

### ISSUE 11 – FEBRUARY, 2015



Happy new year and welcome to our first issue of SPREP-Tok for 2015.

Already, 2015 is promising to be an exciting and productive year for both SPREP and the Pacific region. Here at the Secretariat, our major focus will continue to be the expert delivery of services to our Pacific island member countries and territories in areas of our mandate.

Supporting staff at our Apia headquarters are two out-posted SPREP Officers: one in the Republic of Marshall Islands and the other in the Federated States of Micronesia. Also, in 2015 our in-country presence will be further expanded through seven new project positions based in Fiji, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands through the five-year Pacific Ecosystem-based Adaptation to Climate Change project which is being funded by the Government of Germany.

I hope that you enjoy this issue of SPREP-Tok. As always, we welcome your comments and feedback.

David Sheppard  
**Director General**

### LATEST NEWS



#### WEATHERING FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY IN THE PACIFIC

The Regional Expert Roundtable on Climate Services for Agriculture and Food and Nutrition Security opened in Samoa this week. It brings together a range of experts from the agricultural, climate change and weather sectors to provide guidance on how climate services can effectively contribute to food and nutrition security. [Read more...](#)



#### WALKING THE WEATHER TALK IN SAMOA

Ensuring that local communities better understand meteorological terms and services was at the core of communications and media training for the Samoa Meteorological Service and partners this week. The training was coordinated by SPREP as part of a project funded by the Government of Finland to reduce the vulnerability of local communities to climate change impacts. It brought together participants from the Samoa Meteorological Service, Disaster Management Office and the Samoa Red Cross to identify ways that weather information can be shared so that audiences better understand and are more prepared. [Read more...](#)



### MANAGING MERCURY WASTE A GROWING PRIORITY

The first-ever sub-regional workshop on the Minamata Convention on Mercury was held at SPREP from 19 to 21 January. The workshop, coordinated and organised by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), supported Pacific islands in the early ratification and implementation of the Convention. The workshop was officially opened by Prime Minister of Samoa who noted that Samoa was one of 87 countries to sign the historic Minamata Convention on Mercury in Kumamoto Prefecture in Japan in October 2013. [Read more...](#)



### WETLANDS FOR OUR FUTURE

The annual observation of World Wetlands Day on the second day of February each year marks the day the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands was signed in the Iranian city of Ramsar in 1971. This year's theme for World Wetlands Day – 'Wetlands for our Future' – highlighted the vital importance of wetlands to the survival of humanity. It underpins the importance of keeping these ecosystems healthy and resilient into the future so that they can continue to support both human livelihoods and the unique biodiversity that depend on them. [Read more...](#)



### HIGHLIGHTING THE POWER OF SOLAR IN TUVALU

Representatives from Fiji TV, SPREP and the Tuvalu Electricity Corporation (TEC) have commenced work on collecting footage for a new documentary on the provision of solar power to communities in the remote areas of Tuvalu. The ground-breaking project, run in partnership between the European Union and the Government of Tuvalu, will feature in a 15 minute documentary, funded by PIGGAREP, which will look at some of the successes and challenges that the project has faced in improving access to reliable and environmentally sound energy services to three remote outer islands of Tuvalu. [Read more...](#)



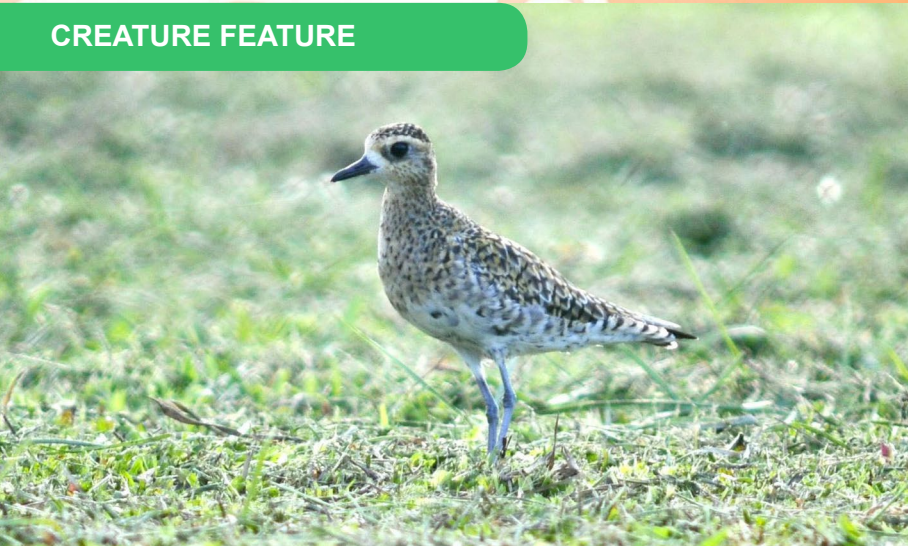
### STUDENTS FROM CHINA LEARNING ABOUT PACIFIC WASTE ISSUES

SPREP will be home for two students from the School of Environment located in Tsinghua University, Beijing, China, over the next four months. Ms. Chang Wang and Ms Qiyang Kuang, marked the beginning of their assignments with SPREP with a visit to the Chinese Ambassador, Her Excellency Li Yanduan. Both students will be based in SPREP's Waste Management Division as part of their work attachment to help them complete their dissertations. [Read more...](#)



### SOLAR POWER BRINGS WATER TO HOMES IN TONGA

Thirteen remote villages in the Ha'apai District of Tonga now have improved access to water thanks to the installation of solar powered water pumps which reduced reliance on diesel fuel for access to well water. Since the pumps which were launched for use in December last year, the fuel and electricity use in these 13 villages is estimated to have been reduced by more than half. This project was funded by Denmark through the SIDS DOCK initiative and was implemented through PIGGAREP+ the Pacific Islands Greenhouse Gas Abatement through Renewable Energy Project. [Read more...](#)



Photos | Gianluca Serra

## THE PACIFIC GOLDEN PLOVER: VOYAGER OF THE SKIES

When I first moved to Samoa, a self-confessed bird nut, I was delighted to observe that between the months of April/May and September/October the meadow of my garden becomes home to a discreet and very quiet bird known as the Pacific golden plover (*Pluvialis fulva*). One moment the bird is there, the next it is gone – only to appear months later for another visit.

