



SPREP
 Secretariat of the Pacific Regional
 Environment Programme

THE CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF MIGRATORY SPECIES OF WILD ANIMALS (CMS)

What is the issue?

Of the world's approximately 1.75 million known animal species, at least 10,000 migrate seasonally in search of food, water and safe breeding grounds. Through the air, over land and in water, these animals navigate migration pathways much as our Pacific ancestors did in settling these islands – using natural cues to guide their journeys.

Examples of such animal behaviour familiar to us in the Pacific Islands region include the annual migrations of the Humpback whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*), the Bristle thighed curlew (*Numenius tahitiensis*) and the Leatherback turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*).



Humpback whales migrate from their feeding grounds in the Antarctic to the warmer waters of the Pacific to breed, calve and suckle their young. For the humpback whales of the endangered sub-population of Oceania, they can spend up to six months in the Pacific before making the long swim back to the Southern Ocean.



The **bristle-thighed curlew** is a globally threatened shorebird that breeds in Alaska during the summer months and then escapes cold winters by flying some 9,000 kilometres to the Pacific islands region, where it can be seen on coastlines of Hawaii, French Polynesia and Pitcairn in the east right across to the Solomon Islands and Fiji in the west. It prefers undisturbed/isolated atolls as it spends a portion of the non-breeding season in moult (replacing its feathers) which means that flight is laboured or, for some individuals, impossible for a period of time.



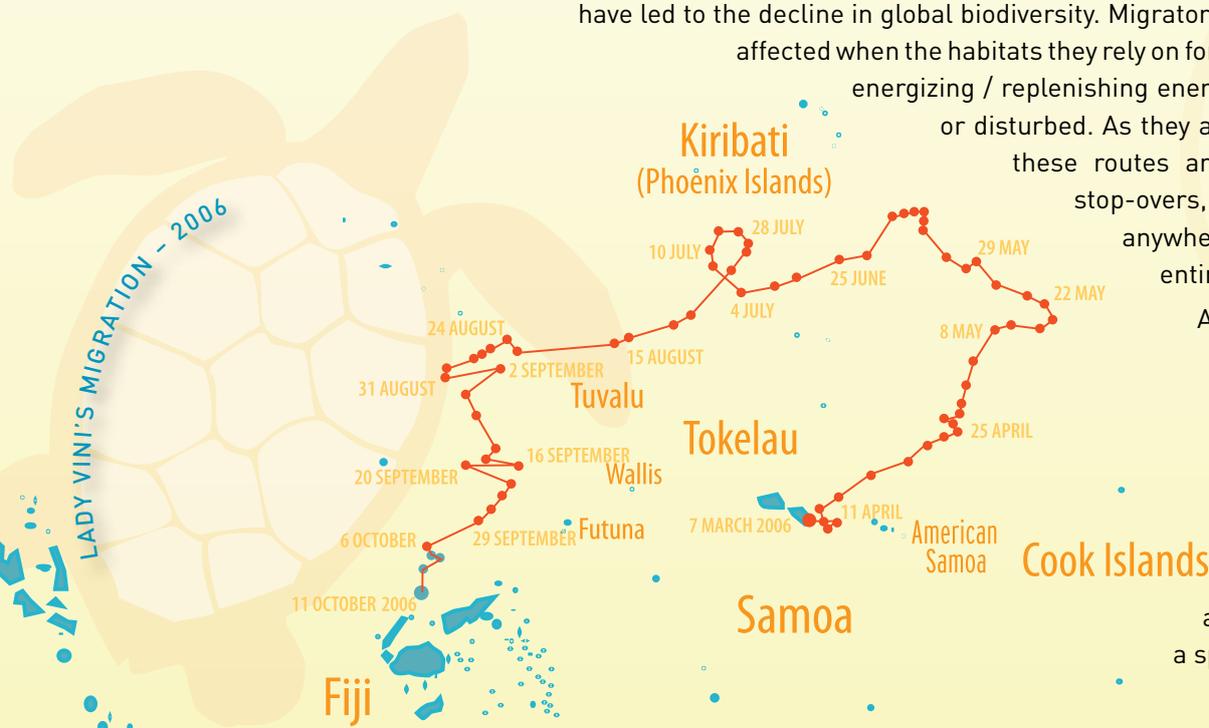
The critically endangered **leatherback** is one of six species of marine turtles found in the Pacific, and the only soft-shelled member of this group of animals. The western Pacific leatherback turtle nests year round at beaches of several western Pacific island nations including the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea. While exhibiting different migratory destinations, it is clear that leatherbacks make lengthy migrations crossing several EEZs and encountering numerous threats as they do so.

