

ISSUE 09 – OCTOBER, 2014



October was an extremely busy month which commenced with the 25th Annual Meeting of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme in Majuro, Republic of the Marshall Islands. This successful event was preceded by meetings of the Pacific Environment Forum and the Conference of the Parties to the Noumea and Waigani Conventions. It was then followed by the [High Level Support Mechanism workshop](#).

Not long afterwards, I had the pleasure of attending the 12th Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity in Pyeongchang, Korea which met to discuss the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011 – 2020 and the 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets. This event also coincided with the [historic first meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol](#).

All these events provided a valuable forum for SPREP, and our members and partners, to voice concerns and priorities and to report on the very real progress that has been made in our region.

You can read more about these important events in this issue of SPREP-Tok, with many more stories featured on the [SPREP website](#).

David Sheppard
Director General

LATEST NEWS



25TH SPREP MEETING CONCLUDES IN MAJURO, MARSHALL ISLANDS

On the fourth and final day of the 25th Annual Meeting of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, High Level representatives from across the Pacific island region and beyond called for less talk and more action on climate change financing. Other key themes discussed at the meeting included the importance of building island resilience, developing the blue-green economy and the growing meaningful and durable partnerships to achieve common goals. [Read more...](#)



PACIFIC UNITY AT GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY CONFERENCE

Pacific island nations showcased their unity at the 12th Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, sharing the recently endorsed Framework for Nature Conservation and Protected Areas in the Pacific Islands Region with more than 190 governments present at the meeting. The Framework is a significant milestone achievement for the Pacific region, given its alignment to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plans. [Read more...](#)



FORMAL AGREEMENT TO SUPPORT ADAPTATION ACTIVITIES IN RMI

A ground-breaking Letter of Agreement has been signed between SPREP and the Republic of the Marshall Islands to support the development of urgently needed climate change adaptation activities. The Agreement will involve SPREP providing support to the Marshall Islands to develop concepts and project proposals for submission to the Adaptation Fund Board. [Read more...](#)



TARGETING SHIP SOURCED MARINE POLLUTION

Representatives from 13 Pacific island countries and territories gathered in Brisbane, Australia to review and update the Pacific Ocean Pollution Prevention Programme (PACPOL) strategy. This important strategy, implemented in partnership by SPREP and the International Maritime Organization, outlines activities to protect the Pacific islands from the effects of marine pollution. It follows the recent endorsement of the [world-first Regional Reception Facilities Plan](#) which will result in the reduction of waste materials being dumped from ships in Pacific waters. [Read more...](#)



PACIFIC FIGHT AGAINST INVASIVES SHARED WITH GLOBAL COMMUNITY

Islands contain the highest number of extinctions in the world, a significant proportion of which are caused by invasive alien species. At the 12th Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, Pacific islands raised their voice on this issue with a statement made by Ms Ratita Bebe, of Kiribati on their behalf: "As people born and raised on islands we are fully aware of the impacts caused by invasive alien species to our food security, to our health, our economic development and aspirations, and to our biodiversity and ecosystem function." [Read more...](#)



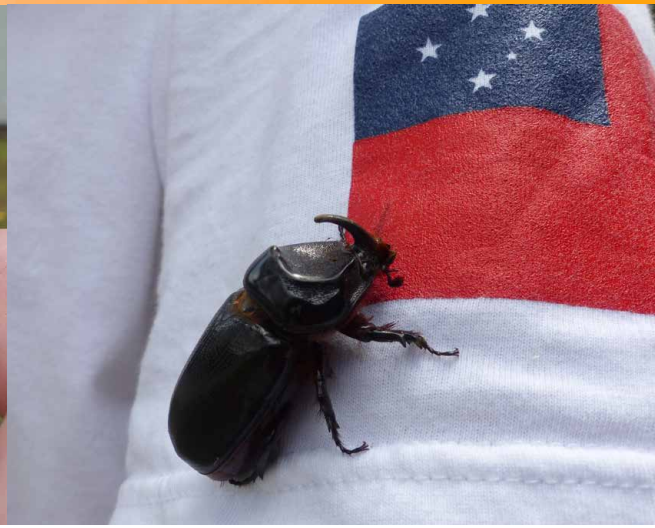
WASTE AND POLLUTION MANAGEMENT: STATUS AND SOLUTIONS

Waste and pollution management in the Pacific region was in the spotlight at this year's Pacific Environment Forum in Majuro, Republic of the Marshall Islands before the SPREP Meeting. At the Forum, around 50 participants gathered to hear presentations on current waste and pollution management initiatives and to identify priority areas for future targeted waste and pollution management intervention, as well as national and regional recycling priorities for the next five years. [Read more...](#)



COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS WORKSHOP IN FSM

SPREP has partnered with key agencies in the region to deliver a specialised cost-benefit analysis training workshop for government officials in Kosrae, Federated States of Micronesia. The workshop took place as part of the Pilot Programme for Climate Resilience – a project that seeks to pilot and demonstrate ways in which climate risk and resilience can be integrated in development planning and implementation. [Read more...](#)



THE UNLUCKY COCONUT RHINOCEROS BEETLE – SCOURGE OF THE PACIFIC

An unfortunate reality of conservation, globally, is that once a species has been categorised as ‘invasive’ we are no longer inclined to admire it for its natural beauty and interesting quirks. However, one can’t help but have some sympathy for the poor old coconut rhinoceros beetle whose fate, it appears, was sealed when it’s prime source of food became financially lucrative.

