

Continued from previous page

The information gained from this programme will assist SPREP support its member countries to better understand the migration and feeding patterns of sea turtles in the Pacific and support community based conservation efforts.

Turtle conservation is a shared responsibility and I commend the many collaborative partnerships that have taken place over the year. Initiatives such as the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on the Conservation and Management of Western Pacific Leatherback Turtles, which was signed by Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, the Wan Smolbag Theatre Vanua Tai tagging and monitoring programme in Vanuatu and the Save the Turtle fund, an ANZ Samoa and SPREP partnership encouraging community based conservation, are all examples of successful regional collaborations in action this year.

The Year of the Sea Turtle provided the impetus to promote regional efforts to conserve sea turtles, and I hope that we take the lessons learnt through this campaign and ensure that sea turtles continue their long journey through the Pacific ocean.

Asterio Takesy
SPREP Director

SPREP praises IOSEA's Year of the Turtle campaign

The Indian Ocean - South-East Asia (IOSEA) Year of the Turtle has united nations and communities in celebration of marine turtles and their conservation under the banner of "*Cooperating to Conserve Marine Turtles – our Ocean's Ambassadors*". SPREP congratulates IOSEA for their work in increasing public awareness and understanding of the threats faced by marine turtles and the work being undertaken in the region to conserve these ancient creatures and the habitats on which they depend.

www.ioseaturtles.org/yot2006/



New YOST Campaign Coordinator joins SPREP



Ms. Megan Krolik from Sydney joined SPREP's marine team in September to coordinate the Pacific Year of the Sea Turtle campaign until March 2007. Megan is currently studying towards her MA in International Development at the University of New South Wales and has previously worked for UNICEF Australia and CARE UK. Megan fell in love with loggerheads whilst working on the Greek island of Zakynthos with Archelon, the Sea Turtle Protection Society of Greece and is excited to be contributing to the conservation of sea turtles closer to home.

Megan's background is in communications and will be working to consolidate the activities of the YOST campaign so far.

Contact details: megank@sprep.org or (685) 21929



Country Attachments

Officers from Tonga and Tuvalu took part in a Country Attachment-Training Program in early December in the Solomon Islands.

This program allowed participants from countries without an active turtle program to experience hands on turtle nesting survey work.

Participants in the Solomon Islands Conservation Department initiative were Mr Malakai Finau, Assistant Conservation Officer, Environment Department and Mr Tevita 'Ahoafi, Technical Fisheries Officer, OIC Ha'apai Branch, Tonga.

It is hoped this training will support the establishment of national turtle programmes in both Tuvalu and Tonga. SPREP and partners will work with countries to develop national programmes where required, including the provision of basic equipment.

For more information contact Lui Bell, Marine Species Officer, SPREP, luib@sprep.org

Become a Marine Turtle Ambassador today!

The Pacific Ocean is home to six of the seven known species of sea turtles in the world and sea turtle populations are rapidly declining due to unsustainable harvesting and an increasingly polluted ocean. We urgently need to work together to look after these ancient travelers of the oceans.

By becoming a Marine Turtle Ambassador for the Pacific today, you will play an important role in ensuring the survival of these endangered species.

Make a pledge to look after our ocean and our sea turtles, starting now, in the 2006 Pacific Year of the Sea Turtle.

As a Marine Turtle Ambassador, you will receive an official Ambassador card, and a resource kit that will help you spread the message of sea turtle conservation in your community!

To become a Marine Turtle Ambassador for the Pacific, simply send an email to megank@sprep.org

Only a limited number of Ambassador packs are available. Please apply now to help conserve our endangered Pacific sea turtles. With your help, their future can be protected.

Protect them, protect our heritage!



Happy Year of the Sea Turtle from the Institute of Marine Resources!

Fiji's Year of Sea Turtle celebrations continue with the Institute of Marine Resources (IMR), under the University of the South Pacific, pledging to ensure the work started this year continues into 2007.

IMR assists community conservation by assisting and backstopping research and training on turtle conservation, working closely with Wan Smolbag in Vanuatu and with the Tetepare Descendants' Association on their very successful community conservation efforts. In Fiji they have also been working closely with the Fiji Ministry of Fisheries, Ministry of Environment and WWF to develop the Fiji Strategy and also provide appropriate information and data to justify the extension of the Turtle Moratorium.

IMR recently obtained funding from the US Fish & Wildlife department, WWF-Pacific and the USP grants committee, which has allowed them to take on two new staff members.

Ms Merewalesi Laveti has joined the team as the Turtle Conservation research assistant, while Ms. Neema Nand will be working with IMR as a MSc student. Her research will be to compile information on the sea turtle nesting grounds in Fiji and one of her main duties will be to coordinate the turtle tagging information via the TREDIS database. SPREP will provide training for her in early December.

