

## SCB-A Newsletter September 2006

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### New Editor of *Pacific Conservation Biology*: Ian McLean

THE new Editor of *Pacific Conservation Biology*, Ian McLean, brings a wealth of Pacific experience to his new job. Ian is originally from central North Island, New Zealand. His earliest research experiences as an undergraduate and MSc student were with endangered bird species on the conservation islands near Auckland. Ian then spent some years in Canada, where he worked on ground squirrels in the Yukon and in Alberta. After several years teaching at the University of British Columbia (plus more bird research) he returned to an academic position at the University of Canterbury, which he held for 10 years. During that period he ran a peripatetic research programme encompassing behavioural, ecological and conservation issues in forest birds, penguins and marine mammals.

In the early 1990s Ian began a research programme that attempted to introduce new behavioural skills to species being bred in captivity. Concentrating on predation, this programme encompassed several bird species in New Zealand and wallaby species in Australia. It was expanded when Ian moved to Perth (Western Australia, WA) in 1996. During five years in Perth, Ian worked as a researcher at the University of WA and ecologist at a local national park, as well as teaching and supervising students at other local universities in Perth. He then moved on again, this time to do humanitarian aid work with the UN from a base in Geneva, Switzerland. This job involved many visits to Asian countries on the Pacific rim, particularly Cambodia, where land mines and other explosive remnants of war continue to plague the local population.

Five years in the minefields of the world was enough, and at the end of 2005, Ian returned to New Zealand where he is now based at the University of Otago.

### Special Journal Prices

We can finally announce to developing countries that if they join SCB they will receive the journals *Conservation Biology* and *Biological Conservation* online for only USD \$10 — and there may be more journals tied into this deal (but this has yet to be agreed too). However, this price does not include people who are paid “developed” countries wages. This should certainly help provide a push for us here in the Pacific at least.

### The Australasian presence at the annual SCB meeting

Craig Morley, Nicky Nelson and Wendy Jackson from the SCB-A Board attended the SCB conference in San Jose in June. There were also about 20 people from the Australasian section attending so there were plenty of papers of regional interest, as well as sessions ranging from conservation psychology to trans-border issues to using GIS. We came away with lots of ideas for our regional conference in July next year (see below).

### Inaugural conference of the Australasian Section of the Society for Conservation Biology

The inaugural meeting of the Australasian region of SCB The Biodiversity Extinction Crisis, a Pacific and Australasian response will be held from 10–13 July 2007 at the University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia so put those dates in your diary NOW. This conference identifies the major problems for biodiversity conservation in our region, existing and potential solutions and links to the global biodiversity initiatives. Real opportunities can be found in the nexus between conservation science and policy-makers, managers and the community. There will be five major themes: (1) Regional challenges (particular issues for our part of the world); (2) Managing threatening process of universal importance; (3) Case studies of conservation in action,

including biodiversity monitoring and assessment; (4) Conservation science and policy and; (5) Conservation science and the community (non-government organizations, indigenous people).

Further information on the meeting, as well as registration and abstract submission will be forthcoming so keep an eye out and forward this on to your colleagues.

The local organizing committee is extremely pleased to announce that we are in negotiations with an international superstar of conservation biology as our plenary speaker. While it is slightly premature to announce who that is, keep a lookout for future bulletins! The conference organizers are also currently looking to develop key sponsorships and have approached (or been approached by) a number of organizations, including the NSW Department of Environment and Conservation, the Zoological Parks Board of NSW, and the Invasive Animals CRC, who are interested in supporting this landmark meeting. Please contact Richard Kingsford ([richard.kingsford@unsw.edu.au](mailto:richard.kingsford@unsw.edu.au)), Karen Firestone ([kfirestone@zoo.nsw.gov.au](mailto:kfirestone@zoo.nsw.gov.au)) or Wendy Jackson ([wendy.jackson@gmail.com](mailto:wendy.jackson@gmail.com)) if you wish to discuss sponsorship opportunities.

### Other conferences coming up in the Australasian region:

#### *The 8th New Guinea Biology Conference*

September 26th–28th, 2006, University of Papua New Guinea, Waigani Campus, Port Moresby. The interdependence of biological and cultural diversity are best demonstrated among the communities from the island of New Guinea. Natural systems cannot be understood, conserved and managed, without recognizing the human cultures that shape them. Together, cultural diversity and biological diversity hold the key to ensuring resilience and sustainability in both social and ecological systems.

