

## The Pacific dives into the Year of the Sea Turtle






SPREP's Deputy Director, Vitolio Lui, officially launching the 2006 Pacific Year of the Sea Turtle

The Pacific Year of the Sea Turtle campaign was launched on 1 March at SPREP Headquarters in Apia, Samoa. The official regional launch was marked by a call to Pacific countries and territories to work together to increase turtle conservation efforts in the region.

Once hunted in the Pacific as part of subsistence living, increasing human populations, the introduction of new fishing technology, pollution and loss of feeding and nesting habitats in the Pacific have resulted in reduced turtle numbers.

The Year of the Sea Turtle is a regional campaign that aims to reverse the rapid decline in turtle numbers by:

-  Promoting community conservation of turtle nesting, feeding and foraging sites
-  Strengthening national legislation and policies to encourage effective management
-  Fostering partnerships for long-term conservation

With almost all species of turtles considered threatened with extinction, SPREP believes that the Pacific must undertake renewed efforts to promote the need for turtle conservation in the region.

SPREP believes the critical success factor in this campaign is the participation of key partners including national governments, intergovernmental organizations, communities, fisheries and tourism authorities, donors, and NGOs.

The 2006 Pacific Year of the Sea Turtle is a key element of the Marine Species Programme Framework (2003-2007) developed and endorsed by Pacific island countries and territories. The Framework guides SPREP's work in marine species conservation in the Pacific.

SPREP is a regional intergovernmental organisation working with Pacific island countries and territories to strengthen environmental management and promote sustainable development.

Welcome to the first edition of **Turtle Talk**, developed by the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) as part of the 2006 Pacific Year of the Sea Turtle.

### In this edition we feature:

- ❖ Regional launch
- ❖ National launches: American Samoa, Cook Islands, Fiji, Solomon Islands
- ❖ Tracking turtles: learning about turtle migration routes
- ❖ Regional efforts to reduce declining turtle numbers
- ❖ Pacific regional turtle conservation
- ❖ Key partners in the Year of the Sea Turtle
- ❖ Year of the Sea Turtle coordination committee
- ❖ Available resources



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# 2006 Pacific Year of the Sea Turtle



## Regional collaboration and cooperation

Given their migratory nature and status, turtle conservation requires regional participation and collaboration. SPREP's members coordinated their national launches to coincide with the regional launch. These included:

### American Samoa

As part of their national launch, a team from American Samoa attached a satellite tag on a nesting hawksbill turtle at Malota. "Ms Malota" was tagged and released on 28 February, two days before the national launch ceremony.

American Samoa's theme for the year is:

Sacred. Heritage. Pride: Save Our Turtles - Talaaga ma mitamitaga: Faasao le l'a Sa, Year of the Sea Turtle - 2006

For more information contact Kate Schletz Saili ([kschletz@yahoo.com](mailto:kschletz@yahoo.com))

### Cook Islands

The Cook Islands campaign was launched on 1 March by Minister Teina Bishop, with a call to students of Avatea School to become "warriors" to campaign on behalf of turtles.

The students were encouraged to support turtle conservation efforts by protecting turtles and through sharing information about the importance of these ancient creatures to Cook Islands' culture and heritage.

Students of Avatea Primary School produced poems and pictures to mark the launch of the Cook Islands Year of the Sea Turtle.

For more information contact Keri Herman ([resources@environment.org.ck](mailto:resources@environment.org.ck))

### Fiji

The Fiji national launch focused on strengthening partnerships with representatives from the private sector and promoting their critical role in turtle conservation initiatives.

The Fiji campaign was jointly launched by the CEO FINTEL, Mr. Sakaraia Tuilakepa and the Managing Director of Pacific Manufacturers Limited, Mr. Viliame Leqa, at the WWF Fiji office in Suva on 2 March 2006.

