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Editorial



Whales and humans have a long history of interaction. Initially both feared and revered by early societies, recent archaeological finds demonstrate that whales have also been actively hunted for over 8,000 years. As a model for the sustainable utilization of marine resources, however, whaling has a dismal record. The history of organised whaling since the 18th century, with its profound and often romanticized consequences for the Pacific, is a story of rapid, repetitive overexploitation driving some species to near-extinction.

Since 1946, control over global whaling has been attempted by the International Whaling Commission, a body that now includes five Pacific Island nations. Meetings of the IWC have become contentious, as pro- and anti-whaling members vigorously debate the most appropriate balance between conserving whales and harvesting them. Since 1986, most members have observed a moratorium on commercial whaling. Outside of the IWC, many regional nations have supported a call for the South Pacific to become a whale sanctuary; within it, Pacific Island members have been lobbied strongly by proponents of both sides. Such efforts are only likely to intensify in future.

Early whaling declined in part due to competition from cheaper alternatives produced by the petroleum industry. Ironically, we have also consumed oil at a rapid rate. In little over 150 years, we have reached a point where the exhaustion of all known oil reserves can be foreseen. As the price of petroleum continues to rise, attention will no doubt return to other, renewable sources of oil, bringing greater urgency to the debates over whaling. If industrial whaling does resume, we can only hope that the lessons of the past will be remembered. Sulang,

Chris Nelson, PIMRIS Coordinator

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Rock carvings near Ulsan, South Korea, depict ancient whaling activities.



Directory

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New Faces, New Places

Ken MacKay arrived to take up his position as the Director of USP's Institute of Marine Resources (IMR) at the start of September. Previously the Field Program Coordinator of C-SPOD II (the second phase of the Canada-South Pacific Ocean Development Program of the Canadian Agency for International Development), Ken is no stranger to the Pacific region. He also served as Director General of ICLARM, the International Centre for Living Aquatic Resources Management (1991-1993) and has over 35 years of experience in project management, research and teaching in natural resources management, aquaculture and agriculture in Canada, Asia, Africa and the Pacific region. Ken is also a keen rugby player.



Alefina Vuki has been appointed as the Acting Chief Executive of Fiji Fisheries as of September 8 by the Minister of Fisheries and Forests, Konisi Yabaki. Ms Vuki has previously served as Director for Women in the Ministry of Women, Culture and Social Welfare.



Professor Moto Miyata ended a 6-month Visiting Professorship at USP in July after conducting a course in physical oceanography for 35 students from around the region. The course was a joint project of POGO, the Partnership for Observation of the Global Oceans (a consortium of major oceanographic institutions across the world) and the Nippon Foundation. Prof. Miyata has previously worked at the Universities of Tokyo and Hawaii, the Institute of Ocean Sciences in British Columbia and NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

Emeline Tupou is currently on leave from her post at the Ministry of Fisheries in Tonga, vacationing in the USA. She completed a work attachment at the Coordination Unit in May and attended the PIMRIS Steering Committee meeting at the same time. She commenced at the Ministry as a Fisheries Trainee in December 1999. Her article on the status of the Ministry library can be found on page 10 of this issue.



57th International Whaling Commission Meeting



This year's annual meeting of the International Whaling Commission concluded in Ulsan, South Korea, on June 24, with no change to the official moratorium on commercial whaling but renewed controversy over Japan's whaling activities and



allegations of vote-buying involving several Pacific nations. The meeting welcomed 9 new members to the IWC, including Kiribati and Nauru, bringing its total membership to a record 66 countries.

The IWC was established in 1946 "to provide for the proper conservation of whale stocks and thus make possible the orderly development of the whaling industry". Initially a forum solely for whaling nations, the nature of the IWC has altered as some existing members have ceased whaling activities and other non-whaling countries have joined. Striking the right balance between conservation and development has become an on-going debate within the body since the 1970s. In 1979, a proposal to end commercial whaling of all species except minke whales was adopted and a moratorium on pelagic whaling came into effect in 1986. Exceptions for subsistence whaling and scientific research have been made, but Japan's scientific whaling program has been criticised as little more than commercial whaling in disguise. Pro-whaling nations led by Japan have consistently introduced proposals to end the moratorium in recent years. This year was no different.