IMR also coordinated a three day Turtle Survey Workshop in early December. This workshop was facilitated by Ian Bell from Queensland, Australia and offered training on turtle biology, tagging, foraging ground and nesting beach surveys and data entry. Joining Ian in the workshop was SPREP's Lui Bell and Anne Trevor and also Dr. George Balazs from NOAA's Marine Turtle Research Program.

For more information contact Merewalesi Laveti, laveti_m@usp.ac.fj



PNG communities help protect leatherbacks



A bamboo grid nest protection device, a cost effective means of preventing dog predation (Photo courtesy of Huon Coast Leatherback Turtle Conservation Project).

Sea Turtle Restoration Project arrives in PNG

In mid 2006, the Sea Turtle Restoration Project (STRP) extended its activities from Costa Rica and the United States to Papua New Guinea, opening an office in Port Moresby to help save, protect and restore the western Pacific leatherback. Sadly, leatherback populations in the Pacific have declined drastically and are now in urgent need of protection and restoration.

STRP works to protect endangered sea turtles and the marine environment in culturally and economically sustainable ways and have to date helped protect over 100,000 sea turtle eggs, produced award winning documentaries and helped communities establish wildlife refuges and time-area closures to protect endangered sea turtles. They have also used strategic legal action that has compelled changes in US and international fisheries practices and law.

Currently, the STRP is hosting a research programme in PNG, along with a public awareness campaign to educate, inform and inspire communities to protect and restore the leatherback population of the region.

For more info contact Mr. Wenceslaus Magun, magun.wences@gmail.com

The PNG leatherback-nesting season is well under way, with activities occurring at numerous beaches along the Huon Coast of the Morobe Province.

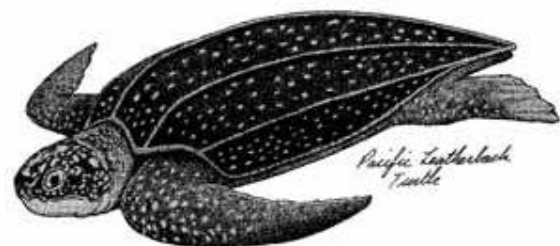
The Huon Coast Leatherback Turtle project, led by new project manager Mr. Barry Krueger, is working with communities along the coast, including Labu Tale, Busama, Lababia and Paiawa to promote turtle monitoring and protection activities for population recovery. A fifth community, Kobo, has been included this season thanks to the generous donation of funds by the Village Development Trust.

For more information contact Irene Kinan, Irene.kinan@Noaa.gov or Dr Nicolas J Pilcher, Marine Research Foundation, pilcher@tm.net.my

Tri-National Aerial Survey planned for December

A tri-national aerial survey is scheduled this December in the Solomon Islands, PNG and Indonesia. The aim of this survey is to better understand the western Pacific leatherback nesting population and to acquire a snapshot of nesting activity in these areas. The results of this survey will also be used to calculate population trends and will be published at a later date.

The survey is a collaborative effort by TNC, WWF, the PNG Department of Conservation, the Marine Research Foundation of Malaysia, the Western Pacific Fishery Management and the NMFS. For more info on survey results contact the Southwest Fishery Science Center.



Tracking green turtle Fini Melieli

The Palau Marine Turtle Monitoring and Conservation Program has successfully tracked a green turtle from Merir Island, Palau to the waters off the coast of Irian Jaya, Indonesia. 'Fini Melieli' was tagged on 1 November by the Governor of Sonsorol, the State Conservation Officer and Programme Coordinator, Joshua Eberdong. After nesting on Merir Island, Fini Melieli swam over 370miles in 12 days!

Turtles represent the cooperation and collaboration of Pacific island countries and territories; they are the symbol of Pacific unity, of our traditional and cultural heritage. The Year of the Sea Turtle has been a celebration of these ancient creatures, and an urgent call to protect these endangered species from extinction.

