forward with individual site management.

Akanisi from WCS presented the EBM Guide to participants. Her presentation raised a lot of questions from participants regarding the

work we are doing in Kubulau and the management plan that WCS had helped develop.

The participants were also informed about the FLMMA structure and the various processes they need to undergo when proposing marine protected areas.



## VILLAGE VISIT TO KIOBO BY SIMONE MORTAN

What an amazingly special treat tonight when we got to visit Kiobo village which is in Kubulau District. The visit was arranged by Dr. Stacy Jupiter who is working with these villagers as part of the Ecosystem-Based Management work supported by the Wildlife Conservation Society.

We arrived at the village by skiff around 5p.m. and the entire village turned out on the beach to greet us with music and leis. The welcoming words of "Bula bula!" were shouted out to us and each of us was warmly greeted with firm handshakes by the village people.

We were taken through the village to visit the lovo pit, a large pit maybe 6 feet square with very hot rocks that had been prepared. Our dinner of pork, lamb, and chicken was wrapped in coconut palm fronds and laid on top of breadfruit and cassava that formed the first layer of the dinner cooking on the rocks. Finally the whole pile of cooking food was covered with a variety of leaves. First it was palm fronds, followed by banana leaves and finally covered with a very broad leaf. Theresa, one of our Kiobo hosts, explained that the leaves helped to keep the food clean as well and provide a cap so that the food will

Steam. The final layer of leaves was held in place with large logs placed around the perimeter of the pile.

From there we were led into the bure (the village's central gathering place) for the ceremonial welcome and presentation of gifts. Mo, NAI'A's Senior Dive Master, acted as our spokesman and we were represented by our "chiefs," Dr. Webster and Bailey. After some formal words of gratitude for their hospitality and welcome by Tui Kubulau, we all introduced ourselves with many expressing gratitude both for their hospitality but also for the way they are taking such good care of the reefs in this region.

Then it was on to the kava ceremony called sevusevu. Dr. Webster and Bailey were the first to be offered the kava. A single clap of the hands is the tradition before taking the cup (coconut shell) and then it's bottoms up followed by 3 more claps. Once the chiefs from our group and the village had all been served, the kava was offered to everyone else and the music and dancing began. Tui Kubulau played a 12 string guitar and was joined by NAI'A's talented guitar-playing Mo and several others.

The music ranged from traditional Fijian songs to the Beatles, Jimmy Buffet and the Eagles. Imagine our surprise when the village women presented us with trays of cakes, breadfruit, and complete tea service! It seemed as though we could have stayed and partied all night with them and not worn out our welcome, but it was time to board the skiffs and return to the NAI'A to enjoy the dinner cooked in the lovo pit and start our long southerly transit tonight from this area to the island of Gau. I hope I can return to Fiji again someday to re-experience the warmth and welcome of these wonderful people.

Written by Simone Mortan of the Monterey Bay Aquarium on a recent visit to Kiobo from the NAI'A.





## SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT

This factsheet is designed to help communities learn about relevant rules and policies that support sustainable management of terrestrial (land) and freshwater habitats. National rules are taken from the Fiji Forest Decree, Fiji Logging Code of Practice, and the Environment Management Act, while local rules are based on the Kubulau Ridge-To-Reef Management Plan.

### *Importance of Maintaining a healthy forest and Riparian Vegetation*

Healthy forest and riparian vegetation (vegetation found along river banks) may provide many services and functions such as:

- Providing shelter for animals;
- Providing forest products and traditional medicines;
- Reducing floodwaters following rains;
- Maintaining water quality in streams and rivers;
- Keeping streams cool;
- Providing food sources for freshwater animals;
- Providing beautiful natural habitats to support recreation and ecotourism; and
- Acting as buffer by filtering out sediments, debris and pollutants due to land use.

Land clearing is defined as the **removal of vegetation** from an area, which can include clearing native or secondary growth plants from land and replacing them with agricultural, urban or other land uses. It affects downstream ecosystems in many different ways, which may include:

- Increases in surface runoff and downstream flooding;
- Increases in soil erosion causing poor conditions for farming;
- Increases in sediment and nutrients entering waterways and coastal marine habitats;
- Loss of biodiversity due to change and damaging of habitats;
- Increases in pests and pathogens that can cause disease;
- Changes in patterns and occurrence of forest fires;
- Changes in rainfall patterns;
- Greater impacts from natural disasters (e.g. tropical cyclones); and
- Increase in greenhouse gases which contributes to global warming.