The Danish Chairman, Henrik Fisher, opened the meeting on June 20. Keo-Don Oh, South Korea's Minister of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, and Maeng Woo Park, the Mayor of Ulsan, welcomed delegates and observers. 57 commissioners were present at the opening ceremony and others arrived during the meeting. Most commissioners were accompanied by panels of advisers.

During review of the agenda, Japan proposed deleting items on sanctuaries, whale-watching, killing methods, small cetaceans, health issues and a Conservation Committee. It has disputed the legitimacy of the IWC as a forum to discuss these matters. However, all of these were retained on the agenda following several close votes. In the afternoon Japan proposed that all votes be conducted by secret ballot (as has been the case for election of officials and meeting venues since 1999), arguing that this would liberate members from undue pressure. Other members interpreted this as an attempt to reduce the transparency of proceedings. The proposal was also defeated at vote.

The Scientific Committee's report on certain whale stocks advised that some (but not all) populations of humpback and right whales in the southern hemisphere showed signs of recovery. Concern remained over the status of several species in other areas, where low populations are endangered due to ship strikes, bycatch and oil and gas developments in their feeding grounds. Antarctic minke and common minke, blue, fin and bowhead populations in the Pacific were also discussed.

Day 2 opened with a call from St Lucia for a private meeting regarding meeting procedures and this was held over objections raised by Australia. Discussion afterwards centred on aspects of the rules governing whaling. Japan proposed an amendment that would effectively have lifted the moratorium on commercial whaling, but this was defeated at vote. Terms of reference for a technical workshop on killing methods and animal welfare issues to be held before the 2006 meeting were agreed to.

Aboriginal subsistence whaling, scientific permits and sanctuaries were discussed the following day. Quotas for subsistence whale hunting were maintained or reduced. Japan presented plans for a new scientific research programme under Article 8 of the IWC Convention, which allows members to issue special permits to "kill, take or treat whales" for this purpose. The necessity of this research was questioned and a resolution calling for the programme to be withdrawn or conducted only via non-lethal methods was passed. Japan said it would proceed anyway, taking 935 whales (mostly minke).

Other matters discussed at the meeting included whale-watching, small cetaceans and a report from the Conservation Committee. All met some controversy as members disagree on whether the IWC has a legal mandate to take responsibility for these matters. However, broad agreement was reached, as at past meetings, that advice from the Scientific Committee on these matters should be considered. Even if the IWC cannot regulate on them, it is argued, individual governments will be informed and able to take action as required. On this basis, findings on the biological impacts of whale-watching and guidelines for conducting such activities were presented; the status of various species of porpoise and other small cetaceans were outlined; and several recommendations on conservation, including a programme of research on whale deaths and injuries caused by ship strikes, were accepted.

Not surprisingly, political repercussions from the meeting continued after its conclusion. Tuvalu, the Solomon Islands, Kiribati and Nauru were all criticized by Australia and New Zealand for voting with Japan on a number of issues. A majority of Pacific Island states have already declared protection for whales in their territorial waters, supporting the concept of the entire South Pacific becoming a whale sanctuary (see map at: http://www.wwf-pacific.org/fj/whales_campaign_map.htm).

New Zealand delegates reiterated claims that a number of poor IWC members had voted according to promises of aid from Japan and ABC TV in Australia broadcast a documentary (*Whale Wars*) which supported these allegations with interviews conducted in a number of Pacific and Caribbean countries. Japan has often countered that it gives aid to many anti-whaling nations, too -- and that Australia and New Zealand could just as easily be accused of buying votes with the foreign aid they provide.