For more information contact Joshua Eberdong, joshua_eberdong@yahoo.com

Traditional owners celebrate marine resources partnership

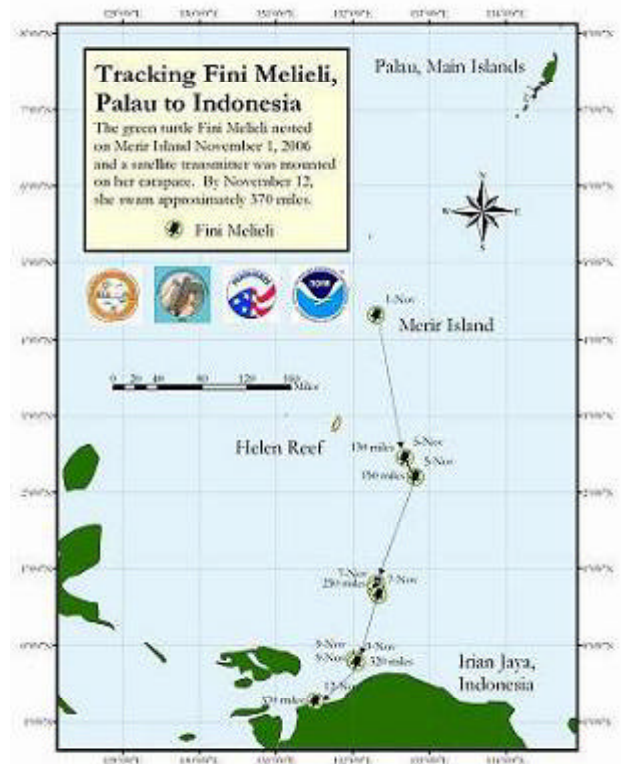
Traditional Owners from the Giringun region in Queensland, Australia, came together in August to celebrate the first accredited Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreement in the Great Barrier Reef.

The Great Barrier Reef is home to six species of sea turtle, and the coastal waters of Queensland provide important feeding and breeding areas.

The Agreement is specifically designed to ensure traditional use is undertaken in a way that is ecologically sustainable while still meeting indigenous needs.

Members of six Giringun sea country groups (Djiru, Gulnay, Girramay, Bandjin, Warragamay and Nywaigi) developed the agreement over the past two years.

For more information visit www.gbrmpa.gov.au



Introducing Fefe the turtle!



Te mana o te moana's Turtle Care Centre in French Polynesia received a surprise in September when Fefe the twisted turtle came to stay. Fefe is a juvenile green turtle with a shell abnormality caused by vertebrae trauma or a neo-natal deformity. She is 8.8cm x 19.9cm wide and is growing more in width than in length. While Fefe is eating well and can swim normally, she does have some stability problems and the staff at the Turtle Care Centre will be watching her carefully as she grows.

www.temanaotemoana.org



Sinamoga Soccer Club adopts sea turtles as float theme



The protection of Pacific sea turtles was showcased in September, as part of the Sinamoga Soccer Club's entry in Samoa's Teuila Festival Float Competition.

This year's competition theme was Samoa: the Pearl of the Pacific and the Sinamoga Soccer Club generously dedicated their float to 2006 Pacific Year of the Sea Turtle campaign and the 'save the turtle' message.

Float design focused on the Pacific and its ocean resources and featured a man-made oyster shell surrounded by 'islands' of the Pacific. The bonnet of the truck displayed a carved turtle whilst airbrushed murals featuring the "underwater" scenes of the Pacific surrounded the entire float.

While the float did not win the overall competition, the message of sea turtle conservation was well received by the festival crowd.

American Samoa joins turtle database

American Samoa recently joined the growing number of Pacific countries trialing the Turtle Research and Monitoring Database System (TREDS), hosting a training and installation visit from SPREP's Associate Turtle Database Officer Anne Trevor and Database and System Administrator, Christian Slaven.

During the visit SPREP staff members provided technical and installation support and training to Ailao Tualaulelei and Visa Vaivai from the Wildlife Division in the Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources.

TREDS is a Pacific-wide research database that will coordinate the large volume of data collected

Hidden Haggan celebrations in Guam

To celebration of the International Year of the Sea Turtle, the Bureau of Statistics and Plans-Coastal Management Program, UnderWater World, GVB, the Agana Shopping Centre and Guam Environmental Education Partners Inc hosted a series of Hidden Haggan (Turtle) celebrations in Guam during October and November.

The celebrations began with an environmental education program and arts exhibition at the Agana Shopping Centre on 31 October which aimed to raise awareness of the importance of sea turtles to Guam's culture and heritage. Twenty fiberglass turtles were painted and nested by students from all over the island in parts of the island that reflect Guam's culture, heritage, beauty and business districts during the exhibit.

Maps with the locations were distributed to encourage people to find the nested turtles.

For more information contact Event Coordinator, Krista Gaza at krisgaza@yahoo.com

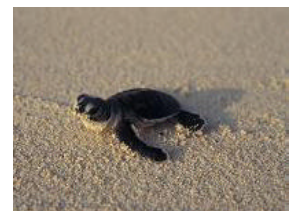


Photo: Freundfactory

from turtle research and monitoring in the region.

While the development of the database is nearing completion, there is still a need for TREDS to be trialed in a few member countries before it is officially launched and distributed to member countries for use in turtle research and monitoring initiatives throughout the Pacific region.

The database is also being trialed in Samoa and Vanuatu, Fiji and French Polynesia.