Why are we concerned?

Over the years, habitat loss and fragmentation, overharvesting, pollution, climate change and invasive species have led to the decline in global biodiversity. Migratory species are particularly

affected when the habitats they rely on for resting, reproducing, re-energizing / replenishing energy and travelling are lost or disturbed. As they are programmed to travel these routes and make these required stop-overs, the loss of a single site anywhere can jeopardize an entire migrating population.

As shown by the hawks-bill turtle Lady Vini's travels through the Pacific, the successful management of migratory species requires an international chain of collaboration across the entire range of a species.



What is being done?

The Convention on Migratory Species (CMS or sometimes referred to as the Bonn Convention) is the key intergovernmental treaty which focuses on the protection and conservation of these migrating avian, terrestrial and aquatic animal species. The CMS recognizes that wild migratory animals are an irreplaceable part of the Earth's natural system and that these animals by their nature move across national jurisdictional boundaries to reach their feeding and breeding grounds or to escape winter.

The CMS entered into force in 1983 and to date, has 117 Parties – including the following Pacific Island countries:

Pacific Island country	Entered into force
Cook Islands	01 August, 2006
Palau	01 February, 2008
Samoa	01 November, 2005

The CMS has **three fundamental principles**:

1. Acknowledgement of the importance of migratory species;
2. Acknowledgement of the need to ensure that no migratory species becomes endangered;
3. Parties shall:
 - a. promote/support/participate in research relating to migratory species
 - b. endeavour to provide immediate protection for Appendix I listed migratory species
 - c. endeavour to conclude Agreements to conserve Appendix II listed migratory species



Leatherback turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*) laying eggs.
© Martin Harvey / WWF-Canon



Humpback whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) feeding.
© William W. Rossiter / WWF-Canon

Responding to the three

- Encourage the participation of non-Party countries
- Encourage and support the implementation of commitments by Parties and Signatories
- Identify the 30 most threatened migration sites and corridors worldwide and strive towards their protection and management
- Prioritize conservation of critical sites along flyways
- Prioritize protection of coastal zones, marine corridors and high seas habitats

The CMS provides a comprehensive suite of tools allowing range states to tailor conservation and management efforts for a particular species. These include **key management mechanisms** such as:

1 Species Appendix Lists

Appendix I: list of migratory species that are endangered – in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of their range.

Appendix II: list of migratory species with an unfavourable conservation status and requiring international agreements for their conservation and management; additionally, those animals whose conservation status would significantly benefit from international cooperation achieved through an international agreement.

It is also possible for a species to be listed on both Appendices.

2 Agreements or Memoranda of Understanding

Resulting from the framework nature of the Convention, independent instruments can evolve and range from legally binding Agreements to less formal Memoranda of Understanding (MoU).

There are currently three MoU relevant to the Pacific Islands region.

Memorandum of Understanding	Number of SPREP Member Signatories	Number of Collaborating Organisations
Pacific Island Cetaceans	15	7
Dugong	5	1
Shark	5	2