The Prime Minister of Tuvalu, Maatia Toafa, denied accusations that his country's voting was swayed by financial assistance from Japan. He said his country was able to form its own opinion on the issue independent of outside influences. Japan had supplied aid money to Tuvalu for capital projects for about a decade, whereas Tuvalu only joined the IWC in 2004 and had received no extra money or indications of it from Japan since that time, he said.

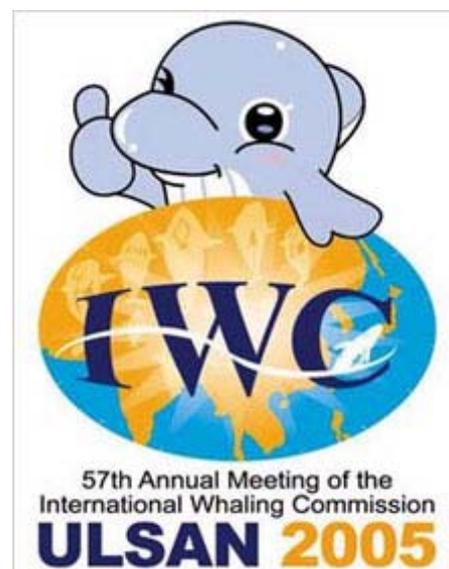
Australian Environment Minister Ian Campbell was most critical of the Solomon Islands, having been personally assured by Solomons PM Sir Allan Kemakeza that his government would abstain from the vote on a return to commercial whaling just a few weeks before the IWC meeting. On Day 2 of the meeting, however, at the launch of restorations to Honiara International Airport (to which Japan will contribute more than US\$1,000,000) it was announced that the Solomon Islands would support Japan in various international fora, to reciprocate Tokyo's tangible assistance. This turnaround also drew criticism at home, the opposition describing it as "regrettable and damaging to the country's regional and international image". The Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation (SIBC) carried reports that Paul Maenu'u, the country's Fisheries Minister and IWC commissioner, had defied a cabinet decision to abstain from voting.

IWC commissioners from Nauru and Kiribati both rejected Campbell's criticism and stated that their support for a return to commercial whaling was based upon concern that reviving whale numbers could affect their fish stocks. They argue that some species have the potential to devastate tuna populations, upon which their countries rely for food and export earnings.

Japan, at the end of this year's meeting, repeated warnings it has given previously that it might withdraw from the forum and resume commercial whaling outside of its auspices. Other commissioners voiced concerns that the IWC has failed in its mandate and needs to be replaced with a new organisation with more rigorous mechanisms for dispute resolution.

The next IWC annual meeting will be held in the Caribbean.

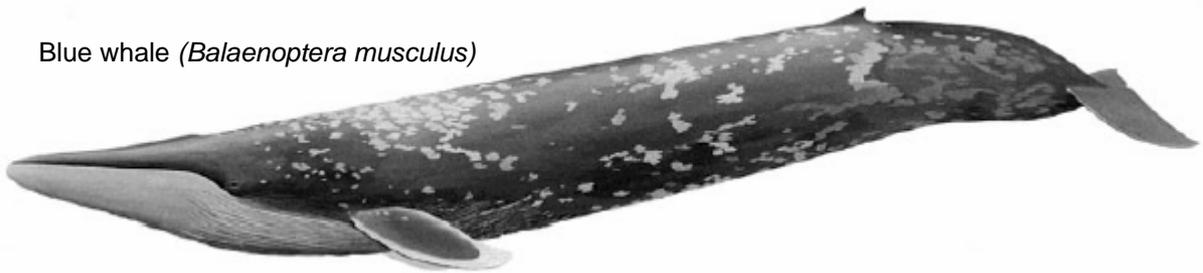
For further reading, the IWC's website is: <http://www.iwcoffice.org/>



