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Preparations are well underway for the 25th Annual Meeting of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme to be held in Majuro, Republic of the Marshall Islands from September 30 to October 2 followed by a High Level Ministerial segment on October 3.

Our Annual Meeting brings members, partners and staff together every year to review the work of the Secretariat and help guide our work for the coming year.

We've recorded many achievements and outcomes for 2013 and have since had a busy 2014. SPREP looks forward to next year in supporting Pacific countries to better protect and manage their environments to support sustainable development.

I look forward to reporting back on the outcomes of the meeting in the next issue of *SPREP-Tok*.

David Sheppard
Director General

LATEST NEWS



MARSHALL ISLANDS HOST THE 25TH SPREP MEETING

The 25th Annual Meeting of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme will take stock of SPREP's activities in 2013 and approve a work plan and budget for 2015. Key items on the agenda for the 25SM include the Independent Corporate Review and the Mid-term Review of the SPREP Strategic Plan 2011 – 2015. Other issues under discussion include climate change, solid and hazardous waste, and protection and management of the Pacific Ocean. The High Level Ministerial Segment has three key agenda items – Climate Change Financing, Ocean Conservation and Management and the UN SIDS 2014 Conference. [Read more...](#)



PACIFIC ISLANDS READY FOR ADAPTATION FUND AFTER TRAINING

The Adaptation Fund was established to finance concrete adaptation projects and programmes in developing countries that are parties to the Kyoto Protocol and are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change. To date, the fund has dedicated more than USD 232 million to increase climate resilience in 40 countries around the world. None of these include countries from the Pacific islands. To help address this, a special workshop was held to bring regional representatives together to learn more about the Adaptation Fund, the project cycle, the adaptation fund application process and how they can be applied in the Pacific. [Read more...](#)



EMERGENCY ASBESTOS CLEANUP IN FIJI

Dangerous forms of brown and white asbestos, discovered in the Tamavua Twomey Hospital complex, in Suva, Fiji, are to be removed this month. The asbestos was discovered through the European Union's Pacific Hazardous Waste Management (PacWaste) project, which is being implemented by SPREP. Given the serious ongoing human health risk and the need for immediate action, the EU, SPREP and the Fiji Ministry of Health have agreed to fast-track an asbestos cleanup to urgently address the situation through the targeted removal and disposal of the asbestos present at the hospital. [Read more...](#)



SCHOLARSHIP AWARDED IN MEMORY OF LUI BELL

Ms Saras Sharma has been announced as the recipient of the 2014 Lui Bell Memorial Post-Graduate Scholarship for Marine Species Conservation, established to honour the life and work of the late Lui Bell and his commitment to the conservation of marine species in the Pacific islands. Ms. Sharma is a graduate of the University of the South Pacific and is currently working at the Department of Fisheries in Fiji. She is planning her Masters Degree in Marine Affairs, specifically studying the migration pattern of humpback whales in Fiji waters. [Read more...](#)



CRAFTING TO THE BONGO BEAT!

Earlier this month, women from across Upolu, Samoa had the opportunity to attend workshops on waste-craft – refashioning rubbish into beautiful and sought-after consumer items. In other Pacific island countries such as Fiji, the practice has proven to be a huge success – not just in terms of raising awareness of sound waste management practices but also in providing income to many communities from the sale of items created from the waste materials. [Read more...](#)



COUNTRY REPORTS FOR HEALTHCARE WASTE MANAGEMENT

Reports detailing the current state of healthcare waste management across 14 Pacific island countries and Timor Leste are now available following a regional baseline survey carried out by SPREP consultants between March and May this year. PacWaste – a four-year, €7.85m project funded by the European Union and implemented by SPREP, undertook the regional assessment to determine how healthcare waste is managed by hospitals and health facilities in participating countries and identify the best treatment options for the Pacific. [Read more...](#)



REGIONAL OBSERVATORY FOR BIODIVERSITY AND PROTECTED AREAS

The Biodiversity and Protected Areas Management (BIOPAMA) Programme is pleased to announce the commencement of an important new partnership that will see SPREP as the host organisation for the Regional Observatory for Protected Areas and Biodiversity in the Pacific Islands region. The EU-funded BIOPAMA programme, jointly implemented by IUCN and partners, aims to improve the long-term conservation of biodiversity by promoting the use of the best available science and knowledge and build capacity to strengthen policy on biodiversity conservation. [Read more...](#)



Photo: © Stuart Chape

THE PACIFIC BOA – MASTER OF CAMOUFLAGE

Morning tea time on the SPREP campus is normally a very relaxed affair – but not necessarily for those of our staff who happen to be ophiophobic, or fearful of snakes.