While it doesn’t come close to the size of the world’s largest beetle – that title belongs to the 17.5cm Hercules beetle from Central and South America – the coconut rhinoceros beetle (*Orcytes rhinoceros*) is nonetheless on the larger side of the beetle length spectrum with adults growing to an average of around 6cm.

The defining feature of these large, dark brown beetles is the conspicuous horn on their heads, which has earned them their memorable name. This horn is used as a tool for burrowing into the crown of coconut palms in order to access the delicious sap inside. In the process of burrowing for sap, the beetle causes injury to the growing tissues, resulting in a reduced yield of coconuts from affected palms and, eventually, death of the tree.

If it wasn’t for the economic importance of coconut palms, the unsuspecting coconut rhinoceros beetle would probably just be another bumbling insect. Instead it has become the target of extensive eradication campaigns in almost all the Pacific countries in which it is present. Currently, these include American Samoa, Fiji, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tokelau, Tonga, Wallis and Futuna and most recently Guam and Hawaii.

Efforts to control the beetle in the Pacific date back to the end of World War II with the formation of the Insect Control Committee for Micronesia (ICCM). In the time that has passed since then, a large number of biological agents – including predators, parasites, and pathogens – have been introduced to control the seemingly indestructible beetle.

These have included the introduction of two large parasitic wasps from Africa and Asia which lay their eggs on the beetle grubs. When the wasp eggs hatch, the larvae gorge their way through the unsuspecting grubs before they have the chance to grow into beetles. While there was a small degree of success with this approach, the thick-skinned coconut rhinoceros beetle ultimately proved too hardy for the programme to record any major success.

The first real breakthrough in controlling the beetle came with the discovery of a virus called *Baculovirus orcytes* which specifically targets and kills the adult beetle. In 1970 a population of virus infected beetles was released in Fiji and the impact on the species’ population was immediately noticeable. While the virus failed to eradicate the beetles altogether, it certainly reduced numbers to levels that were manageable – thus ensuring the local copra industry could continue to thrive.

Nowadays there are a number of techniques that have proven successful in controlling the population of the beetle, such as the use of a chemical attractant to trap them and the release of green muscardine fungus spores.

Currently, however, the preferred control technique is the manual identification and removal of beetle breeding sites in coconut plantations. Requiring no biological agents or harsh chemicals, this strategy has the added bonus of fostering responsible plantation management throughout the region.

FAST FACTS

- Since its discovery in Guam in 2007, the beetle has caused severe damage to coconut palms across the island. The impact of the beetle’s spread was exacerbated by the fact that many bird species (natural predators of the beetle) had been wiped out following the introduction of the invasive brown treesnake.
- Early in 2014, the species was discovered in Hawaii, prompting swift action from authorities to locate and eradicate any existing populations before they take hold.
- Rhinoceros beetles are popular as pets in parts of Asia, in part due to their being clean, easy to maintain and safe to handle.

KATHY JETNIL-KIJINER

Following the official close of the 25th SPREP Meeting in Majuro, delegates and SPREP staff were treated to a celebration hosted by the President, The Hon. Mr Christopher Loeak.

For many, one of the highlights of this special function was the chance to meet 26 year old Marshalese poet – Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner – and to hear her perform the poem that wowed global leaders at the World Climate Summit in New York only the week before.

Ms Jetnil-Kijiner was one of just four people chosen from 544 nominees to address Ban Ki-Moon’s global assembly on climate change in New York. Addressing the official summit opening, Jetnil-Kijiner performed a poem called [Dear Matafele Peinem](#), written in the form of an ode to her young daughter.

In the poem, she urges world leaders to take fast and meaningful action on climate change, and references the global groundswell of support for such action:

“There are thousands out on the street,
marching with signs,
hand in hand,
chanting for change NOW.
They’re marching for you, baby.
They’re marching for us.
Because we deserve to do more than just survive...
we deserve to thrive.”

Reducing many world leaders to tears with her stirring and impassioned performance, Jetnil-Kijiner received a standing ovation during which her partner and baby daughter joined her on the stage.

The theme of fighting against feeling voiceless and powerless is a pervasive one in Jetnil-Kijiner’s work. She first came to international attention in 2012 at the London-based international poetry festival – Poetry Parnassus. At the festival she performed her poem [Tell Them](#) in which she implores her friends in the United States to tell everybody that they can about the urgent situation faced by her home country in the face of rising sea levels. The poem ends with the powerful refrain:

“Tell them that we don’t want to leave.
We never wanted to leave.
We are nothing without our islands.”



COMING UP

- 4 – 9 November: CMS COP (Ecuador)
- 12 – 20 November: World Parks Congress (Australia)
- 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.