### *Management of Terrestrial and Freshwater Ecosystems*

Negative effects of land clearing can be avoided or minimized through proper management strategies. Community members can help properly manage the terrestrial and freshwater habitats by following best practises such as:

- Managing livestock to avoid excess trampling;
- Promote agroforestry (growing crops with trees and shrubs) that focus on productivity while maintaining habitat for threatened species;
- Maintaining or restoring riparian forest buffer zones; and
- Strongly weighing out the long-term environmental costs against short-term financial gains before agreeing to any new logging leases.

*This extract was taken from the Sustainable Forest Management flier presented at the CENT workshop. For more information or copies of the brochure please ask your KRMC representative.*

## RIPARIAN AND INSTREAM SURVEYING

The WCS team in partnership with Wetlands International Oceania is in the field conducting freshwater fish and riparian forest surveys in Kubulau, Wainunu and Sasa in Macuata.

The team is trying to answer a fundamental question for conservation and development, "What is the role of riparian (the interface between land and a river or stream) forest buffers in preserving in-stream fish abundance, diversity and water quality?"

Similar research has shown that at least 30 m wide riparian buffers are necessary to maintain ecosystem functions and processes. However, this is the first time that this research is being done for tropical high islands whose river catchments are generally steeper, shorter and have specialized fish fauna and riparian forest, and the first time that it has been directly applied in Fiji.

In the first week in Wainunu, the research



team recorded over 23 species of freshwater fishes and worked in mainly well-forested catchments with few

invasive species. These areas seem generally well stocked with large gudgeons (*vo*) and flagtails (*ika droka*) and the water quality benefits from an abundance of riparian vegetation like Tahitian chestnut trees (*ivi*). However, as most of the fishes are migratory, major obstacles such as high waterfalls or hanging culverts bisect the stream and many of the fishes are prevented from going upstream no matter how well-intact the riparian forest.

Maintenance of a wide and continuous riparian buffer strip around rivers will help preserve fish abundance and water quality. Building fish ladders into hanging culverts can also potentially help to increase fish abundance and diversity upstream. The results of this research will be made available for local and national conservation and development planning and can also have application throughout the Pacific on similar high island ecosystems.

FIJI ECOSYSTEM BASED MANAGEMENT  
(EBM) = HEALTHY PEOPLE, PROCESSES  
AND SYSTEMS

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## ONGOING AND UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Oct—Nov 2010** — Riparian and instream surveys
- **November 2010** – Workshops to introduce EBM principles to Wainunu and Wailevu districts

## NEW STAFF

**Rebecca Weeks** joined the WCS-Fiji marine team in 2010 as a Postdoctoral Research Fellow. After completing a Masters degree in Zoology at the University in Sheffield (UK), Rebecca moved to Australia to pursue her interest in marine conservation. Her PhD, undertaken through the at James Cook University, explored approaches to developing marine protected area networks in the Philippines. Rebecca's research integrates ecological and socioeconomic data to design marine protected area networks that effectively meet both broad-scale objectives for biodiversity conservation and the needs of local fishing communities. In addition to undertaking extensive field-work in the Philippines, Rebecca has also worked on marine conservation projects in Madagascar and Seychelles.



## PACKARD FOUNDATION MEMBERS VISIT KUBULAU



FOUR Northern districts which have marine protected areas (MPAs) in place met representatives of their main donor - the Packard Foundation from the United States. The MPA heads of Mali, Sasa, Dreketi and Macuata met with eight board members of the Packard Foundation.

Vice president Chris DeCardy said the team was visiting the villages to find out where their funds have been utilised and to understand the support needed by the villagers for future improvement. The team visited Kubulau.

"It was an inspiration to see the people continue works towards conserving their surroundings and the marine ecosystem while seeking to grow their community," he said.

"The people of Kubulau are trying to develop their island as a popular tourist destination.

"This development will help them earn money and not rely solely on fishing."

Mr DeCardy said this was a positive change as people were adapting to long term survival methods which would benefit their future generations.

"There are leaders within the communities who are trying to help others understand the benefits of conserving our natural resources, including marine conservation.

"The villagers have also been honest that they have just started with the conservation program but they have been able to do a lot in a short time."

Mr DeCardy said the conservation programs have received positive response from village communities in Vanua Levu.

The team visited Kubulau on the Uto ni Yalo which gave locals the opportunity to see the historic canoe for the first time.

Source: Fiji Times

### ANY QUESTIONS...?

Please send your questions and letters to the Vatu-i-Ra Community Bulletin Editorial Team, using the contact details above. Please contact the Editor for further details.

*TAQOMAKI NI NODA VEIKABULA*



The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) is a U.S. based international NGO, with conservation programs all around the world, including Fiji. Over the past century, the WCS has worked to establish more than 130 parks and protected areas on land and at sea as well as working on threatened species. WCS works to save wildlife and wild places by understanding and resolving the critical problems that threaten key species and large, wild ecosystems around the world.