



# NatureFiji-MareqetiViti

## Newsletter 3

August 2009

Ni Sa Bula and welcome to our 3rd newsletter.

So far 2009 has been a very busy year for us, we have been lucky to receive funding for several large projects, including: further pelagic expeditions to find the Fiji Petrel; a large Forestry project looking at creating permanent sustainably-managed forest estates; funding from British High Commission for our Sago Project; and, the Arcadia fund for some of our core activities. Alongside finding funding for further conservation activities we have also nearly completed several projects, including a trial Sago Palm restoration community project at Culanuku and Site Support Group work at Tomanivi (see feature article).

Our function as a conservation facilitator and influencer continues, in addition to our position as secretariat for wetlands conservation, we have a new role on the Fiji Ramsar Steering Committee Secretariat and, in conjunction with the National Trust, we have initiated an awareness campaign for forest conservation on Taveuni.

As an organisation we continue to grow and we have recently moved into our own office at 14 Hamilton-Beattie Street.

The new office will enable us to administer the organisation better, welcome visitors and host the increasing number of volunteers who travel within Fiji and from overseas to help us.

Especially pleasing last month was a members' day in the Garrick Reserve where we initiated the planting of 'insurance populations' of two endangered palms - the Fiji Sago Palm *Metroxylon vitiense* and the Navua Palm *Heterospathe phillipsi*. 27 volunteers turned out to help and we all had a great time.



William Young of U.S.P  
Planting the endemic Navua Palm at the Garrick Reserve

We hope you find this latest newsletter interesting and don't forget there is more information about us and our projects on our website...

[www.naturefiji.org](http://www.naturefiji.org).

*MareqetiViti* is best translated as 'Caring for Fiji'

NatureFiji-MareqetiViti's mission is to enhance biodiversity and habitat conservation, endangered species protection and sustainable use of natural resources of the Fiji Islands through the promotion of collaborative conservation action, awareness raising, education, research and biodiversity information exchange.

# Feature Article

## ***UPSTREAM - DOWNSTREAM: Youths of the interior of Ba and Naitasiri snorkel in Rewa!***

20 youths from Nadala Village (Ba) and Tikina Nabubuco (Naitasiri) participated in NFMV's first ever youth camp. The camp began from Nadala Village with the presentation of the 'sevusevu', and a session on the proper use and care of binoculars by National Trust for Fiji's Jone Niukula and Dept of Forestry's Senivalati Vido. The youths then left the village and for the first time, took the Monasavu - Vunidawa route to Suva.

Along the way, Conservation International's Isaac Rounds, NFMV's Nunia Thomas, Jone, and Vido highlighted Fiji's habitats of national significance (Tropical montane cloud forest and hydro dam of Monasavu) and gave brief lectures on botany, ornithology, herpetology, entomology and the threats to Fiji's biodiversity.



Passing through the Tikina Nabubuco, the youths discovered the tectonic history of the ridges and mountains surrounding their villages. They had covered the geography of New Zealand at school, not realizing that Fiji had had her share of major tectonic activity and was just as interesting!

The youths camped at the Dept of Forestry's Training Centre in Colo-i-suva; went bird watching every morning; visited the Fiji Museum, South Pacific Regional Herbarium, the USP Marine Collection; conducted freshwater fish sampling with Wetland International's Kinikoto Qounadovu and Alipate Raikabula of Wildlife Conservation International; got a taste of marine conservation and snorkelling in the Vueti Navakavu Project Area in Muaivuso. This was the first time many of the youths had been snorkelling, and they marvelled at the diversity and beauty underwater.

The youths left the camp enlightened on why we must learn about and protect our endemic biodiversity. Their group presentations showed that they had begun to appreciate the link between our culture and our biodiversity.



The youth camp was funded by the Aag V. Jensen Charity Trust, with staff support from: the National Trust for the Fiji Islands, Conservation International, Dept of Forestry, Wetlands International, BirdLife International (Fiji Programme), Wildlife Conservation Society, Institute of Marine Resources and the Institute of Applied Sciences. The Biology Division and South Pacific Regional Herbarium of USP provided equipment. Thanks to all !

# Project Updates

**Fiji Ramsar Steering Committee Secretariat Role for NFMV** NFMV is pleased to be Fiji's NGO focal point for the Community, Education and Public Awareness part of the Ramsar Convention.

