



ISSUE 10 – NOVEMBER / DECEMBER, 2014



At this time of year it's natural to start to reflect on the year gone by. Thinking back on 2014, it has truly been such an important year for the Pacific environment, for small island developing states and, indeed, for SPREP. A personal highlight was participating in the Mua Voyage's recent expedition to Sydney for the World Parks Congress. You can read more about this, and see some spectacular photographs, in the news below. This story, and also that of [the voyage of Ariti the turtle](#), really underlines how the Pacific Ocean is indeed the lifeblood for our people and our marine species.

The Congress proved to be a fruitful and important gathering, during which SPREP signed two new Memorandums of Understanding with the Secretariats of the [Convention on Biological Diversity](#) and the [Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora](#). These important agreements can only serve to strengthen our common goals to conserve and preserve our environment.

As this is our last issue of *SPREP-Tok* for the year, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your support over the past 12 months and encourage you to watch our short [end of year video](#) which highlights some of our achievements from the past year. We could not have celebrated so many successes without you.

We look forward to continuing our journey together in 2015.

David Sheppard
Director General

LATEST NEWS



MUA VOYAGE SETS THE SAILS FOR A NEW FUTURE

The Director General of SPREP joined Pacific leaders and regional and international partners as the Mua Voyage of traditional ocean sailing canoes came to a dynamic, colourful and historic conclusion in Sydney. The four traditional voyaging canoes from Cook Islands, Fiji, New Zealand and Samoa sailed to Sydney, bringing a message of hope and progress and a call for unity and harmony between people and nature. In true Pacific spirit, the Voyaging Societies of Cook Islands, Fiji, New Zealand, Samoa and Tonga, worked as one to bring the Pacific voice to the World Parks Congress. [Read more...](#)



REDUCING INTERNATIONAL SHIPPING EMISSIONS

As the world counts down to the UN conference on climate change, here in the Pacific a regional gathering took place to discuss air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions from international shipping. Participants at the special workshop discussed Annex VI of the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, known as MARPOL. This Annex deals with the prevention of air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions from ships. [Read more...](#)



COLLABORATION AND COORDINATION AT WORLD PARKS CONGRESS

Partnerships, regional support, leadership and inspirational stories were the focus of a side event hosted by SPREP at the World Parks Congress. The scene was set with an opening song entitled 'Oceania – a Hymn for the Pacific', featuring different artists from the Pacific. Set to a series of images from across the Pacific islands region, the song was a fitting symbol of the growing recognition of the need for collaborative partnerships and journeying together on 'one vaka'. [Read more...](#)



OUR PACIFIC, OUR FUTURE

Regional solidarity, committed international partnerships, education and the need to look beyond the perceived barriers to successful conservation, were at the forefront of an informal talanoa (talk) between Pacific island leaders at the World Parks Congress in Sydney. The Prime Minister of Cook Islands, Mr Henry Puna; President of Palau, Mr Tommy Remengesau Jr; and President of Kiribati, Mr Anote Tong, highlighted these issues in the context of effective leadership for ocean conservation and protection of Pacific island fisheries. [Read more...](#)



NATURAL SOLUTIONS FOR BEACH RESTORATION

An innovative set of techniques developed specifically for the strengthening and rehabilitation of beaches in the Pacific island region have been put to the test in Vava'u, Tonga. The beach rehabilitation guidelines and practical interventions – developed over the past two years and tested in Samoa, Vanuatu and Kiribati – are designed to limit and, where possible, stop continued erosion on affected beaches in the region and put in place strategies to try to reverse existing damage. [Read more...](#)



PREPARING MEDIA FOR DISASTER RESPONSE

An earthquake leading to a tsunami in Samoa was the mock 'disaster' at the core of a simulation exercise designed to test the roles of national media. Held on a wet and windy Monday, the simulation exercise was facilitated by the Samoa Disaster Management Office. The mock 'earthquake causing a tsunami' was the prompt for the national media to practice who will be giving directions, what actions were to be taken and how these would be done. [Read more...](#)



CAMPAIGN NOMINATED FOR GREEN STAR AWARD

The 2014 'Small Islands, Weather Together' campaign has been nominated for a Green Cross 'Green Star Award' for its efforts to strengthen weather and climate services for all small island nations. This campaign, developed by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), has now reached more than 100 million people in over 50 countries, and included a [23 minute television programme](#) broadcast throughout the Asia Pacific region via the Australia Plus Network and other broadcasters. [Read more...](#)



Photos (inset) | Te mana o te moana



ARITI'S AMAZING JOURNEY

Early last year a juvenile loggerhead turtle was found by a fisherman near the village of Teahupo'o on Tahiti. The turtle had sustained injuries, presumed to be from the crashing waves which the area is known for, so she was taken to a special turtle clinic to recuperate.