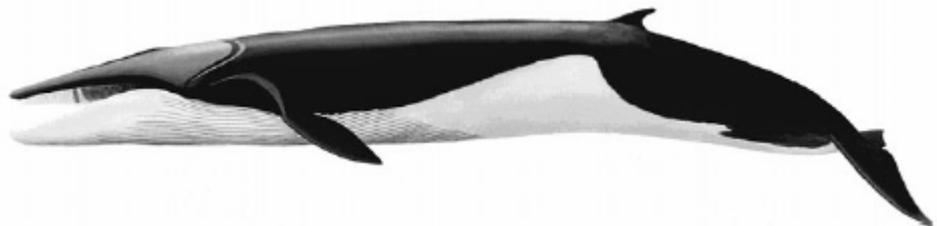
A Guide to the Large Whales of the Tropical Pacific

More than half of all known species of whale live in Pacific waters. Shown here to scale are all of the large whales commonly found around the Pacific Islands. The majority are baleen whales (Suborder Mysticeti) – filter feeders that strain krill and plankton in Antarctic waters and generally fast during their migrations north to breed and rear young. Of the toothed whales (Suborder Odontoceti) the largest is the sperm whale (up to 18 metres). They have a wider diet consisting principally of squid and some fish species. Smaller pygmy, dwarf and beaked whales are also found in the region.

Blue whale (*Balaenoptera musculus*)



Fin whale
(*Balaenoptera physalus*)



Sei whale (*Balaenoptera borealis*)



Humpback whale
(*Megaptera novaeangliae*)



Bryde's whale (*Balaenoptera edeni*)



Minke whale (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*)



Sperm whale
(*Physeter macrocephalus*)



(Source: Carpenter, K.E.; Niem, V.H. (eds.) 2001. *FAO species identification guide for fishery purposes. The living marine resources of the Western Central Pacific. Volume 6.* Rome, FAO. pp.4017-4020.)

Whaling and Whale-Watching in the Pacific

The hunting of whales by humans in some parts of the Pacific has a long history. Recently discovered rock carvings near Ulsan in South Korea (reproduced on the banner for the IWC meeting there this year) depict several species of whale – right, sperm and humpback -- surrounded by boats with human figures, floats and harpoons. Large quantities of whalebone have also been uncovered in the area, indicating that whaling activities were a significant part of life for communities there in the period between 6,000 and 1,500 BC.



Many other Pacific communities, however, regarded whales as deities and would not kill or make use of them. Occasionally, coastal communities would scavenge beached whale carcasses. The rarity of sperm whale teeth acquired in this way made them possessions highly valued in some Pacific societies and early Chinese traders bought them from European whalers specifically for barter with islanders. *Tabua* remain an important element of customary ceremonies in Fiji today.

The pursuit of whales for oil and bone on an industrial scale from the 18th century drew hundreds of vessels from Europe and the new United States to the Pacific. British whaleboats ventured into the eastern Pacific as early as 1776, but it was vessels based in New England that came to dominate the industry. Smaller fleets from other European countries also conducted whaling in the region. The effects on Pacific communities were profound.

Having exhausted populations of whales common to the northern Atlantic and Arctic Oceans, these distant-water whaling fleets basically repeated this process as new grounds were discovered, first off South America and then westward to the new colonies of eastern Australia, New Zealand and the islands of French and Central Polynesia in between. In 1819, further whale populations off Japan and, later, in the northern Pacific, were discovered and pursued. By the mid 1800s it is estimated that around 800 whaling vessels were making regular circuits of the Pacific – typically along the equator or in the eastern Pacific grounds during the northern winter, then up to the Japan and Arctic grounds in the northern summer.



Provisioning whaling vessels became an industry in itself for many Pacific ports. Being large vessels (generally between 300 and 400 tons) they could stay at sea for extended periods, but had no ready supply of fresh food and water or firewood. Western ships were not permitted to land in Japan and some island groups, particularly in Melanesia, gained reputations as being inhospitable to whaling crews. Ports located “along the line” (of the equator) or in the central Pacific thus became regular stopovers for whaling vessels seeking to offload oil, replenish their provisions and make repairs. Crew members took the opportunity to enjoy liquor and the company of local women.