For more information contact Manasa Sovaki ([msovaki@govnet.gov.fj](mailto:msovaki@govnet.gov.fj)); Penina Solomona ([psolomona@wwfpacific.org.fj](mailto:psolomona@wwfpacific.org.fj))

### Solomon Islands

In the Solomon Islands, Western Province Premier, Alex Lokopio, launched the campaign in Gizo on 9 March by stressing the need for communities and governments to work together to strengthen turtle conservation efforts.

Mr Lokopio said the campaign launch should be a testimony for all to ensure cooperation and commitment by all stakeholders to save sea turtles.

The campaign in the Solomon Islands is strongly supported by WWF, who is extremely active in turtle conservation efforts.

For more information contact Tia Masolo ([t\\_masolo@yahoo.com.au](mailto:t_masolo@yahoo.com.au)) or John Pitavoga ([jrpita@solomon.com.sb](mailto:jrpita@solomon.com.sb))



Siaifoi, Kate Saili, and the Malota Village Mayor with "Ms Malota"

**Please save the turtle**

*Turtles live in the sea and on land.*

*Only a few of them on Rarotonga now.*

*Please help us save them for the better of our generation to come.*

*By William Estall, Avatea School*



The Solomon Islands' launch included clean-ups of nesting beaches on Tetepare and Baniata.

## Tracking turtles - learning more about turtle migration routes

The regional launch of the Year of the Sea Turtle was marked by the tagging and release of two turtles from Samoa. A green turtle (Miss Lina) and a hawksbill nester turtle (Lady Vini) were the first turtles to be tagged in a regional programme that will monitor the movements of five turtles throughout the region. The tagging was undertaken by SPREP and the Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment and Meteorology (MNREM) of the Government of Samoa. The tagging programme will provide invaluable information about their migratory routes and illustrate that turtle conservation is a shared responsibility.

The tagging programme is supported by the Marine Turtle Research Program, NOAA, Hawaii.

Other SPREP members that are targeted for the satellite tagging programme include French Polynesia, Fiji and Tonga.

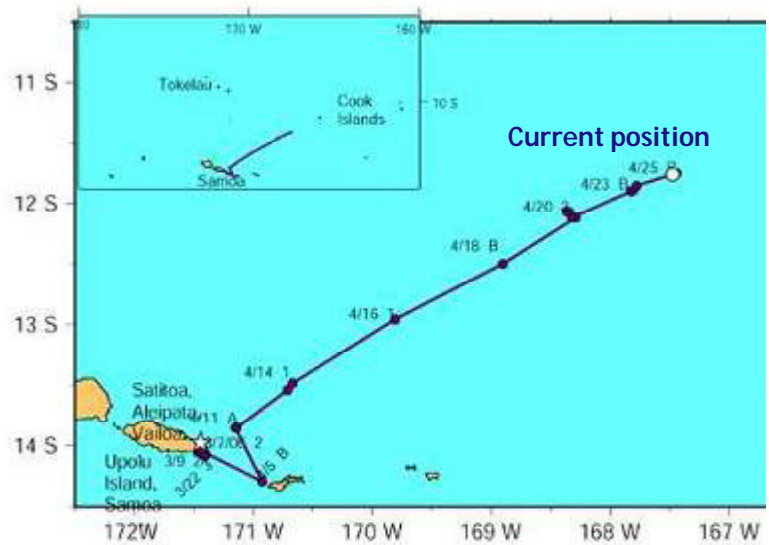
### Pacific regional turtle conservation efforts

Following a directive from SPREP members, the Secretariat is working with the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS) Secretariat and other key partners to progress regional arrangements for marine turtles.

The CMS Conference of Parties meeting in November 2005 adopted a recommendation encouraging Parties and range states in the Pacific to cooperate to develop a Memorandum of Understanding and associated Conservation Plan for the conservation and management of marine turtles in that region under the CMS.

The resolution also encourages existing Pacific regional conservation programs and instruments relevant to marine turtles to participate in the development and implementation of a regional conservation arrangement for marine turtles in the Pacific.