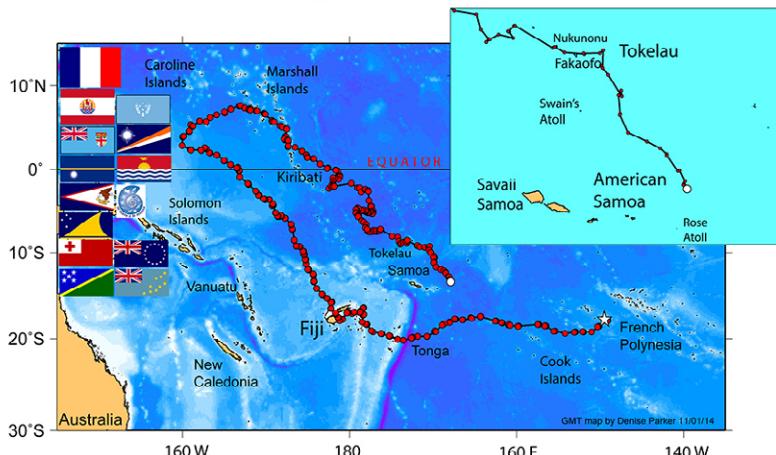
The turtle, subsequently named Ariti, would go on to become the first loggerhead turtle ever to be satellite tracked from French Polynesia. And the phenomenal journey that she commenced after her release on May 24, 2013 would go on to amaze people from all around the world.

In the 531 days after her release Ariti travelled an astonishing 13,679 kilometres, on a journey that took her through 12 different Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) as well as through high seas and international waters.

The last known leg of her journey saw her travel through Tokelau and into American Samoan waters. Unfortunately on October 19 this year, when she was 130 kilometres north of Rose Atoll, the transmitter stopped. Hopefully, this was because the batteries finally ran out. The sad reality is that there is always the chance that Ariti, like many other turtles every year, became an incidental victim of the Pacific tuna fishery.

FINAL MAP:

2013-2014 satellite track of loggerhead, Ariti, rescued by local fisherman and rehabilitated
 Dual TAM-2639 tags ID 42717, 53771 Duty cycles offset - 8 hr on, 120 off CCL: 68.9 cm
 Released 24 May 2013 Days transmitting: 531 days
 Distance traveled: 13,679 km



Pictured above: Ariti's amazing journey, made possible through the work of Te mana o te moana and supported by the United States National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Department of Environment of French Polynesia (DIREN).

Loggerhead turtles like Ariti are seasoned international voyagers. In fact, one of the reasons why marine turtles are facing a high risk of extinction is that they are highly migratory and frequently cross different political and jurisdictional boundaries. This makes them especially hard to protect, even with growing support for International Agreements such as the Convention on Migratory Species and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species.



Satellite tracking programmes and stories such as Ariti's provide valuable data on turtle migration and also help to spread the message that marine turtles are shared resources and that everyone is responsible for helping to conserve them.

One of the pioneers of using satellite and metal tags to monitor sea turtles was the late [Lui Bell](#) (pictured above) who worked as SPREP's Marine Species Adviser for seven years. Two years on from his sudden passing, Lui's absence at SPREP is still palpable.

Stories such as Ariti's are a fitting reminder of Lui's legacy. The information obtained as a result of his work significantly improved our understanding of the movements of marine turtles like the loggerhead turtle, and his tireless work to protect the species lives on through initiatives such as TREDS – the Turtle Research and Monitoring Database System.

Here's to Lui for his contribution to the conservation of these beautiful creatures. And here's to Ariti – may your journey continue for a long time to come.

FEALOFANI BRUUN – ASSISTANT CAPTAIN OF THE GAUALOFA

By Kevin Dayonga

She's known as Fani to most of her friends, a young female voyager from Samoa. I met Fani when we were in Apia in October 2010, forming the Pacific Emerging Environmental Leaders' Network (PEEL), an initiative of SPREP, which gets together young professionals who have a shared vision for improved environmental management and sustainable development.

Fani started sailing when she was five years old and grew up on a yacht. In 2009 she joined the Samoan Voyaging Society as one of the crew members of the Gaualofa. The Voyaging Society has the aim of promoting positive Samoan cultural values, respect for the ocean and nature, individual and social responsibility, discipline and integrity.

Fani says that voyaging changed her as a person. Within a few years she rose from a normal deckhand to one of the senior members of her vaka. Fani believes that being one of the captains in a male dominated field is a privilege and honour, and very challenging:

“The lives of people are in your hands, you have to think about everyone else and not yourself. I'm very honoured to have such a great crew.”

The crew that she's currently with is made up of Tongans, Samoans, Fijians, Cook Islanders and an American. Coming to Sydney with the Mua Voyage is part of her role as an environmental advocate.

“From my personal opinion, it is about inspiring the leaders to think for a moment and be proactive about what they are doing. The message that is brought is for them - I may not think like a scientist or talk eloquently like a politician but I and other members come with our hearts. We bring with us the voices of our people with the sails – with the backing of our ancestors. We are front liners, we will be affected first with sea level rise, ocean acidification is happening and we would like our voices be heard.”

“We need to take ownership of what we have, be proud of it, look forward don't look back, your ancestors will help guide you into the future. To young women, nothing is too high... like the wave, you don't go through the wave, you go over the wave. To my crew that I came with, I trust that they will return with a different mindset and new approach and attitudes towards their environment.”



Pictured above: Fealofani Bruun, fourth from the left, with the other crew members of the Gaualofa in Sydney for the World Parks Congress.



WE'D LOVE YOUR FEEDBACK ON SPREP-TOK

We're keen to make some changes to this newsletter in the new 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 with your comments and suggestions.