

## FROM THE 9TH PACIFIC ISLANDS CONFERENCE ON NATURE CONSERVATION AND PROTECTED AREAS

The 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation Conference and Protected Areas is hosted by the Government of Fiji in partnership with the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, the Pacific Island Roundtable for Nature Conservation and IUCN Oceania.

This media coverage is a partnership supported by the Pacific Media Assistance Scheme (PACMAS), SPREP, University of the South Pacific (USP), Fiji National University (FNU) and the Pacific Island News Association (PINA).

# Conservation leaders receive inaugural Pacific awards



**Ms. Teina Mackenzie on behalf of Mr. Ian Karika; Mr. Manuwai Matawai of Papua New Guinea; Minister Umiich Sengebau from Palau on behalf of President Remengasau Jr; Mr Ronneth John of Vanuatu; Mr Aiyaz Sayed- Khaiyum, Attorney General, Minister of Environment; Dr Bill Albersberg, Professor Randy Thaman; Ms. Audrey Newman**

**SUVA, Fiji - 3 December 2013**

A special ceremony to commemorate the inaugural Pacific Islands Environment Leadership Awards took place in Suva, Fiji last night.

The 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas opened in Suva on Monday with day one ending on a high note as participants

celebrated the achievements and contributions of individuals, communities, non-governmental organisations, private enterprises, and countries towards achieving an environmentally sustainable Pacific.

"People are at the centre of conservation efforts. We must honour, embrace and celebrate our champions," said Mr David Sheppard, Director General of SPREP.

The awards were presented by Hon Mr Aiyaz Sayed- Khaiyum, Attorney-General, Minister for Justice, Anti-Corruption, Public Enterprises, Communications, Civil Aviation, Tourism, Industry and Trade,

Local Government, Urban Development, Housing and Environment.

### **The Awardees of the special categories are:**

**Mr Ian Karika** of the Cook Islands won the award for Excellence in National Leadership in Environmental Sustainability and Conservation. His award was accepted on behalf of Mr Karika by Ms Te Here Koteka and Ms Miria Rongo.

**Mr Manuwai Matawai**, Papua-New Guinea won the Individual Category of the Ratu Aisea Katonivere Award for Excellence in Community Leadership

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**9th PACIFIC ISLANDS  
CONFERENCE ON  
NATURE CONSERVATION  
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## SPREP launches scholarship as tribute to conservationist

By CAROLYN KITIONE  
Journalism student at USP

A lasting tribute has been made to prominent Samoan conservationist Lui Bell by establishing a scholarship in his name.

The scholarship will enable three post-graduate students a chance to further their studies on marine conservation.

Launching the Lui Bell Post-Graduate Scholarship for Marine Species Conservation at the Pacific Islands Environment Leadership Awards last night, SPREP Director General Mr David Sheppard pledged USD\$20,000 on behalf of the organisation to initiate the fund.

Mr Bell was the marine species adviser at SPREP when he passed away last year.

The scholarship is to honour the contributions to and sacrifice he made for marine conservation.

Honouring Mr Bell's contribution to conservation, Mr Sheppard said his "achievements will stand as a beacon for marine conservation in the Pacific region for decades and generations to come."

Mr Bell was a "deeply committed conservationist" and spent over two decades as the driving force behind SPREP's Turtle Action Plans and the Turtle Research and Monitoring Database.

His leadership also resulted in the introduction of the Convention on Migratory Species and the negotiation of a Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Cetaceans in the Pacific Islands, which has 15 SPREP members as signatories.

The Convention on Migratory Species is an intergovernmental treaty concerned with the conservation of wildlife and habitats on a global scale. Cook Islands, Fiji, Palau and Samoa are signatories to this convention.

The Conservation of Cetaceans is an international framework for coordinated conservation efforts which focus on whales, dolphins and porpoises.

According to Mr Sheppard, the scholarship "will provide financial support to Pacific Islands nationals undertaking studies in marine science, with a focus



*The late Mr Lui Bell in whose name a scholarship fund has been set up.*

on conservation of threatened marine species."

"Our target is to achieve a permanent minimum annual funding pool of USD\$60,000 and to provide for three post-graduate students," he said.

The first call for applications will be made in March next year, and will close in June, with a decision on the successful applicants to be announced in July.

At his death, Mr Bell had just started work on a regional project linking turtle conservation and ecotourism, delivering benefits to both threatened species and coastal communities.