Although Hawaiian ports were the most commonly visited, the broader economic and social impacts of the whalers were experienced across the Pacific. Sudden economic growth attracted many villagers to the urban areas, affecting many aspects of traditional life, from crop production and trade to politics and health. Diseases against which islanders had no natural immunity, particularly measles, caused major epidemics. Local men replaced Westerners on many boats, eventually accounting for 20% of all whaling crews. Ironically, this was often because the Europeans found the Pacific way of life better than at home; up to 3000 deserted the whaling ships to settle or become beachcombers on the islands.

The nature of whaling changed dramatically in the mid-19th century due to technological advances. The emergence of the petroleum industry saw cheaper substitutes for whale oil become available and swifter steamboats could pursue more species over a wider geographic range. Equipped with explosive harpoons and air compressors, whalers were now able to catch the larger rorquals which had been able to out-run sailing vessels, and inflate their corpses to prevent them from sinking. Populations of blue, fin, sei and Bryde’s whales also became hunted in Pacific waters, but, again, at unsustainable rates. Early in the 20th century, the rich Southern Ocean grounds were also discovered and quickly exploited, factory ships reducing the need for land stations. Tonga maintained a small coastal whaling industry for local consumption until 1978, when it was ended by royal decree.

Populations of most whale species today remain small fractions of what they were before commercial whaling began. Popular opinion has shifted in many countries from thinking of whales as a resource to be harvested to intelligent, endangered creatures inspiring wonder and sympathy. Whale-watching has emerged as a non-lethal alternative way for humans to benefit from whales, both aesthetically and economically. It began in the 1950s, when people began spotting annual migrations of whales from high vantage points along the Pacific coast of the United States. Cruise ship operators soon realised the potential of offering closer views of the whales. Commercial whale-watching expanded rapidly and land or sea-based whale observing experiences are now offered in over 80 countries or territories. It has become big business even in Japan, Norway and Iceland, the three strongest pro-whaling states.

In the Pacific, boat cruises and opportunities to snorkel with humpback whales are offered in half a dozen countries, principally Tonga, Niue and the Cook Islands. It can be a significant source of foreign income. In 1999 direct earnings from whale-watching operations in Tonga alone were estimated to be around T\$750,000 per annum, rising to over T\$1,000,000 in total when revenues from accommodation and related services were included. Whale-watching can also have scientific and educational benefits. When trained naturalists accompany cruises as guides, tourists have an opportunity to learn more about marine ecosystems and gain a better appreciation of the issues involved in sustainable resource management.



Internet resources providing differing viewpoints on these topics include:

- | | |
|--|---|
| Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society | (http://www.wdcs.org/) |
| Whalewatch | (http://www.whalewatch.org) |
| Institute of Cetacean Research (Japan) | (http://www.icrwhale.org/eng-index.htm) |
| Japan Fisheries Agency Whaling Section | (http://www.jfa.maff.go.jp/whale/index.htm) |
| World Council of Whalers | (http://www.worldcouncilofwhalers.com/index.htm) |
| WWF Pacific Whale Campaign | (http://www.wwpacific.org/fj/whales_campaign_index.htm) |
| Whale-watching in Tonga | (http://www.multilingual-matters.net/jost/009/0128/jost0090128.pdf) |

Not Just Whales...

Diversity of Ocean Species Falling, Study Finds

The variety of species in the world's oceans has fallen between 10 and 50% in the past half century, say biologists in a recent paper published in the journal *Science*. A combination of overfishing, habitat destruction and climate change has diminished the range of fish across the globe, according to the scientists from Dalhousie University in Canada and Leibniz Institute for Marine Science in Germany.

The study, which marks the first worldwide mapping of predatory fish diversity, identified five hot spots in the world that have a rich variety of species: the east coast of Florida; south of Hawaii; near Australia's Great Barrier Reef; near Sri Lanka and in the South Pacific north of Easter Island. "These areas are of global significance," researcher Boris Worm said. "It's really important to protect them now, because 20 years from now they may not be there."

In some areas where a wide variety of tuna and billfish used to thrive, diversity has plummeted. Mid-size predators - snake mackerel and pelagic stingrays - are taking their place. "Where you used to put out a fishing line 50 years ago and catch 10 species, now you catch 5 species for the same amount of effort," Worm said. "That's a recipe for ecological collapse and disaster." The total catch of tuna and billfish has increased as much as tenfold over the past 50 years, they found, and overfishing is the main factor in these species' decline, as well as for other fish caught inadvertently.

But shifts in temperature can also affect diversity. The study found that in the Pacific, the variety of fish increased when an El Niño event brought warmer surface water and contracted as temperatures fell. Predatory fish appear to like medium temperatures, around 77°F [25°C], they found.

To do the study, the team used data from Japanese long-line fisheries going back to the 1950s, which they cross-referenced with U.S. and Australian scientific observer data.

(Source: *Science*, v.309, no.5739, pp.1365-1369, 26 August 2005)

International Banks Contributing to Overfishing?

A new report has claimed that controversial bank investments in longline fishing in the Pacific are contributing to over fishing of tuna and an extinction crisis for sea turtles and seabirds.

The report, *Bankrupting the Pacific*, has been released by the Sea Turtle Restoration Project, an NGO based in the US. It examines four projects funded by the International Finance Corporation (a partner organisation to the World Bank) and the Asian Development Bank. It concludes that investments in Pacific longline fishing by the banks have coincided with overfishing and pose threats to marine biodiversity in the region.

The investments were made in critical nesting and migratory habitats of endangered sea turtles and seabirds without any assessment of the impact on biodiversity of the regions where the projects took place, in violation of the banks' own environmental and fisheries policies. This has "helped drive the leatherback sea turtle to the brink of extinction in the Pacific," according to lead author Robert Ovetz. The Save the Leatherback Campaign Coordinator says the female nesting population of the Pacific leatherback sea turtle has collapsed by 95 percent since 1980.

The report calls for the banks to cancel ongoing longline fishing projects, implement a moratorium on all future longline projects and implement a set of reforms to prevent further damage to the ocean ecosystem. The full report can be found online at: <http://www.seaturtles.org/pdf/ACF1120.pdf>

(PACNEWS 2: Thurs 15 Sept 2005)

[The analysis of longline data quoted by both of these reports has been disputed by SPC and other scientists. One example is available online at <http://www.spc.int/OceanFish/Docs/Research/HamptonEtal2005.pdf> -- Ed.]

Solomon Islands Government to Ban Export of Sea-cucumber

The Solomon Islands advised in July that it would ban the export of beche-de-mer or sea cucumber from the start of August. Tione Bugotu, Permanent Secretary for Fisheries and Marine Resources, said the ban would apply to all species of beche-de-mer.



He told the *Solomon Star* the decision was reached in a review of the beche-de-mer fishery in the country by Dr Christain Ramofafia of the World Fish Centre. Mr Bugotu said the review revealed that the country's beche-de-mer stock was in "serious problem and faced an uncertain future." It also found that catches and exports have fallen since peaks of 615 tonnes and 715 tonnes were achieved in 1991 and 1992 respectively.

The review also revealed that in contrast to declining catches and exports, the number of sea cucumber species exploited for beche-de-mer production has increased from 22 in 1994 to 32 currently, with 50 per cent of the species having low market value. "This contrasting trend suggests dwindling sea cucumber resources, especially of high value species and local over-fishing. It is likely that current fishing levels are unsustainable," the review concluded.

Mr Bugotu said it was obvious from these results that the beche-de-mer fishery in the Solomon Islands needed proper management strategies or the fishery would face a collapse. Beche-de-mer has been a major source of income for Solomon Islands rural dwellers.

(Amended from PACNEWS 2: Mon 11 July 2005)

Other News from the Region

Palau/Federated States of Micronesia: Treaty to set maritime boundaries

Early in 2006 Palau and the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) will sign a treaty that determines the two countries' maritime boundary. Representatives of the two governments made the announcement following the latest in a series of reviews and discussions regarding maritime boundary and related issues within the region.

Minister Fritz Koshiba, representing Palau, said they must finish preparing the treaty within the next six months and sign it before the second Conference of the Pacific Association of Land Professionals, which Palau is hosting from 13-18 March 2006. Representing the FSM are Mathew Chigiya and Scott Sweet, who are both with the National Oceanic Resources Management Authority.

(PACNEWS 3: Mon 05 Sept 2005)

Niue: Interest in uranium mine fades

A geological research report written in 1979 has dampened claims by an Australian mining company that Niue could be sitting on top of the world's largest uranium deposit. The report by Arthur Smith, a consultant engaged by the International Atomic Energy Agency, concluded that there was only a slight possibility of locating an exploitable, commercially viable deposit on the island.

Richard Revelins, executive director of Yamarna Goldfields Ltd., later said the company would try to determine whether the 26-year-old report holds more weight than geological modelling that had confirmed the potential for a large deposit. In the meantime, the company's chairman Bryan Frost apparently lost enthusiasm in the project. Another of his companies sold 11 million Yarmana shares for 1.6-1.8¢ that it had acquired for just 1.1¢ each the day the company announced its plan to drill on the island. Other companies the two have been involved with in the past have included Laugh.com.

(PACNEWS: 5 & 7 Sept 2005; *The Weekend Australian*, 10 Sept 2005)

New Zealand: Record tuna catch

Kiwi angler Michael Hayes hooked a bluefin tuna "the size of a cow" off the west coast in August. If DNA tests confirm the species the 268 kg catch will be a new International Game Fish Association record.

(*The Guardian Weekly*, 2-8 Sept 2005)

Ministry of Fisheries Library, Tonga

'Emeline Tupou

The Kingdom of Tonga consists of around 150 islands, less than 40 of which are inhabited. Most lie within the Tongatapu, Ha'apai and Vava'u groups. The capital, Nuku'alofa, is located on the largest island, Tongatapu. The Ministry of Fisheries is responsible for managing the marine resources of the nation. It has a staff of around 120 people providing services including extension, training, research, monitoring and enforcement. It maintains fishery stations on a number of outlying islands as well as various vessels. Before the Ministry was created in 1991 there was a Fishery Division within the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.

The Library at the Ministry of Fisheries is under the Information Unit. I am the only staff handling all the library requirements and I also do export data input (snapper, tuna, aquarium). I have a certificate in library practice from USP. There is a very minimal budget assigned for library activities and the ordering of books.

In March 2000 Mr. Ganeshan Rao, PIMRIS Coordinator, visited Tonga and assisted us in starting up the previous Fisheries Library. Unfortunately, on the morning of Wednesday, 19th September, 2001, a fire broke out in the building and destroyed the library as well as the Ministry's museum. The 2nd floor was the Conference room, Audio Visual room and the kitchen where the fire started. Approximately 90% of the books were safely recovered and placed in a room used for storing boatyard equipment – our temporary library.



Before the 2001 fire ▲ and afterwards ▼

After the first phase of renovations was completed in late 2004 the library was moved to our new room in the fisheries office. Due to the continuation of the renovations most of the books are still packed in boxes. The new library will be fully set up when the second phase of renovation is completed.



The library started with WinISIS as the first software used for cataloguing records. In 2002 the Ministry of Fisheries became a member of the Pacific Environmental Information Network (PEIN) coordinated by SPREP and funded by the European Union. One new computer and a printer were donated to the library. Another software, InMagic DB\TextWorks, was already installed on the computer. We catalogued every item into both softwares but this may now change.

Our Library is mostly used by local and overseas students for their fisheries project research, private sector workers and fisheries staff for searching for information. In the near future we would like to upgrade the standard of our library including services and the books and reports that we keep at a professional level. Fisheries conservation and management are now part of the research topics for form 4 to 6 at high school and college levels in Tonga.