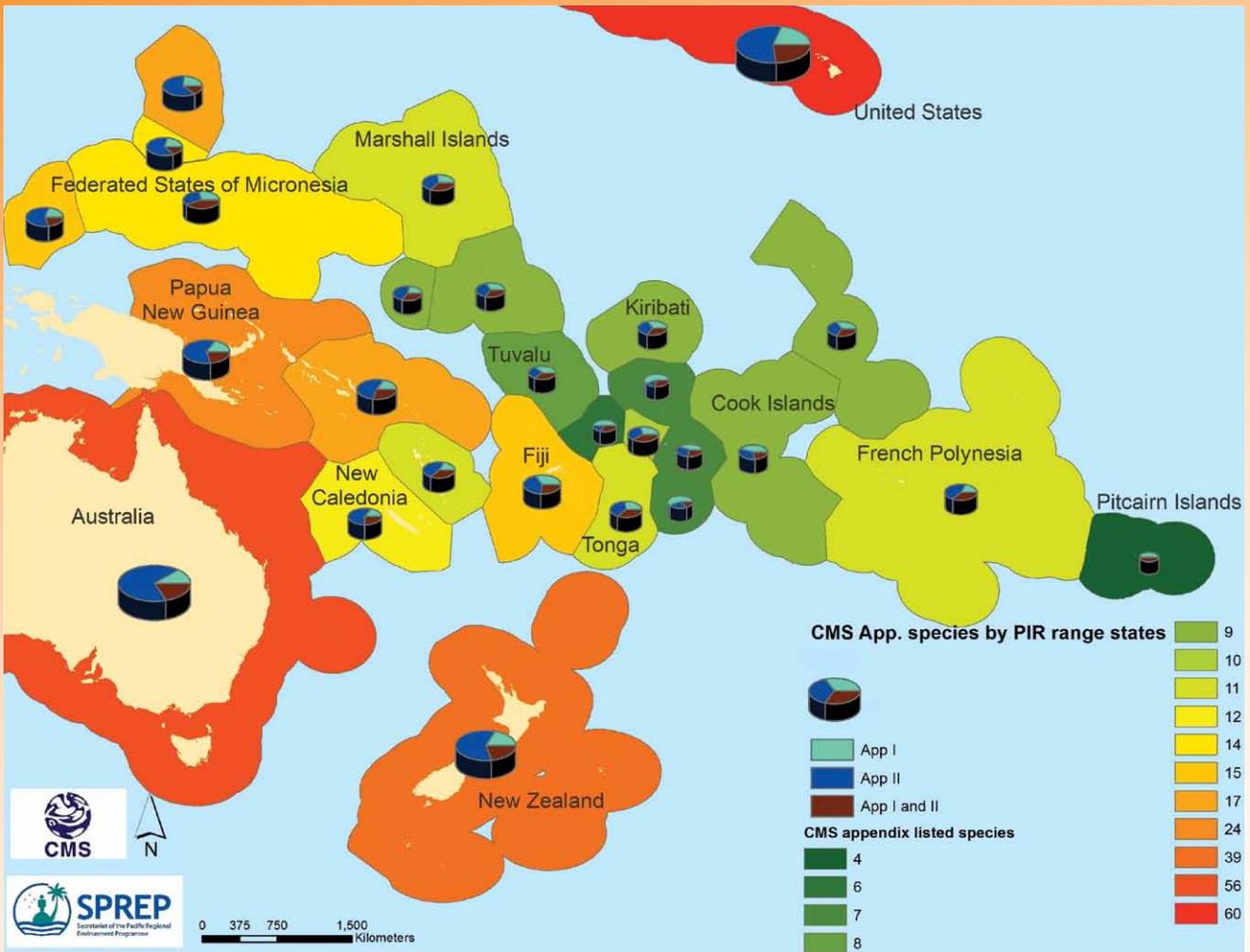
Where appropriate, each Agreement will have coordinated **conservation and management plans** that reflect actions to be taken to restore the migratory species concerned to a favourable conservation status.

The CMS also builds **effective partnerships** by working with existing institutions or processes in the Pacific Islands region to streamline efforts and maximize on existing national capacities. These include *inter alia*:

- establishing a CMS Pacific Officer position at SPREP to support the delivery of CMS commitments by the Pacific Islands region;
- adopting the SPREP Whale and Dolphin Action Plan as that for the Pacific Island Cetaceans MoU;
- strengthened collaboration with other biodiversity related Conventions (eg: CBD; Ramsar; CITES) to streamline migratory species into national plans or processes (eg: NBSAPs).

Threats to migratory species

- Request independent international assessments when infrastructure development projects may disrupt routes of migratory species
- Strengthen enforcement, intelligence and combating transnational wildlife crime through relevant national agencies, Interpol, CITES and World Customs Organisation
- Create incentives to reduce unsustainable use including the full participation of local communities
- Develop an international alert system.



The graphic reflects the number of CMS Appendix listed species in countries and territories of the Pacific region.



The blue whale (*Balaenoptera musculus*), the world's largest living mammal, lists 24 of the above 26 countries as range states.



The only insect on the CMS Appendices, the monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*), has 10 of these countries as range states.



The green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) which is popular due to its traditional value for many Pacific Island communities, has all 26 countries as range states.

For more information: www.cms.int | www.sprep.org



THIS PROJECT IS FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION



SPREP
Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme