

ISSUE 14 – MAY, 2015



I have recently returned from the seventh Pacific Islands Leaders' Meeting with Japan (PALM 7) at which representatives from all Pacific countries convened to discuss issues of importance to the region. The meeting was co-convened by the Prime Minister of Japan and the President of Palau, in his role as current chair of the Forum.

This summit was very timely, given the recent announcement of a [Pacific Climate Change Centre \(PCCC\)](#), facilitated by the Grant Aid Program of the Government of Japan, to be located on the grounds of SPREP.

Climate change was a key topic of discussion at the PALM 7 summit and in the resulting PALM 7 Declaration HE Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan formally referenced Japan's intention to "provide comprehensive assistance, in collaboration with SPREP, including the development of the Pacific Climate Change Centre and capacity-building which supports the efforts for tackling climate change by the Pacific region as a whole."

SPREP is looking forward to working with the Government of Japan, and our other partners to continue building the resilience of our Pacific island Members to the impacts of climate change and disasters.

David Sheppard
Director General, SPREP

LATEST NEWS



NEW PACIFIC CLIMATE CHANGE CENTRE TO BE HOSTED AT SPREP

Following a landmark agreement between the Governments of Samoa and Japan, it has been formally announced that a regional centre for climate change will be constructed at the SPREP campus in Apia, Samoa. The Pacific Climate Change Centre (PCCC) will be a centre of excellence in service and support for Pacific island countries and territories on climate change, and will provide a base to host experts, researchers and officials for collaborative and applied research, training and policy initiatives. [Read more...](#)



PLANNING TO BATTLE INVASIVE SPECIES IN WALLIS AND FUTUNA

Invasive species experts from SPREP and Conservation International (New Caledonia) have travelled to Wallis and Futuna to commence work on an action plan designed to address the growing impact of invasive species in the territory. While the islands have a large number of invasive animal and plant species, experts and stakeholders have determined that rats, ants and ornamental plants pose the most serious risk to biodiversity, health and livelihoods. [Read more...](#)



FIFTH PACIFIC CLIMATE CHANGE ROUNDTABLE WRAPS UP IN SAMOA

Earlier this month, more than 200 delegates attended the Fifth Pacific Climate Change Roundtable (PCCR) in Apia, Samoa. At the four-day meeting, key stakeholders from across the region discussed climate change issues and priorities, with a view to strengthening regional coordination and better assisting Pacific island countries and territories to address climate change. Delegates also looked at the voyage toward the 21st Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change which is taking place in Paris at the end of this year. [Read more...](#)



CYCLONE PAM – POST DISASTER NEEDS ASSESSMENT

A team from SPREP travelled to Vanuatu in April to assist in the preparation of a World Bank-led damage and loss assessment. The team found that severe Tropical Cyclone Pam is likely one of the strongest cyclones to have ever made landfall in the Pacific Islands region. Sadly, the cyclone resulted in tragic loss of life along with extensive damage. However, it is believed that greater negative impacts were prevented as a result of the successful implementation of Vanuatu's Early Warning System and Disaster Risk Management plans. [Read more...](#)



YOUTH AS POWERFUL MOBILISERS IN CLIMATE CHANGE DISCUSSIONS

At the Oceania 21 Meeting in New Caledonia, SPREP's first ever Youth Ambassador, Ms Brianna Fruean, stood before delegates to highlight the important role that young people can play in climate change negotiations, particularly with regard to mobilising support for positive outcomes. Ms. Fruean acknowledged the work undertaken by Pacific island youth to address climate change and environment-related issues across the region, emphasising the significant number of young Pacific islanders actively working to bring about a better environment for the region. [Read more...](#)



