WHAT'S NEW IN THE PACIFIC

POPULATION GROWTH IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS must be changed, according to the Secretariat for the Pacific Community who spoke on the need to balance population and resources. In the Pacific islands, only about 10 to 20 percent of those who leave school can find jobs. It was pointed out that the total population in the region is 8.3 million, but 5.3 million are in Papua New Guinea. There is deterioration in the balance between population and resources, and urban areas are becoming more crowded; governments find it difficult to provide infrastructure, and jobs are scarce.

Pacific News Bulletin 17(8) 2002

A SEVERE CYCLONE SMASHED INTO the remote South Pacific islands of Tikopia and Anuta, shredding trees and flattening buildings. Photos taken by freelance photographer and filmmaker Geoff Mackley showed walls and roofs ripped off buildings, lying amid shredded and toppled trees on the tiny island of Tikopia, which bore the brunt of Cyclone Zoe’s 186 mph winds. Some 2,000 Solomon Islanders live on Tikopia, which is just three miles long, and the smaller islands of Fataka and Anuta. The storm, which cut radio links to the outside world, washed through some villages. Islanders fled to mountain caves for safety. People living on Mota Lava, 190 km southwest of Tikopia, appear to have survived; the situation on Anuta was unclear. Emergency shelter, food and medical supplies were delayed because of an argument with the crew of a Solomons’ state patrol boat over unpaid wages. The Solomons’ government is bankrupt and the national economy relies on foreign aid after years of ethnic militia fighting. It was announced on 9 January that the Cook Islands were giving $10,000 for disaster relief work in the Solomons. Prime Minister Dr Woonton announced that, “We have all read in the newspapers and watched on television reports of the horrific damage caused by cyclone Zoe…. It brings back memories to us all of the enormous cyclone damage to Manihiki and other Northern Group islands a few years ago. At that time, many countries came to our assistance, for which we remain most grateful. This is the Solomon Islands’ hour of need and on behalf of the government and all of the people of the Cook Islands, I will be sending to the Prime Minister of the Solomon Islands today $10,000 to assist in disaster relief efforts on the two islands.”

Cook Islands News/PINA Nius, 9 January 2003

A 67-YEAR-OLD CALIFORNIA MAN was expected to reach Guam on 28 January, more than 6,000 miles and four months after he set out with his nephew 40 x 20-foot redwood raft. Andrew Uranon set out with his nephew on 28 January, more than 6,000 miles and four months after he


Yet another Reed raft, dubbed the Viracocha II, is under construction in Vila del Mar, Chile. Plans are set off across the Pacific in February with the hope to travel 10,000 miles. Seven Aymaras worked on the craft made of natural fibers. In charge is Phil Buck, who previously made a trip from Arica to Easter Island. The crew of nine will come from different nations. Plans are to stop at Easter Island, Tahiti, and Fiji for water and provisions. Their goal is Sydney, Australia.

El Mercurio de Valparaíso December 28, 2002

COOK ISLANDS

ARTIFACTS THAT MAY HAVE been made 800-1000 years ago were excavated from Avarua, situated on the motu Te Kainga, Rakahanga. The archaeologist, Anne Di Piazza, excavated 3 earth ovens (umu) containing charcoal, fish hooks made from pearl shells, a chisel made of clam, and a pounder made of coral. “I found the same artifacts in East Polynesia,” said Di Piazza: “People settled in this part of the Pacific, maybe 2000 to 3000 BC.”

Di Piazza, from the National Centre for Scientific Research in Marseilles, France, is basing her estimated dates on artifacts she has excavated on the Christmas and Phoenix Islands that were made with the same kind of shell. She has now returned to France where the artifacts from Rakahanga will be carbon dated, and then returned to the Cook Islands National Museum.

Ngatuaine Maui from the Anthropology Department of the Ministry of Culture stated that these finds are important for the people of the Cook Islands and will fill in links with the history of Rakahanga.

Cook Islands News, January 28, 2003

NAURU

TINY NAURU’S AMBASSADOR to the UN, Vinci Clodumar, said the United States has an “attitude problem”. In referring to the US missile tests on Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands, the desires of most Pacific Island countries to keep their region clear of nuclear weapons are being ignored.

Pacific News Bulletin, 17(9),2002

GUAM

US FISH AND WILDLIFE OFFICIALS unveiled a plan to designate 24,800 acres on Guam as critical habitat for three endangered species. But local Chamorro families are angry and frustrated because they want that land returned to them. The habitats are now under the jurisdiction of Anderson Air Force base and the Naval Magazine areas around Fena Lake. The species for which the habitats would be created are the Guam Micronesian kingfisher, the Mariana crow and the Mariana fruit bat. These three species were nearly exterminated by the brown tree snake that arrived in the 1940s, probably via military aircraft. In a hearing, irate locals expressed their anger, saying it is the Chamorros who are the endangered species.