**For more information contact SPREP's Marine Species Officer, Lui Bell, [luib@sprep.org](mailto:luib@sprep.org).**



Top: Map of Lady Vini's journey as of 26/04/05.

Right: Releasing Lady Vini after attaching a satellite tag.

To track Lady Vini and Miss Lina online, visit the Year of the Sea Turtle web page: [www.sprep.org/yost](http://www.sprep.org/yost)



### ASEAN efforts to boost turtle numbers

The Pacific Year of the Sea Turtle coincides with the launch of a sister campaign in the Indian Ocean, coordinated by the Indian Ocean, South East Asian Memorandum of Understanding Secretariat in Bangkok (IOSEA).

The IOSEA Year of the Turtle aims to unite nations and communities to celebrate marine turtles and to support their conservation. While increasing public awareness and understanding of the threats faced by marine turtles, the campaign will also highlight the work of organisations working to conserve sea turtles.

**For more information visit: [www.ioseaturtles.org/yot2006](http://www.ioseaturtles.org/yot2006)**



## Turtles found in the Pacific

Six of the world's seven species of turtles are found in the Pacific. Five of the sea turtles found in the Pacific are listed on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Animals. IUCN is an international organization that monitors the state of the world's species and determines their risk of extinction, or the risk of species disappearing forever.

Leatherback Turtle	<b>CRITICALLY ENDANGERED</b>
Hawksbill Turtle	<b>CRITICALLY ENDANGERED</b>
Olive Ridley Turtle	<b>ENDANGERED</b>
Loggerhead Turtle	<b>ENDANGERED</b>
Green Turtle	<b>ENDANGERED</b>
Flatback Turtle	(Data deficient)
<b>Not found in the Pacific</b>	
Kemp's Ridley Turtle	<b>CRITICALLY ENDANGERED</b>

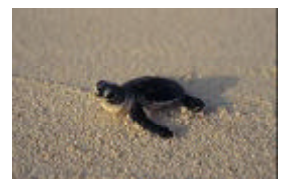


## Organisations working in turtle conservation in the Pacific

- ❖ Conservation International (CI)
- ❖ Hawaii Longline Association
- ❖ International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW)
- ❖ Indian Ocean South East Asian Memorandum of Understanding Secretariat (IOSEA)
- ❖ James Cook University (JCU)
- ❖ Marine Turtle Research Program, NOAA, National Marine Fisheries Service, Pacific Islands
- ❖ Fisheries Science Center
- ❖ Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC)
- ❖ United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)
- ❖ University of the South Pacific (USP)
- ❖ US National Marine Fisheries Services
- ❖ Wan Smolbag (WSB)
- ❖ Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission
- ❖ Western Pacific Regional Management Council (WPRMC)
- ❖ World Wide Fund for Nature Conservation (WWF)

## Pacific Year of the Sea Turtle Campaign Coordination Committee

- ❖ American Samoa (Kate Schletz Saili)
- ❖ CI Pacific (Sue Miller-Taei)
- ❖ Fiji (Manasa Sovaki)
- ❖ IFAW (Denise Boyd)
- ❖ IOSEA (Stephanie Dunstan)
- ❖ 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)
- ❖ USP (Kenneth T. MacKay)
- ❖ WPRFMC (Irene Kinan)
- ❖ WWF Pacific (Penina Solomona)



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## Year of the Sea Turtle resources

A number of resources are available to support national campaigns including: posters, stickers, postcards, fact sheets, and turtle identification sheets. Please contact SPREP's Marine Species Officer, Lui Bell (luib@sprep.org) for more information. SPREP also has a number of resources available in the Information Resource Centre.

**Please send news, stories, and pictures for the next edition of Turtle Talk to Tamara Logan, SPREP's Education and Social Communications Officer (tamara@sprep.org)**

**For more information please visit the Year of the Sea Turtle web site [www.sprep.org/yost](http://www.sprep.org/yost)**