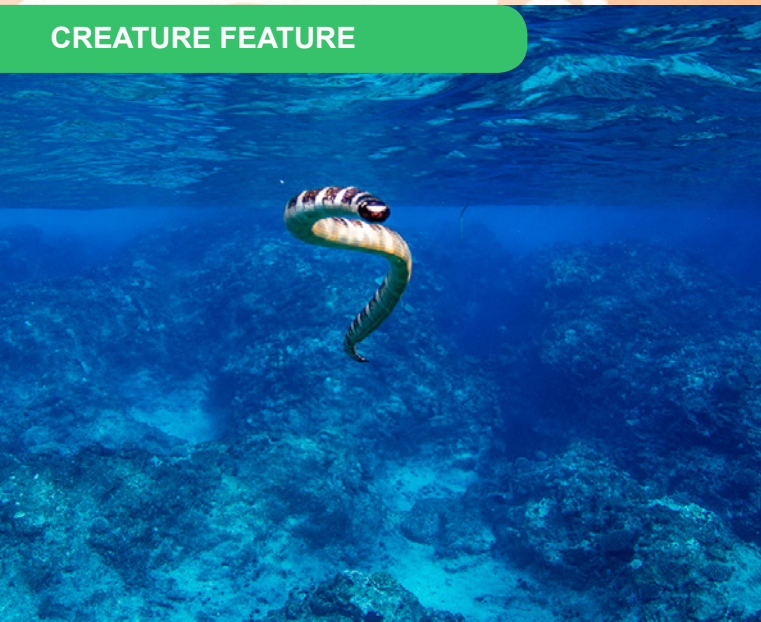
MANAGING THE MOVEMENT OF TOXIC AND HAZARDOUS WASTES

Managing the movement of toxic waste materials between Pacific island countries and their disposal in environmentally sustainable facilities is a critical waste management issue for the Pacific region. At the recent Conferences of the Parties to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions, SPREP hazardous waste experts worked with delegates from the Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Palau, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa and Tonga to bring a Pacific perspective to the global management of toxic chemicals including pesticides, and wastes such as E-waste and asbestos. [Read more...](#)



CELEBRATING WORLD WATER AND FORESTS DAY

Representatives from SPREP attended a special joint celebration of World Water Day and World Forest Day in Apia, Samoa. The theme of event, held at Vaisigano Bridge, was 'Water and Forests for Sustainable Development and Climate Change Resilience'. The event included the launch of the three dimensional model of the Vaisigano Catchment Area, the launch of the Forests and Protected Areas Management Documentary and DVD, the launch of Watershed Management Plans, and the launch of the 2 Million Tree campaign. [Read more...](#)



Feature photos: © Isabella Chowra

THE SPECTACULAR KATUALI OF NIUE

The flat-tail sea snake (*Laticauda schistorhynchus*) is found only on the small island of Niue. Known locally as katuali, these attractive reptiles – clothed in conspicuous bands of black and grey – are a common sight in and around coves and other calm waters around the island. Their significance to the national identity of Niue is evident through their prominence in local handicrafts, legends and songs.

While the common name would suggest that it is a snake, the katuali is in fact a sea krait. The difference between a sea snake and sea krait is small but significant.

Sea snakes are defined by their fin-like tails and flattened scales, traits that have evolved to assist them to swim effortlessly through the water. Sea kraits, however, are thought to be more primitive and are therefore not as well-adapted to sea life.

With less developed tail fins and wide scales on its body, the physiology of the sea krait is similar to that of terrestrial snakes. While the sea snake has a strong preference for the ocean and is ovoviviparous – meaning that it gives birth to live young in the water – the sea krait is comfortable moving about on land to digest food and rest, and even mates and lays eggs on land.

The katuali is small by snake standards, growing only up to one metre in length. Despite being equipped with an extremely toxic venom, the katuali is not aggressive. They are curious in nature though and are commonly known to approach swimmers to take a quizzical look before gliding away to seek refuge in numbers.



Above: A curious katuali rests on land alongside the Lima Pools on Niue. Photo: S. Willson/SPREP

KATUALI FAST FACTS

- Unlike fish, katuali do not have gills and must surface regularly to breathe.
- After mating the females swim into sea caves to lay their eggs. Once the eggs hatch, which usually takes around six months, the infant snakes make their way to the ocean.
- Katuali require access to freshwater to drink. Such sources of freshwater may come, for example, from the outflow of rivers and springs into the sea in coastal areas.
- Katuali are listed as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List. Threats to their survival include habitat degradation, extreme weather events such as cyclones.

PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF THE LITTLE FIRE ANT ACROSS THE PACIFIC

Have you seen the little fire ant on your TV lately? SPREP has recently launched a new regional television campaign to raise awareness of the harmful effects of invasive species – and the dreaded little fire ant is the star of the show.

This tiny ant, only 1.5mm in length, is an introduced invasive species now found widely in the Pacific region including Hawaii, Guam, Papua New Guinea, New Caledonia, the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Wallis and Futuna and French Polynesia.

Little fire ants may be small but they cause massive damage. Forming dense three-dimensional super-colonies, these tree-dwelling ants can fall from vegetation onto people and animals below, stinging their victims and potentially causing blindness in domestic animals.

In natural ecosystems, they prey on, or drive out native fauna, leaving an ecosystem depleted of much of its pre-existing animal life. Once they infest homes and gardens it becomes extremely difficult for families and farmers to tend to plantations and grow crops thus impacting on agricultural production.

As ants are primarily transported by accident, the campaign encourages people to avoid moving plant material between islands unless it has been thoroughly checked and washed.

The ‘Stop the Little Fire Ant!’ television campaign with Australia Plus will run until the end of June. It was produced in partnership with The Pasifika Collective, a New Zealand-based charity which focuses on building professional skills in marketing and education-entertainment approaches across the Pacific region.



The short animation about the little fire ant can be viewed online by visiting www.sprep.org/stopthelittlefireant



A new set of publications about the management of the little fire ant in French Polynesia can be accessed from the SPREP website.

COMING UP

- 1 - 5 June:** *Journées bleues* – Bue Days – conference (French Polynesia)
- 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)



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