Recently we were joined at morning tea by a very special guest – an adult female Pacific boa. It is highly unusual to see a snake here on Upolu, Samoa. Ophiophobes aside, there were a large number of people keen to meet her. This particular specimen had been retrieved during an environmental survey of Savai'i earlier in the year.

The Pacific boa (*Candoia bibroni*) is a non-venomous snake endemic to Melanesia and Polynesia with a range extending from parts of the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and Fiji through to Samoa and American Samoa.

Sometimes referred to as the Fiji boa or the Pacific tree boa, this species is a small type of boa constrictor that crushes its prey to death using its body as a constrictive coil. It is believed to prey upon lizards, rats as well as small birds and their eggs.

Pacific boa population numbers are thought to be consistently underestimated as these snakes are true masters of camouflage, thanks to their disruptive colour patterning – which can range from red to almost black. This colour variation has, at times, led people to believe that they are different species but currently there is no evidence to suggest that this is the case.

Unlike pythons which lay eggs, the Pacific boa gives birth to live young which, endearingly, are independent from birth and simply wriggle off to lead their own lives. This trait may have contributed to the Pacific boa surviving the introduction of egg-loving mongooses to Fiji, whereas many bird species were not so fortunate.

The harmless Pacific boa looks a lot like another snake species – the brown tree snake (*Boiga irregularis*), which has had an absolutely devastating impact on native birds and bats in other parts of the Pacific, especially on Guam. Thankfully, the similarity between the two snakes stops at their visual appearance.

As for this particular specimen, she and the two offspring that she gave birth to in her short period of captivity have been safely returned to the location on Savai'i in which she was found.



Photo: © Stuart Chape

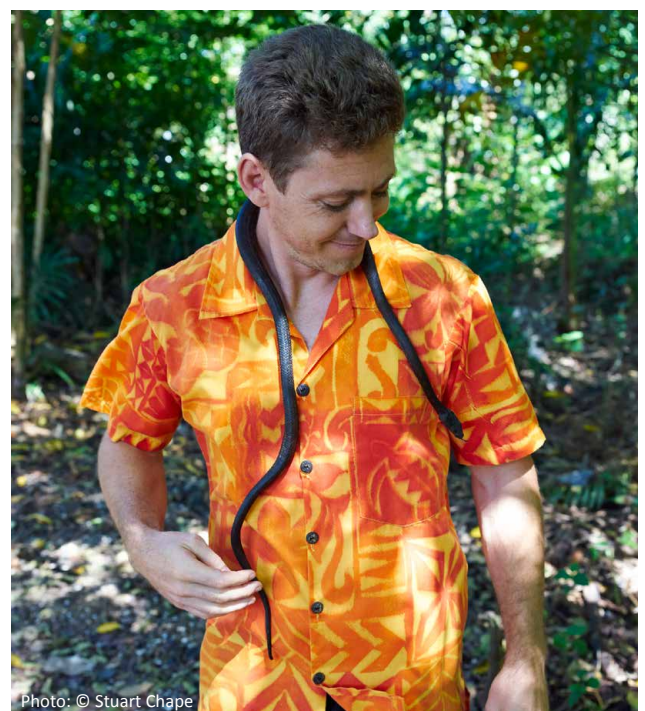


Photo: © Stuart Chape

SPREP STAFF AT UN SIDS CONFERENCE

Before we close the curtains on our role in the third United Nations Conference on Small Island Developing States, it is only fitting to acknowledge the fantastic contribution made by all SPREP staff to this successful event.

It is worth noting that the SPREP seat at the UN plenary and the SPREP stand in the exhibition pavilion were not ever left unattended for the duration of the four-day conference.

In total, 78 of our staff members attended the conference itself and many more provided vital behind-the-scenes work to ensure the smooth running of the side events held at the conference venue and at our campus in Apia.

By way of example, our teapersons Aмоса Tootoo and Tologauvale Leaula (pictured directly below) played a vital role in ensuring that events were set up and catered to a high standard. Ms Leaula explains:

“It was very hard work of course, but so enjoyable to be able to show our beautiful SPREP environment to so many important visitors from around the world.”

Over the course of the conference, SPREP held 15 side events, eight parallel events, 25 executive bilateral meetings, five launches and five signing of agreements. Aмоса and Tologauvale can attest that this amounts to a lot of tea, coffee and finger food!



COMING UP

29 September: Pacific Environment Forum (RMI)

30 September – 2 October: SPREP Meeting of Officials (RMI)

6 – 14 October: CBD COP 12 (Korea)

4 – 9 November: CMS COP (Ecuador)

1 – 12 December: UNFCCC COP 20 (Peru)



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