**Resource kit for rodent eradication** NFMV has been identified as a key contributor to the development of a resource kit for rodent (rats, mongoose etc) eradication in the Pacific. Rodents pose a serious threat to Fiji's native flora and fauna and NFMV is very pleased to be able to assist this worthwhile project.

**Collared Petrel Chick** NFMV's team on Gau is monitoring a Collared Petrel chick - a first for this species, which is classified as Near-threatened. The chick is doing well and the villagers are being trained to protect the colony by using rat bait and by setting feral cat traps. They will also monitor the site to ensure that no feral pigs come near the colony.



Photo: Amaniam Taukei with Collared Petrel burrows on Gau

**Flesh-footed Shearwater** Leone Damudamu was fishing in Gau waters when an all dark 'kacau' circled the boat and then landed on it. Thinking

that this must be a Fiji Petrel or Kacau ni Gau, following the Fiji Petrel Project procedures he took it to National Trust-NFMV warden Amaniam Taukei in Lovu village, Gau. Amaniam took measurements and photographs, placed the bird in a large carton and left it in a cool place until evening. He then released the bird and it flew off to sea. The photographs showed that it was not a Fiji Petrel but the first record from Fiji of the Flesh-footed Shearwater *Puffinus carneipes*.



Photo: A Flesh-footed Shearwater photographed off Gau by Joerg Kretzschmar in May 2009.

## Rare Bat Species on Taveuni

In May our team, headed by Annette Scanlon successfully captured and released the little known Fiji Flying Fox, *Mirimiri acrodonta* on Taveuni. The 3<sup>rd</sup> ever positive identification of this bat which is classified as Critically Endangered because of its restricted distribution to the high altitude montane forests of Taveuni. It has no close relatives in the world being the sole member of the genus *Mirimiri*. NFMV is funding the Taveuni surveys through a grant from the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund. (Photo by Guy Bottroff)



# Other NFMV and Member News

## NFMV's new Office

After 2 years of operating out of Dick Watling's Environmental Consultants office in Tamavua, NFMV has a new office. We are now situated at 14 Hamilton-Beattie Street, Suva.

## 2010 NFMV Calendar

Do pictures of Fiji's Natural Heritage, grab your attention? Well NFMV can ensure that they hang on your wall for the whole year. Planned for printing in early August, NFMV's calendar for 2010 features 13 of Stuart Chape's internationally-acclaimed photographs of Fiji's wildlife and wild places. This is NFMV's first commercial venture and we look forward to your support.....place your orders [support@naturefiji.org](mailto:support@naturefiji.org)



## NFMV Volunteers...very busy

NFMV volunteers have been very busy. In March and April, Kelera Macedru, Lai Waqanisau, Alisi Moce, Lice Tique, Elia Mataitoga and Inoke Waqanivere helped with the unpleasant task of preparing the chum for the Fiji Petrel Expedition. Kelera excelled herself and has now joined NFMV as a Conservation Officer working with the Fiji Petrel and Tomanivi Projects. **Welcome to the team Kelera.**

Amanda Rogers has joined NFMV as a volunteer for 3 months to document several projects in video and audio and to produce a mini-series of multimedia

stories for our website. This project is part of her Masters in Science Communication at the University of Otago, New Zealand.

Fabien Jan, a Frenchman fresh from a year's work with the Mascarene Petrel (close relative of the Fiji Petrel) on Reunion Island has joined us for 3 months to help us with the Fiji Petrel project. Specifically, Fabien is working with villagers to monitor and protect a Collared Petrel colony - as training for when we find Fiji Petrel nests. In this he works closely with Moce Qalo and Amaniam Taukei, the National Trust Warden on Gau who NFMV is supporting throughout the project.

## George Bennett - a Friend of NFMV - passes away

George Bennett, an artist of rare talent and eclectic habit, died in Suva on 10 March 2009. George was born in California, USA but after periods in the Philippines, Micronesia and Tonga, George spent the last 15 years of his life in Fiji, mainly on Taveuni but recently at Wainadoi. During this period of his life George developed a deep interest in Fijian wildlife and palms and produced many wonderful watercolour paintings of Fiji's diverse fauna and flora. George leaves a lasting legacy in Fiji - his artwork is the basis of the recent issue of Fijian currency notes, and for the last decade George provided the art work for many stamps issued by the Philatelic Bureau of FijiPost.

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© NatureFiji-MareqetiViti, 14 Hamilton-Beattie St, Suva, Fiji, Phone: +679 3100598 Fax: +679 3100582