Assistance is required on librarian training and costs involved in requesting useful books and reports that I don't have in my Library. I am looking forward to more assistance from PIMRIS in the future and working hand in hand to build and share reliable fisheries information in the Pacific.

New Publications

Novaczek, I., Mitchell, J., & Veitayaki, J. (eds.) 2005, *Pacific Voices: Equity and Sustainability in Pacific Island Fisheries*. Institute of Pacific Studies, USP, Suva. xii, 246 p. F\$30.00

(Available from: IPS, Box 1168, Suva, Fiji. Ph: (679) 323 2332 Fax: (679) 323 1524 Email: ips@usp.ac.fj)

Inshore fish stocks and habitats are in decline in the Pacific and the role of women in small scale and subsistence fisheries is relatively neglected. These concerns have been voiced over the past decades but data on the status of inshore stocks and on the volume of fish and shellfish caught by small-scale, inshore fishers are still rare or absent for many Pacific Islands nations.

Information on fisheries activities of women, the impact of activities on fish stocks and habitats and fisherwomen's contributions to the economy, society and culture of Pacific Islands is also missing, incomplete or superficial. Governments that fund research often assume that the only important fisheries are those which earn foreign currency and promote modernization. Yet the inshore provides essential protein to the majority of Pacific Islanders and women are the key labor force in subsistence fisheries in many island nations

It is important to document any decline of inshore resources critical to regional food security, to determine the reasons behind this and look for options to restore, conserve and manage these essential resources. It is vital for women's histories, roles and perceptions to be documented as well as men's and that such documentation involves researchers who are rooted in Pacific culture, able to grasp the unspoken complexities of relationships between coastal peoples and their inshore marine environments.

The 14 case studies in this book tell, often through direct quotes of village people, what islanders remember of the past riches of inshore fishing grounds, how and why changes have occurred, what they think of current conditions and how they see their prospects for the future. Social issues are emphasized and social science methodologies used to explore the ways in which culture, gender and generational perspectives interact with processes of modernization. This interaction influences the rate and shape of technological change in small-scale fisheries, the intensity of fishing effort, the need for conservation and management, the shape of local management institutions and the success or failure of management strategies. Only by grappling with the interplay of history, customs, economics and social relations can a researcher uncover the incentives and motivations to fish; to destroy or conserve resources; and to participate in or resist management efforts.



Photo credit: www.upei.ca/islandstudies/pacific/index.html

These studies show that the rate and degree of change in inshore fisheries over the past century have indeed been profound and many communities face difficult challenges. The authors examine various aspects of traditional inshore fisheries, as well as new industries including ornamental shellfisheries and the live coral trade; women's roles in village and industrial fisheries; and other topics. Their findings will inform coastal communities, academics, politicians and government staff, and NGO facilitators engaged in policy development, programme and project planning and coastal community development.

Conference & Workshop Notices

2005

- October 10-14 31st Annual Conference of the International Association of Aquatic and Marine Science Libraries and Information Centers (IAMSLIC), Rome, Italy
<http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/nefsclibrary/2005iamslic/2005home.html>
- October 23-28 1st International Congress on Marine Protected Areas, Geelong, Victoria, Australia
<http://www.impacongress.org>
- Oct 31 – Nov 3 Pacem in Maribus XXXI: Building Bridges towards Integrated Oceans Governance, Townsville, Queensland, Australia
<http://ioc.unesco.org/ioi/contents.php?id=123>
- Nov 28 - Dec 2 3rd International Symposium on Deep-Sea Corals, Miami, Florida
<http://conference.ifas.ufl.edu/coral>
- December 12-16 16th Biennial Conference on the Biology of Marine Mammals, San Diego, Calif.
<http://www.marinemammalogy.org/conference2005/>

2006

- Feb 7-9 1st International Symposium on Mangroves as Fish Habitat, Miami, Florida
<http://www.rsmas.miami.edu/conference/mangrove-fish-habitat>
- Feb 23 - Mar 2 Sharing the Fish Conference 2006, Perth, Western Australia
<http://www.fishallocation.com>

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