Pacific News Bulletin, 17(10),2002
FIJI
KAVA, CONSUMED TRADITIONALLY in the Pacific as a water extract, contains far less kavalactones than found in kava pills. The pills, when consumed in excessive amounts, have resulted in cases of liver toxicity in western countries, and this has led to a ban on kava imports from the Pacific Islands. The water extraction of kava mainly contains water soluble products such as carbohydrates, proteins and amino acids. Very small amounts of water insoluble kava resins containing kavalactones get through the filters. The alcohol extraction of kava roots yield 10-15% kava resins, 50-60% of which contain kavalactones, and such high concentration of kavalactones can result in liver stress. The water extraction of the same kava roots yield only 6-8% of kava resins. Testing of kava pills sold in the US and Europe reveal that the kavalactone concentration in each pill ranges from 32 to 55%.

*SUVA, FIJI. A French army transport aircraft and ship brought relief to populations stricken by cyclone Ami two weeks ago. The Nouméa-based transport aircraft brought some 1.5 tons of tarpaulins, water-purifying tablets, and other supplies to the island of Vanua Levu (North of Fiji) on Friday. Vanua Levu, and especially its capital town of Labasa, were heavily damaged by cyclone Ami on January 14. To date, the official toll of Ami is fifteen dead with another fifteen missing, and close to US$30 million damage.

The French relief was also the result of close consultations between Australian and New Zealand armies that aims at coordinating actions in times of natural disasters in the Pacific island countries. Asked why the relief assistance did not come to Fiji more quickly, Carpenter said the military “could only respond to requests, mainly from the affected nations.” “Having said this, you will appreciate that us, the military, cannot be seen as intervening on a friendly nation, all dressed up in fatigues... This could be misinterpreted”, he added.

Before the government estimate came in, the local Red Cross and aid donors from Australia, France, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Japan, China and the European Union had announced financial aid packages and initiatives.

Oceania Flash/SPC January 28, 2003

BLEACHING OF THE CORAL REEFS worldwide may be linked to climate change. Over 400 cases of bleaching are linked to increased seawater temperatures, with the majority of bleaching records coming from the Great Barrier Reef, reefs in the Philippines, Indonesia, Japan, Palau, the Seychelles, Belize, and the Florida coasts. Twenty countries in all the major oceans have documented over 430 cases of bleaching, making 2002 the 2nd worst year after 1998. Scientists, marine park managers and others are urged to provide data on bleaching.

Oceanic Waves, START-Oceania Information Bulletin, 4(4), 2002

A 3000 YEAR OLD SKELETON was discovered at the earliest-known human settlement in the Fiji Islands by a team from the University of the South Pacific. The find, made at Moturiki Island in central Fiji was called the most important scientific find in Fiji in the past thirty years. The skeleton was found below sixty centimeters of undisturbed sediments that contained Lapita pottery, making it the second Lapita-age skeleton ever to be found in the Pacific Islands. The skeleton is male, between 1.9 and 2 meters tall, and was buried with the head facing west. A large trochus shell was found below the neck. The settlement, the skeleton, and Lapita pottery was found at Naitable on the southeast coast of Moturiki. The discovery follows earlier finds of Lapita pottery at this site. The designs on the Lapita pottery from Naitable are unlike those found previously in Fiji, most closely resembling those found on pots made around 1550 to 1250 BC in the outer islands of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. It was suggested that the oldest Lapita pottery from Naitable was likely imported from the Santa Cruz/Reef Islands area about 1250 to 1000 BC. This makes it the oldest Lapita pottery found in Fiji, marking “the first footprint” in those islands. Following study, the skeleton will be reburied at Naitable, with permission of the chief of Uluiubau.

*Increased international activity in the Pacific area by foreign fishing vessels is causing concern. However, most island states have no choice but to open up their waters to fishing by foreign vessels because they lack the resources to fish and process the fish on their own. Depletion of fish stocks is a growing concern.

Pacific News Bulletin 17(8) 2002

TUNA RESOURCES CAN BE CONSERVED FOR the future if at least thirteen Pacific Island states agree to enforce the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Convention. The convention, adopted in Hawai’i two years ago, would ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of the regions migratory fish stocks. So far, only four states, including Fiji, have ratified the agreement. Fifteen other states have signed, but not ratified the agreement.

A PACIFIC ISLANDS CONFERENCE of Leaders, held at the University’s Laucala Campus, Suva, Fiji, called for official recognition from the United States of native Hawaiians as a distinct people with their own language, culture, and government. Representing the “Kingdom of Hawaii”, Keao NeSmith said that there are numbers of native Hawaiian organizations working to reestablish and recognize a sovereign native Hawaiian Nation.