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*Carolyn Kitione is a member of the Media Team providing coverage of the 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas from 2 to 6 December in Suva, Fiji. This is a partnership between the Fiji National University (FNU), University of the South Pacific (USP), SPREP and Pacific Islands News Association (PINA) whereby a team of 10 journalism students are mentored by senior reporters as they cover the conference. This activity is funded by the Pacific Assistance Media Scheme (PACMAS).*



# Palau's President named Pacific environment champion

By **ERONI TUINACEVA**

*Journalism student at FNU*

The President of the Republic of Palau, Tommy Remengasau Jr, is the recipient of the inaugural Pacific Champion Award, an honour bestowed as part of the Pacific Islands Environmental Leadership Awards.

President Remengasau was given the award for his numerous achievements as a leader in nature conservation and environmental sustainability.

His accomplishments include banning shark fishing and keeping sharks caught as by-catch in Palau, collaborated with the President of Seychelles to form the Global Island Partnership, and spearheading the campaign to form a new portfolio in New York of Ocean Ambassador as an anchor for efforts to continue ocean conservation and sustainability.

His leading activism has seen him being honoured by *Time* magazine as the Hero of the Environment in 2007.

Accepting the award on President Remengasau's behalf was the Minister for Natural Resources, Environment and Tourism, Hon Mr Umiich Sengebau.

"It is a privilege and honour to receive the award on his behalf. Some of you may know he couldn't be here because this week is the Micronesian Chiefs Executive Summit in Saipan, so he sends his apologies," Minister Sengebau said.

"If he was here, he would be very humbled to receive this award. I know there are also a couple of people he



**Palau's Minister for Natural Resources, Environment and Tourism, Hon Mr Umiich Sengebau receives the Pacific Champion award on behalf of his President Tommy Remengasau from Fijian Attorney-General Hon Mr Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum on Monday night.**

would like to recognise for the award and most especially are the local partners in Palau, Palau Conservation Society and some of the international partners like Nature Conservancy and Conservation International. Most especially are some of the individuals, and I would be sure not to miss Ms Audrey Newman," Minister Sengebau said.

Minister Sengebau also conveyed his gratitude to SPREP and the Fiji Government for hosting the conference.

The inaugural Pacific Islands Environment Leadership Awards was held at the National Gymnasium in Suva last night.

## Environment leaders awards announced

FROM PAGE 1

in Environmental Sustainability and Conservation.

The **Nguna-Pele Marine and Land Protected Area Network**, Vanuatu were awarded for the Community/Group Category of the Ratu Aisea Katonivere Award for Excellence in Community Leadership in Environmental Sustainability.

His Excellency **President Tommy Remengasau Jr** of the Republic of Palau won the Pacific Champion Award.

Accepting the award on President Remengasau's behalf was the Minister for Natural Resources, Environment and Tourism, the Honourable Umiich Sengebau.

Three **Lifetime Achievement Awards**

were announced. The recipients were:

**Ms Audrey Newman**, Hawai'i  
**Professor Randy Thaman**, Fiji  
**Dr Bill Aalbersberg**, Fiji

SPREP would like to congratulate all the winners of the inaugural Pacific Islands Environment Leadership Awards.

Stay posted for more profile news on the award winners.

## Fiji fishermen seek solutions at nature conference

By **JOSEPHINE NAVULA**  
*Journalism student at FNU*

People who are dependent on fisheries need to make some changes in their ways of fishing, a representative of a research centre based in Malaysia said.

WorldFish Centre scientist Phillipa Cohen was responding to concerns from several local resource owners about the significant decrease in catch.

"Most people (are) overfishing and we advise them to decrease their methods like over-harvesting, and for them to balance between their present and future in terms of fishing," Ms Cohen said.

She was at the 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas today.

WorldFish is an international, non-profit research organisation engaged in research for a food secure future.

"Now people are finding it hard to catch fish, because the populations are rising," Ms Cohen explained.

"There are a lot of commercial fisheries going on and, most importantly, pollution that kills the marine life."

Sabeto fisherman Mr Vereniki Sauturaga said their catch was nearing crisis point.

"We manage to catch some fish when we go out fishing, but it's not as many as we usually catch before," he said.



**Morning catch in Fiji. Photo courtesy of Mr Ian Lyons.**

He said he travelled from Nadi on Monday to attend the conference because he hoped to find solutions to their problem.

He said they had made several adjustments to their practices in the hope that fish stock would increase.

"Our village now put up signs for people not to litter near the river or sea because most of the times we see rubbish,"

*Josephine Navula is a member of the Media Team providing coverage of the 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas from 2 to 6 December in Suva, Fiji. This is a partnership between the Fiji National University (FNU), University of the South Pacific (USP), SPREP and Pacific Islands News Association (PINA) whereby a team of 10 journalism students are mentored by senior reporters as they cover the conference. This activity is funded by the Pacific Assistance Media Scheme (PACMAS).*

### Today I learnt ...

We hear from the journalism students providing you with coverage of the 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas



**Ms Shahani Mala, 20 years, journalism student, FNU**

"Today I learnt that the Pacific Islands are doing what they can to preserve their natural resources and the different environment issues that need to be addressed and some ways to solve this using natural solutions."