This interdependence is the theme of 2006 New Guinea Biology Conference. Abstracts can be submitted to Jane Mogina ([moginaj@upng.ac.pg](mailto:moginaj@upng.ac.pg)) or Rose Singadan ([singadan@upng.ac.pg](mailto:singadan@upng.ac.pg)) by 30th July 2006.

#### *National Wildlife Tourism Conference*

13–15 August 2006, Fremantle, WA. The aim of the conference is to build knowledge, networks and participation in the development of a truly sustainable wildlife tourism industry. More information: <http://www.promaco.com.au/conference/2006/wildlife/>

#### *Australasian Aquaculture 2006*

This conference, trade show and associated events of the National Aquaculture Council, the South Australian Aquaculture Council and the Asia-Pacific Chapter of the World Aquaculture Council is to be held from 27–30 August 2006 at the Adelaide Convention Centre, SA. More information: <http://www.australian-aquacultureportal.com/austaqua/aa06.html>

#### *Ecology across the Tasman*

This third joint conference of the New Zealand Ecological Society and the Ecological Society of Australia will enable people from all sectors of ecology to interact and exchange information, and to discuss current and envisioned developments in ecology. The conference will be held in Wellington NZ from 28 August to 1 September 2006. More information: <http://www.vuw.ac.nz/ecology06/>

#### *Australian Weeds Conference*

The 15th Australian Weeds Conference will be held at the Adelaide Convention Centre from 24–28 September 2006. The conference theme is *Managing Weeds in a Changing Climate*. More information: <http://www.plevin.com.au/15AWC2006/>

#### *The 12th Australia New Zealand Systems Society (ANZSYS) Conference*

Entitled *Sustaining our Social and Natural Capital* — will be held from 3–6 December 2006 at the Carrington Hotel, Katoomba, NSW, Australia. The conference is co-hosted by Blue Mountains World Heritage Institute,

Action Learning Action Research and Process Management Association (ALARPM), Society for Organizational Learning (SOLA) Australia and ISCE Events, Mansfield, USA. The conference themes include: Resilience, ecology and governance; Cultural knowledge and heritage; Creativity, organization and complexity; Systems thinking and dynamics; Social sustainability and community; Livelihood, innovation and opportunity; Language, learning and transdisciplinary practice; Engineering systems and infrastructure design. More details at: [http://www.bmwhi.org.au/bmwhi\\_currentevents.html](http://www.bmwhi.org.au/bmwhi_currentevents.html)

#### **A call for editorials from the membership**

Please contact Nicky Nelson ([Nelson@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Nelson@vuw.ac.nz)) if you have anything you would like to contribute to either the SCB newsletter or to the News and Views section of our Journal, *Pacific Conservation Biology*.

#### **BULA COLUMN: LAUNCH OF THE PACIFIC INVASIVES LEARNING NETWORK**

**Dr Jill Key, PILN Coordinator, PO Box 240, Apia, Samoa**

Invasive species are one of the greatest threats to biodiversity in island ecosystems. When a species is accidentally or intentionally introduced into a new landscape or seascape, the consequences can be devastating, posing a large threat to agriculture, public health, tourism, and other economic activities. Invasive plants and animals can spread unchecked, disrupting natural cycles, and costing billions.

Invasives are a priority for Pacific Island nations because islands are highly vulnerable to invasions that can result in catastrophic loss of biodiversity and other impacts. However, the relatively small size and isolation of most islands offer important opportunities for preventing new invasions and eradicating existing pest species. In some parts of the Pacific, experienced conservation professionals have developed model programmes to prevent, eradicate, or control certain high-priority invaders, such as rodents, feral animals, and invasive weeds.

However, according to the Global Invasive Species Programme, "In most Pacific Island countries, there is a profound lack of awareness about the issue and an almost complete absence of capacity to deal with invasive species." Conservation practitioners in the Pacific represent a host of different agencies and countries, and most are geographically and professionally isolated. As a result, few Pacific conservationists currently have the information, expertise, and support they need to manage invasive species effectively.