USP Beat, Vol. 2(17) 2002

TAHITI

The luxury ship Windsong was disabled in December by an explosion and fire in its engine room, causing all 127 passengers to be evacuated at five a.m. The alert was given when the ship was 12 miles north of the island of Taha’a. Passengers were transferred to Taha’a, and then were flown to Pape’ete. The president of French Polynesia and 3 of his ministers sent three trucks to the condemned ship and loaded up all the valuables including TVs, ship’s steering wheel, etc. One truck was stopped by a guard and unloaded; the other two got away. According to law, the president has the right to salvage ships in territorial waters, but only if such order is delivered by the President in person, which is what he did.

Tahiti-Pacificque, No. 140, December 2002
ALIEN EEL, 39 inches long and weighing ten pounds, was RAPA NUI for only the third time in cross the ocean on its own, from its nearest native area, Tahiti. The eel moves from salt to fresh water, and is found in the forming under the sea just south of Hawai‘i Island) and travel aboard a ship and managed to reach the pond, or it might have THE HOKOLE‘A Pacific waters to resume its sailing adventures. The Polynesian AN of the Statendam, said the vessel is inspected by the U.S. Coast Guard and has complied with all environmental regulations. The Statendam stopped at Molokai on a 12-hour visit on December 28. In 2003, the arrivals occurred on January 22, April 15, and tentatively again in November. Other passenger ships stopping off at Molokai in 2003 included the Amsterdam on April 18 and Royal Princess on December 13. The Holland America Line, operator of the Statendam, describes Molokai as the “less-touristed island” and the “itinerary highlight” in its 16-day Circle Hawai‘i cruises. The advance promotion on Holland America’s Web site says that once on Moloka‘i, passengers may go deep sea fishing or explore the island’s scenic beauty, history and ancient places of worship. Other activities include mule rides to Kaluapapa and a hoolaula with food and entertainment at Malama Cultural Park near Kaunakakai Harbor. The director of the Molokai Visitors Association said the passengers aboard the Statendam will be generally an older retired group. She expects about 600 of the 1,000 passengers to visit Molokai, an island with an estimated population of about 7,000 residents. These early visits will determine if Molokai will remain a regular stop. A lot hinges on how things go. Molokai’s unemployment rate was 9% in September, a 2.6% improvement over the same month last year, following 9-11 and a drop in tourism. Zhantell Du doit, whose business is helping to organize the hoolaula, said she feels that there are environmental concerns but she also believes there is room for a compromise. “We need the business,” she said.

THE HOKOLE‘A HAS BEEN RESTORED and is ready to return to Pacific waters to resume its sailing adventures. The Polynesian Voyaging Society was able to reach their goal of the $100,000 required for the restoration. Plans are to sail to the remote northwestern Hawaiian Islands. The voyage will be “statewide” as they will begin at Lo‘ihi (the newest Hawaiian Island, still forming under the sea just south of Hawai‘i Island) and travel all the way to Kure in the northwest Hawaiian chain.

AN ALIEN EEL, 39 inches long and weighing ten pounds, was found on Maui. It may have been brought in ballast water aboard a ship and managed to reach the pond, or it might have crossed the ocean on its own, from its nearest native area, Tahiti. The eel moves from salt to fresh water, and is found in the Indo-Pacific region as well as in South Africa. State laws prohibits its importation. A Maui boy fishing in the pond was stunned to find this creature on his spear. No one at the Department of Land and Natural Resources had seen anything like it, so it was sent to the Bishop Museum and was identified by scientists as Anguilla marmorata, a giant mottled eel, harmful to native creatures.

Honolulu Advertiser, January 27, 2003

WHAT’S NEW IN HANGA ROA

There was a murder on Rapa Nui for only the third time in 120 years. The crime left the island community reeling from shock. Alberto Tepihi Hotus killed his wife, Maria Ika Pakarati, with a knife and then tried unsuccessfully to kill himself. There had been a history of spousal (and substance) abuse in the relationship and she was planning to leave him. This calamity might have been prevented; however, there is little social support in Chile (or on the island) for women who try to use the law to protect themselves and their children from domestic violence. Theoretically, there are severe legal constraints against abusive spouses, but in practice the carabineros are reluctant to intervene. Even then the woman has to press charges, and often she won’t because the legal system discourages her from doing so. In earlier times the family structure was capable of some level of control (albeit inconsistent) over the more common sort of domestic violence, such as threats against the abuser by members of the spouse’s family. But, today families are in disarray and that rarely happens.

Many of the hare moa around the island have been rebuilt and a replica “ancient village” is also being built inland from the ahu at Te Pito Kura. These “restorations” are being done by local youths with no archaeological input.

The Internet Cafe on Atamu Tekena has closed, and as a lot more people seem to have gotten computers in the last year, the Entel internet connections are very slow. It is still possible to check email in the mall next door to the market, Kai Nene (formerly called Tumu Kai) on Atamu Tekena.

A new bar/pub called Aloha has opened in the village. It features live music on Friday nights. Another local pub, called Banana, is said to have a rather rough clientele.

Vandalism to a fallen statue at Vinapu has been reported, and the culprit was identified as a tourist from Japan. He was

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