For more information contact Anne Trevor, Associate Turtles Database Officer annet@sprep.org



Turtle Talk highlights

During the year, Turtle Talk has featured activities and celebrations from across the region.

Here are some highlights:



March

- ❖ SPREP launches the 2006 Pacific Year of the Sea Turtle campaign in Apia, Samoa
- ❖ National campaign launches take place in American Samoa, Cook Islands, Fiji, Solomon Islands
- ❖ The Satellite tracking programme begins, facilitated by SPREP, Samoa's Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE), and Hawaii's Marine Turtle Research Program.
- ❖ SPREP, the Secretariat of the Convention of Migratory Species (CMS) and other partners begin working towards an MOU on the conservation and management of sea turtles in the Pacific region
- ❖ Launch of the Indian Ocean (IOSEA) Year of the Turtle campaign



July

- ❖ The TRENDS Database trailed in Vanuatu
- ❖ Samoa's MNRE releases 16 turtles to mark the national YOST campaign launch
- ❖ The Mayor of Moorea, Tahiti, releases a turtle to mark World Ocean Day on 7 June
- ❖ Tetepare Descendants' Association continue with their successful community based nest monitoring programme



September

- ❖ SPREP and ANZ Bank Samoa launch the Turtle Bag and Samoa says no to plastic!
- ❖ Palau's Marine Turtle Conservation and Monitoring program announces plans to tag and track four turtles
- ❖ Indonesia, PNG and Solomon Islands sign an MOU on Leatherback Conservation and Management
- ❖ WWF hosts a YOST themed float in the Hibiscus Festival in Suva and wins!



Upcoming events

Satellite Tagging

The satellite tagging of nesting turtles, a priority action during the YOST campaign has taken place in two different locations in the Pacific. Tagging was initially conducted in Samoa earlier in the year and more recently in French Polynesia on the 20-24 November. The last sessions are scheduled to take place in early 2007.

The International Pacific Marine Educators Conference, Honolulu 15-19 January 2007

Marine educators worldwide will gather together in January 2007 for the International Pacific Marine Educators Conference. The Conference will provide marine educators with the chance to share resources and build a network aimed at ensuring the health of the Pacific Ocean and the communities who depend upon it.

The conference is a joint initiative of the University of the South Pacific and Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council. For more information visit www.ipmec.info

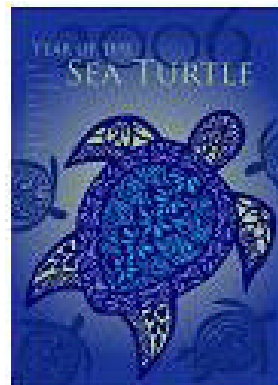
The 27th Annual Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation 22-28 February 2007

The 27th Annual Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation will be held from 22-28 February 2007 at Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. The 2007 International Sea Turtle Symposium will include a plenary session on "Satellite Tracking for the Conservation of Marine Vertebrates" and will take a critical multi-taxon overview as to how satellite tracking has given conservation insight in a range of marine vertebrates. For more info visit www.iconferences.seaturtle.org/

Pacific Year of the Sea Turtle Campaign Coordination Committee

Thank you and congratulations to the following people and organizations, who have worked tirelessly throughout the year to ensure a successful Pacific Year of the Sea Turtle campaign!

- ❖ American Samoa (Ruth Utzurrum)
- ❖ CI Pacific (Sue Miller-Taei)
- ❖ Fiji (Manasa Sovaki)
- ❖ IFAW (Rebecca Keeble)
- ❖ IOSEA (Douglas J Hykle)
- ❖ JCU (Mark Hamann)
- ❖ Marine Turtle Research Program, NOAA (Dr George H. Balazs)
- ❖ PNG (Vagi Rei)
- ❖ Queensland Parks Authority (Dr Colin Limpus)
- ❖ Samoa (Malama Momoemausu)
- ❖ Solomon Islands (Tia Masolo)
- ❖ SPC (Lindsay Chapman & Brett Molony)
- ❖ SPREP (Lui Bell, Dominique Benzaken, Tamara Logan, Megan Krolik, Anne Trevor)
- ❖ USP (Kenneth T. MacKay)
- ❖ WPRFMC (Irene Kinan)
- ❖ WWF Pacific (Penina Solomona)



YOST posters

The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council has produced their own Year of the Sea Turtle poster. To obtain a copy contact Irene Kinan at Irene.Kinan@noaa.gov with your full name and postal address.

The next issue of Turtle Talk will be March 2007. Please send any contributions to Megan Krolik, megank@sprep.org by 10 February 2007.

For more information please visit the Year of the Sea Turtle web site
www.sprep.org/yost