**Mr Edward Tavanavanua, 19 years, journalism student, USP**

"Today I learnt that as local individuals and communities, we cannot always turn to government leaders and organisations to take action against environmental degradation as the onus is on us to be proactive and work together with them, because we are as much the solution as we are the cause."

**Ms Priya Chand, 22 years, journalism student, USP**

"Today I learnt that basic natural solutions, like planting a tree, really do have a huge impact in the conservation of our environment."

**Mr Eroni Tuinaceva, 22 years, journalism student, FNU**

"Today I learnt the importance of time management. A more accurate way to put it, though, would be that I revisited the importance of time management. This value is of particular importance when one decides to go into the fast-paced, demanding, cut-throat world of journalism. From the start of the day, I seemed to be in 'catch-up' mode. I have yet to master this age old art and hope that by the next assignment, I would have gotten myself sorted and I'll finally be able to stick to the deadlines. Fingers crossed I'll go through with this goal."



# Prof Thaman receives recognition for conservation efforts

By **EDWARD TAVANAVANUA**  
*Journalism student at USP*

The need to motivate and educate youth to understand the interconnectedness of nature and human life was key to efforts in conservation and sustainable development, says Professor Randy Thaman.

The University of the South Pacific academic made the statement when he accepted the Lifetime Achievement Award at the Pacific Islands Environment Leadership Awards in Suva last night.

"We need to get our students to get out and realise that we are part of this bigger world of plants and animals," he said.

Without this knowledge, all attempts in nature conservation and sustainable development would ultimately fail, he added.

Professor Thaman also emphasised the need for balance between modern, scientific and traditional knowledge.

He said he personally believed that traditional knowledge was "more threatened than the plants and animals that we are trying to protect".

Professor Thaman has long been



**Professor Randy Thaman with his Lifetime Achievement Award on Monday night.**

involved in initiatives to safeguard the traditional knowledge of Oceanians.

Commenting on his success, Professor Thaman thanked his wife, Konai Helu-Thaman, and children for supporting his endeavours over the years.

He dedicated his award to USP, which he joined in 1974. He is the university's longest-serving staff member, and is a co-founder of the university's Environmental

Science Studies Programme where he teaches.

"We haven't done the best job in the world, but we've done the best job in the Pacific," Professor Thaman said.

He was also "truly thankful" for the various partnerships he has forged along the way.

He said such partnerships with organisations and communities were crucial and encouraged future environment initiatives to focus on this.

"The partnerships have been very long and very intense, and even though we compete with each other, we have always worked together," he said.

He added that the efforts of today's upcoming environment Pacific leaders also deserved applause.

*Edward Tavanavanua is a member of the Media Team providing coverage of the 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas from 2 to 6 December in Suva, Fiji. This is a partnership between the Fiji National University (FNU), University of the South Pacific (USP), SPREP and Pacific Islands News Association (PINA) whereby a team of 10 journalism students are mentored by senior reporters as they cover the conference. This activity is funded by the Pacific Assistance Media Scheme (PACMAS).*

## Today I learnt ...

We hear from the journalism students providing you with coverage of the 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas

**Ms Justine Mannan, 24 years, journalism student, FNU**

"Today I learnt as Pacific Islanders it is our duty to look after the land we live on and the waters we fish in. Our islands may look peaceful but there are many underlying problems that we face that might determine how bright our environmental future is.

A few Pacific Island countries shared their success stories, so it was nice to know that most island countries are actually doing their part to protect their biodiversity. It was interesting to know that some of the islands in the Cook Islands have not been researched yet, and

these range from volcanic islands to atolls, a very diverse range of island formations.

The 'Natural Solutions' session was informative and interesting. Stuart Chape (from SPREP) talked about climate change issues, and how communities are being undermined when it comes to coping and dealing with climate change.

As the Pacific becomes more urbanised so is the likelihood of these island countries being prone to natural disasters and it is important not to jump for short-term solutions but have a long-term plan because relying entirely on infrastructure solutions is not a solution."



**Ms Josephine Navula, 21 years, journalism student, FNU**

"Today I learnt about the fine example of partnership in Choiseul, Solomon Islands. Choiseul's Ecosystem-Based Adaptation project involves the Solomon Islands Government and several non-government organisations, mainly at the community level, who work together to raise awareness about the value of their forests and mangroves."