#### **Peer Learning Networks**

Peer learning networks are a proven strategy for improving conservation skills and building co-operation between trained professionals. By bringing peers together with conservation experts, learning networks foster new ideas and practical, site-specific solutions. Multi-disciplinary project teams can work together on strategies with critical input from other teams and experts, resulting in a common vision and a plan for effective conservation action.

In 2005 The Nature Conservancy joined with the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, the Cooperative Island Initiative on Invasive Species, IUCN Invasive Species Specialist Group, National Park of American Samoa, Conservation International, the Palau Office of Environmental Response and Coordination, University of the South Pacific, USDA Forest Service, and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community to establish the Pacific Invasives Learning Network (PILN). Collaborating closely with the initiative are the National Park of American Samoa and the Pacific Invasives Initiative.

The network serves teams of Pacific Island agencies responsible for invasives management, including agencies responsible for agriculture, international trade and other economic interests, as well as conservation and natural resource management. Its mission is to **empower effective invasive species management through a participant-driven network that meets priority needs, rapidly shares skills and resources, provides links**

to technical expertise, increases information exchange, and accelerates on-the-ground action.

Founding teams come from all over the Pacific region, with representatives from all three sub-regions, Melanesia, Micronesia, Polynesia and include members with a long-term commitment to conservation, strong cultural understanding, and the potential to act as innovators to increase invasive species management and prevention in their nations. Participating teams determine the specific invasive species issues that they will address using the network. PILN's activities and agenda are determined by the individual and shared needs of the participants.

### The Palau meeting

The official launch of the network and first annual meeting took place from 22 to 26 May 2006, hosted by Palau. Members of the initial group of six founding teams from American Samoa, Guam, Niue, Palau, Pohnpei and Samoa participated, together with Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund grantees working on invasive species management demonstration projects from Palau, Samoa, FSM, the Cook Islands, Fiji, and French Polynesia, and representatives of the eight partners and two close collaborators. In total 42 people from 11 countries attended. The Honorable Elias Camsek Chin, Vice President of the Republic of Palau, gave the network its unofficial motto with his concluding remarks at the opening ceremony: "Failure is not an option".

Participants analyzed their collective experience and drafted lessons learned in four key areas: public awareness, strategic planning, weed management and island restoration. Following this each country team drafted an Action Plan for one of their priority projects: American Samoa, eradication of Strawberry Guava from American Samoa by the end of 2008; Guam, control of bud rot *Phytophthora palmivora* on Betelnut; Niue, reduction of the weed *Wedelia* at affected sites within Niue to 0.7 hectares; Palau, elimination of Kebeas (*Merremia peltata*) from the forest margin along the compact road by the end of 2008; Pohnpei, eradication of the following weeds: False Kava, Mile-a-Minute, ivy Gourd, and Chain of Love by 2008; and Samoa, secure funding to carry out activities to manage and prevent invasive species in Samoa. Network assistance and capacity building needs to achieve these action plans were identified.

Among other activities carried out, inputs were provided for the revision of the regional invasive species strategy, and six strategic directions were identified and prioritized, and eight emerging issues were discussed in open space fora: biocontrol, measuring PILN success (during which the PILN work plan was reviewed), political involvement; managing invasive reptiles and amphibians, marine invasive species, biosecurity, refugia and ex-copra islands.

The CD ROM version of the Global Invasive Species Database

(GISD) was also officially launched at the meeting, at a ceremony on Carp Island. An evaluation of relevant elements of the GISD was carried out, the high overall scores (73–96%) suggest that GISD information is relevant and useful and this is confirmed by the positive nature of other comments made.

Of the 34 participants who completed a meeting evaluation form, all expressed themselves "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the meeting. Among the benefits gained from participating were: sharing and learning, a stronger team, awareness of just how much is going on in the region, and a sense of momentum that urgently needs building on.

Considerable momentum has now been generated, both within the meeting participants as a result of the weeks activities and also more widely thanks to the wide media coverage for the meeting, locally, regionally and internationally. A new logo is being designed based on participants suggestions and the network now also has a slogan, "Failure is not an option". In early 2007 the second group of founding teams will meet, and the American Samoa Invasive Species Team has formally offered to host the PILN second annual meeting in August 2007. Lessons learned will be reviewed and expanded in these meetings and draft Action Plans developed and revised

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