The unexceptional appearance of this wader, common throughout the Pacific region, belies some extraordinary talents.

Once you learn the extent of the bird's movements during the year, it is hard not to develop a new found respect for this unassuming little bird. This medium size wader actually breeds during the boreal spring in Siberia and Alaska. Which means that the little winged creature flies around 9000 kilometres, twice a year.

Most of this intercontinental flight is done non-stop over the huge ocean – quite an amazing and perilous adventure for a terrestrial bird. I feel quite convinced that if I could somehow tag the bird that I see in my garden I would discover that the same guy is coming every year. Homing to a specific site is a pretty commonplace – and amazing – capability of long-range bird migrants.

Whenever I have visiting guests I proudly point out my errant plover friend and explain his amazing migratory feat. An Australian friend of mine once contested the assertion that the bird was 'wintering' in my garden. From his perspective, it should be called 'summering!' I argued that the bird is breeding during the Arctic's spring and summer and then spends the autumn and winter in the South Seas. In other words, I postulated that the location of the breeding grounds should determine which hemisphere a creature belongs to.

The Pacific islands resound with stories of great voyagers. Another seasonal visitor to Samoa is the humpback whale. They perform an equally spectacular migration – escaping the Antarctic winter to relax in the tropics. The whales are also 'wintering' in the Pacific (this time my Australian friend would agree) but, unfortunately for my theory, they are breeding during this time! How confusing.

Clearly I still need to refine my theory, but in the meantime I can't help but admire the lovely visitor to my garden – whom I have called Pippo, short for Phillip in Italian.



So why have I chosen to give him a male name? Well, his attire gives him away. His approaching departure is announced by an extraordinary moult process that transforms his inconspicuous winter clothing into an exuberant and chic spring style – revealing unmistakably that Pippo is a male, as females do not change their plumage in the breeding period.

When Pippo moults it is as though he is dressing up for a gallant date – one that will take place thousands of kilometres northward, within the Siberian or Alaskan wild lands.

When I see him getting ready I can reliably say "Good luck Pippo – and bon voyage!" and feel confident that I will see him again in future months.

**By Gianluca Serra**  
 GEF Project Facilitator, SPREP

## KITISENI OVIA – HOOKED ON THE ENVIRONMENT

For 23 year-old Kitiseni Ovia, working in the environment sector came about as a happy accident. Since he was young, Kitiseni wanted to pursue a career in medicine, but with only limited options available for a scholarship he opted to do a Bachelor of Science instead.

Since graduating from USP in 2013 – with majors in biology and chemistry – Kitiseni took up a position in Tuvalu’s capital island of Funafuti as a Project Assistant for the GEF-PAS Integrated Island Biodiversity (IIB) project which looks at ways to improve and protect the biodiversity of Tuvalu.

Kitiseni explains that there is currently very little information available about the animal and plant life of Tuvalu. In fact, only one survey has ever been undertaken previously and it only covered a very small area of Funafuti. Trying to assess how the environment is faring in a given location is very challenging when you don’t have access to reliable and up-to-date information on biodiversity.

“We do have some anecdotal information, such as informal reports from fishermen about the level of fish stocks in the water, but we don’t have any official information or any database through which information about biodiversity in Tuvalu can be recorded.”

All this is about to change. Later this year, a Rapid Biodiversity Assessment, or BIORAP will be conducted over four islands in Tuvalu (Nanumea, Nanumanga, Nui and Funafuti) with a focus on the biodiversity of marine environments.

For Kitiseni, this development is extremely exciting, and will provide the opportunity to work with a team of experts and to learn how BIORAPs are undertaken.



*“I can hardly wait to see how the reefs are doing and actually get some data on the population of fish communities. Since working in this sector I’ve been finding myself getting really interested and excited about the work that I do - particularly the field work which lets me get out in the ocean. Deep down I always wanted to do medicine – but I can see now that I am starting to get hooked on the environment.”*

## COMING UP

- 14 - 19 March:** Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (Japan)
- 11 - 13 May:** Pacific Climate Change Roundtable (Samoa)
- 1 - 9 June:** Ramsar COP 12 (Uruguay)
- 20 - 23 July:** Pacific Meteorological Council and Ministerial Meeting (Tonga)
- 21 - 25 September:** 26th SPREP Meeting (Samoa)
- 30 November - 11 December:** UNFCCC COP 20 (France)



### WE’D LOVE YOUR FEEDBACK ON SPREP-TOK

We’re keen to make some changes to this newsletter over the coming year and would love your feedback to help us get it right. What do you enjoy most about SPREP-Tok? Is there anything you dislike? Do you have suggestions on what we could do better or differently?

Please email [amberc@sprep.org](mailto:amberc@sprep.org) with your comments and suggestions.

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**Our vision:** The Pacific Environment, sustaining our livelihoods and natural heritage in harmony with our cultures.