# Meet the Christmas Island conservationist

By **SHAHANI MALA**

*Journalism student at FNU*

**R**atita Bebe's work with the Ministry of Environment, Land and Agriculture Development sees her live and work on Christmas Island or Kiritimati in Kiribati.

Ms Bebe is in Suva this week as a delegate to the 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas.

Christmas Island is home to about 6000 people and is a conservation area, with some parts of the island designated closed areas requiring permits to access.

It is also the breeding ground for 19 seabirds and endemic species known as Bokikokiko (Christmas Warbler).

Ms Bebe says the highlight of her work is when she is out in the field working, monitoring birds and turtles, including eradication and control activities on feral cats and rats.

Ms Bebe says: "This will be one of the productive conferences because everyone here came to work together in sharing experiences, ideas, and how we can move forward to continue our duty of safeguarding our island biodiversity for the benefit of our people so we can have healthy islands and healthy people."

"Conservation is important because first of all as islanders we are dependent on our resource. It doesn't matter whether you are from a small country or a big country, we all dependent on our resources, starting from land to sea. So it is really important to manage and sustain resources," said Ms Bebe

"My expectation is to learn and share experiences during this conference on related matters that will assist me, especially on common issues with participants of this important Conference when I go back home," Ms Bebe added.

She said as islanders, "we need to work together to maintain our network and assist one another so we continue living on our healthy islands and ocean".

*Shahani Mala is a first year student at Fiji National University and a member of the Media Team providing coverage of the 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas from 2 to 6 December in Suva, Fiji. This is a partnership between the Fiji National University (FNU), University of the South Pacific (USP), SPREP and Pacific Islands News Association (PINA) whereby a team of 10 journalism students are mentored by senior reporters as they cover the conference. This activity is funded by the Pacific Assistance Media Scheme (PACMAS).*



**Ms Ratita Bebe works for the Kiribati Ministry of Environment, Land and Agriculture Development on Christmas Island.**

## Chubby babies charm delegates



By **WATI TALEBULA**  
*Journalism student at FNU*

**I**t's not every day you get to see a baby at a conference which was why the presence of two charming lads at the 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas caused a stir at the Vodafone Arena in Suva on Monday.

Charming the pants off conservationists were Colby Flannery (pictured above right) and Ki'eli-a-lagi Leqa (left).

Four-and-a-half month old Colby's father is Australian global warming activist Professor Tim Flannery, who was

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the keynote speaker on the opening day of the five-day conference.

This is the first conference Colby is attending, according to his mother Kate Holden,

and the reaction to her baby has been overwhelming.

"Colby feels great as he is greeted by people and lovely ladies," she said.

A shy but charming Colby impressed participants and would respond to them with smiles and giggles while trying to hide his face.

Ki'eli-a-lagi slept in his mother, Penina Solomona's arms, oblivious to the activity around him.



## VIEWPOINTS

## What does the term 'natural solutions' mean to you?

**Vox pop and photos by PRIYA CHAND.**

*Priya Chand is a second-year journalism student at the University of the South Pacific and a member of the Media Team providing coverage of the Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas from 2 to 6 December in Suva, Fiji. This is a partnership between the Fiji National University (FNU), University of the South Pacific (USP), SPREP and Pacific Islands News Association (PINA) whereby a team of 10 journalism students are mentored by senior reporters as they cover the conference. This activity is funded by the Pacific Assistance Media Scheme (PACMAS).*



**Michael Donoghue, Samoa**

Natural solutions to me means making the most of what ecosystems have to offer to support sustainable development by protecting ecosystems and protecting nature. We provide for sustainable development and human health and happiness.



**Zuwena Kikoti, Australian National University**

Natural solutions to me is the way to use the natural environment to solve environmental problems we are facing today.



**Hubert Geraux, New Caledonia**

Natural solutions for me means restoring the win-win link between humans and nature.



**Solongo Khurelbaatar, Australian National University**

Natural solutions to me means the solutions that are in harmony with the surrounding environment and the nature.



**Simon Smale, Australia**

For me, natural solutions means using ecological solutions rather than hard-engineering solutions as cost effective and durable ways of addressing a whole range of environmental issues.



**Taulealeausumai Laavasa Malua, Samoa**

Natural solutions are ecologically-based or ecosystem-based methods or approaches.



**Sainimili Bulai, Fiji**

Natural solutions basically means using alternative sources.



**Trinison Tarivonda, Vanuatu**

Natural solutions to me means the things you can do to manage naturally to address the environment issues that we are facing today such as conservation of marine resources and conservation of forests.



**Pravneil Chand, Fiji**

Natural solutions to me means solving problems with the use of natural methods.

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