

**Vava'u Turtle Monitoring Project  
14597-2  
Interim Report: August 2014 - January 2015**

**Key Outcome 1**

*Third consecutive year of turtle nesting monitoring and foraging habitat monitoring. A third annual nesting report to be produced and circulated to all relevant government and decision making bodies specifically in relation to Vava'u's efforts to create marine protected areas.*

Progress: Nesting surveys are almost completed for this season with excellent results. New nesting beaches have been identified and appear to be an important nesting ground for green turtles, which have not yet been documented as nesting in Vava'u. While weather rendered weekly nesting surveys untenable, weather conditions were more favourable than during the 2013-14 nesting season and significantly more surveys have been conducted yielding important results.



**First recorded nesting activity of Green Turtle in Vava'u**



**Measuring one of several turtle tracks identified on a new nesting island**

It is anticipated that at least one more nesting survey will take place before the end of the peak nesting season and following this, a report will be compiled and distributed to the relevant parties. Discussions are still ongoing regarding the creation of marine protected areas, however early indications are that several of the important nesting beaches in Vava'u will be included in the designs.

**Key Outcome 2**

*A small book will be created to be donated to the local primary schools. Using a model implemented in Bonaire through their Sea Turtle Conservation program, we will produce a 20 page paperback book which*



*will be designed to help students to learn the English language, but will be using the subject matter of turtle conservation and environmental awareness as the medium.*

**Progress:** The text of the book has been written and is currently being translated into Tongan. As the book will be 20 pages long, there is plenty of space to put the English and Tongan versions alongside each other. A local publisher has been sourced to print the material which has reduced the turn-around time for production. The next stage of the book is to contract a local artist to illustrate the story, this artist has been sourced and has been used by the Vava'u Environmental Protection Associate to illustrate previous education materials. The plan is to introduce the books into the primary schools by the end of May.

### **Key Outcome 3**

*Following requests from the schools visited last year, we will produce 5 posters for each school on two different turtle environmental topics for them to be permanently displayed in their classrooms after the lessons.*

**Progress:** The topics and materials for the lesson plans are still in the developmental stage. It is planned to submit the posters and the book to the printers in one transaction. We will be implementing the lessons in the schools during the March/April and June/July period. The Tongan education team are currently undergoing training from an environmental education specialist on teaching and delivery methods to enable effective communication with the primary school students. Approaches have been made to the teaching staff at some of the outer islands schools and they are enthusiastic about the prospect of environmental education sessions.

Additionally, we have been approached by members of the community in the Ha'apai island group who are very keen to implement a turtle education program in their local schools. All materials that we produce as part of this project will be shared electronically with this community group for introduction in Ha'apai.

### **Key Outcome 4**

*20 schools will be visited and given environmental/turtle lessons in Tongan. Six of these schools will be on outer islands in a bid to bring the benefits of the main island schools to the outer islands. It is also important to reach these outer island schools as they most frequently see and fish for turtles. Life in these villages is subsistence fishing and farming for livelihoods. These villages are also currently applying to have their associated reefs turned in community managed areas and as part of this we are encouraging a community imposed ban on fishing for turtles within these managed areas.*

**Progress:** As per Key Outcome 3, these lessons have not yet taken place. However, connections have been made with some of the outer island schools and with the Ministry of Fisheries who oversees the managed areas.

### **Other Notable Achievements**

**Turtle Fishery Monitoring:** During June 2014, there were very culturally important ceremonies held in the Vava'u island group which were attended by the King and other highly respected dignitaries. Traditionally turtle meat is served at these events to distinguished guests.

Four large green female turtles were observed by the project team being offloaded from the inter-islands ferry having being caught in Ha'apai. The Ministry of Fisheries was very responsive to our reporting of the incident and were able to confiscate the remaining one female and turn her over the turtle project team for immediate release. We further worked with the ministry to provide them with evidence of the other females illegally taken and this was followed up on by several of the government departments and traced back to the individuals purchasing the turtles and the fisherman in Ha'apai who caught the turtles. While it was unfortunate that we were unable to rescue the other three females (who had been slaughtered before they could be traced), this incident demonstrates the responsiveness of the government officials to illegal fishing activities and their willingness to work with our project in resolving these situations.



The last of five large green turtles caught for traditional cultural feasting. This female was confiscated by the Ministry of Fisheries and turned over to the VTMP for release.



Project supporters Villiami and Kiko assist with the release of the rescued Green Turtle.

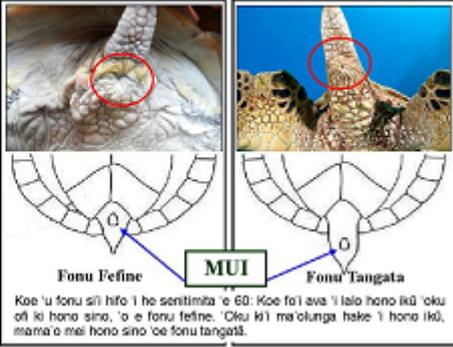
An outcome of this incident was the realisation that while people understand that there is a closed season for fishing turtles, many people are not aware that this only applies to male turtles and that all females are protected year round. In addition to this, it also became very apparent that there is a need to educate the fishermen to enable them to tell the difference between male and female turtles. The VTMP produced an information leaflet in Tongan highlighting the key ways to distinguish males from females and, at the request of the Ministry of Fisheries; this has been distributed to every village in Ha'apai as well as to the Vava'u fisheries office.

### FONU: FEFINE pe TANGATA



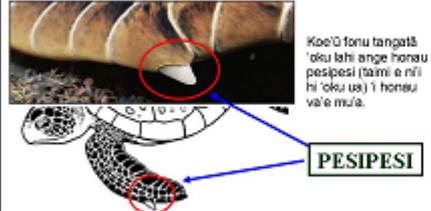
**HIKU**

Koe 'ū fonu lahi hake 1 he sentimita 'e 60. Koe fonu tangatā 'oku lōloa ange hono ikū 'o malava ke 'asi lahi ki tū'a mei hono nge 'esi, koe fonu fefine oku nōnōu hono ikū, 'o ikai mei malava ke 'asi hake mei hono nge 'esi.



**MUI**

Koe 'u fonu sili hifo 1 he sentimita 'e 60: Koe fo'i ava 1 lalo hono ikū 'oku ofi ki hono sino, 'o e fonu fefine. 'Oku ki 1 ma'olunga hake 1 hono ikū, mama o mei hono sino 'oe fonu tangatā.



**PESIPESI**

Koe 'ū fonu tangatā 'oku lahi ange hono pesipesi (tāmi e nī'i hi 'oku us) 1 hono vā'e mū'a.

Fisheries Management (Conservation) Regulations 2008,  
Lao Ki Hono Tootā'i 'o e Fonu

'Oku 'ikai ngofua ki ha taha tootā'i ke ne Tauti, to'o pe fakatau ha fa' 'o ha fonu

- e) Fakatā'ua, māyau'i ha fa'ahinga fakatā'anga ha fonu
- f) Mōuaraki ha tao pe mōuaraki ha ki hono tootā'i pe tamate'i ha fonu
- g) tootā'i pe tamate'i ha fonu tangatā 'oku sili sili hifo e lahi hono tū'a he sentimita 'e 45
- h) Taki ke tootā'i, fakatau pe tamate'i ha fonu loko lōnga e tāmi tapu
- i) Tootā'i, tamate'i pe fakatau 'ae fonu leta ha fa'ahinga tāmi
- j) Fakatau ato e kakano 'o ha fonu kae 'oleva ke fakatā'e he 'ofisa mei he tootā'i 'oku fetonu hono fakatau
- m) 'Kai fetonu ke tootā'i, tauti, fakatau pe tamate'i ha fonu fefine 1 ha fa'ahinga tāmi

Tanaki ki he fa'o e 2008  
Malava ke tootā'i ha fonu tangatā tuku kehe 'a e fonu leta.

- Tāmi tapu mei 'Akosi'ki Fegae'i
- Tapu hono tootā'i 'o e fonu leta 1 ha fa'ahinga tāmi pe
- Tapu hono tootā'i e fonu fefine 1 ha fa'ahinga tāmi pe

VAVA'U ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ASSOCIATION, TURTLES@VAVAUENVIRONMENT.ORG, WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/VAVAUTURTLE



### Gender identification sheet produced to tackle gaps in knowledge amongst the Tongan fishermen

Following the swift action by the Ministry of Fisheries, the VTMP team did not find any more turtles being transported on the inter-island ferry during our monitoring of each load for the remainder of the festivities.

**Rapid Assessment of Biodiversity (BIORAP) in Vava'u:** The Vava'u Turtle Monitoring Program was invited to produce a chapter on turtle foraging and nesting abundance and distribution in Vava'u as part of the BIORAP report that was completed in October 2014.

The BIORAP was jointly coordinated by the Tongan Government, through the Ministry of Lands, Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources (MLECCNR) and the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), along with partner organisations including the Waitt Foundation and the Vava'u Environmental Protection Association (VEPA).