

# THE BUBU SHELL

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## Conservationists converge at Loru



WTEC Management Committee and Members at the Loru Nakamal Blong Environment

In September 2004, members of Vanuatu's only NGO solely dedicated to environmental issues, joined hands at the first official meeting of the organisation since its incorporation in March 2004 as the Wantok Environment Centre (WTEC).

Hosted by the Loru Nakamal Blong Envaeromen on East coast Santo, nine of Vanuatu's leading conservation projects attended included Narong Marine Park, Wiawi Conservation Area, Vatthe Conservation Area, Libansese Conservation Project and Para Marine Park. Sanma Environment Officer Kennery Alvea was also present.

The meeting followed a four day workshop designed to pinpoint the needs of rural

conservation projects and set clear priorities for WTEC for the year ahead. Priorities of members included the appointment of a sustainable markets research officer, improving communications between members, community awareness and technical support on handling land and resource use issues.

"Whilst it was not possible for every WTEC member and supporter to be present, this meeting has been a historical joining of conservation hands and minds. WTEC is striving to meet the common needs of members across the country and this meeting has helped define the way ahead.", said WTEC's Director Mr Roy Hills.

The meeting also appointed

a fully-fledged eight member Management Committee to replace the existing interim one set up at the time of incorporation.

At the closing ceremony, the host Chief Caleb Ser passed a traditional burning log wrapped in namele to Pontiano Valeria of Malekula

who will be hosting the next WTEC members' workshop and AGM at Walarano on Malekula in September 2005.



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## WTEC background and objectives

The plan to form a locally-based NGO to look after the needs and interests of rural conservation projects was first formulated during a workshop for community-based conservation areas organized by VPAI in 1999.

As enshrined in its constitution, its mission is the care and protection of Vanuatu's natural environment, recognising the importance for all forms of life, for present and future generations and in the sustainable development of the country.

WTEC's approach is people centred. Its main focal area is delivering technical support and other services needed by rural communities, families and individuals directly involved in the

conservation or protection of Vanuatu's wildlife and ecosystems and/or the sustainable management of natural resources. WTEC also has an education programme in schools, is engaged in promoting sustainable income generation (particularly from low-impact tourism) and is involved in species specific conservation and research that is in line with national and provincial conservation priorities.

The primary objectives of the WTEC as can be found in its Constitution are:

1. To facilitate mutual support and co-operation between environmental initiatives and projects through the membership of the Wantok Environment Centre.

2. To encourage and support environmental initiatives and projects consistent with the goal of the organisation, especially those being undertaken by individuals and communities in rural areas.
3. To facilitate better co-ordination and improved co-operation between government and non-government organisations involved in environmental matters, particularly in delivering environmental awareness and support at the community level.
4. To work with schools and other learning institutions to stimulate interest in Vanuatu's environment and increase practical skills and experience in environmental subjects.
5. To facilitate the use of appropriate

technologies that reduces human impact on the environment.

6. To encourage and support income-generating activities that are sustainable and have a low social and environmental impact.
7. To encourage and support the application of traditional knowledge and practices in the management and conservation of natural resources in Vanuatu.
8. To raise awareness of environment issues of importance to ni-Vanuatu and provide follow-up and support as and when appropriate.

In March 2004 Wantok Environment Centre (WTEC) was incorporated in Vanuatu as a charitable association.

## WTEC signs MOU with Conservation International

On 19th of November 2004, WTEC and Conservation International (CI) signed a Memorandum of Understanding. The signing took place during a visit to Vanuatu by Francois Martel and Todd Stevenson from CI's Apia and Washington offices.

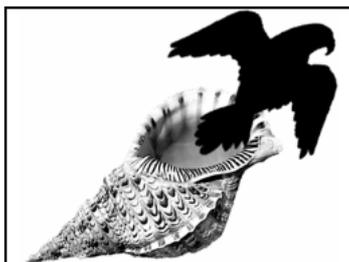
The MOU provides a framework for collaboration between the two organizations and complements signing of an MOU by the Vanuatu Government and CI on the same day.

CI has already committed itself to providing US\$20,000 to Vatthe Conservation Area to help strengthen the conservation measures in place and offset an order of the Supreme Court concerning compensation owed to a land claimant.

Under a grant agreement currently being finalized by WTEC and CI, WTEC will be

responsible for working with Vatthe to achieve objectives agreed upon by all the parties involved. This will include the part repayment of the grant into a Trust Fund that will be operated in conjunction with the Environment Unit to support other conservation areas in the country.

WTEC and Vatthe's Steering Committee are now set to meet on 9th February to discuss the project objectives and schedule fieldwork activities for 2005.



WTEC logo. Bubu shell symbolizes custom and tradition, instrument of calling people together. Bird symbolizes carrier of environmental message out to public.

## WTEC launches two eco-tourism websites

In line with its objectives on supporting conservation areas and sustainable income generating activities in rural communities, WTEC has launched two new websites.

The eco-bungalows website is designed to provide first hand, relevant, up to date, honest and unbiased information about the locally owned and run bungalows. It also highlights the natural attractions and the conservation areas scattered around the islands. Tourists need to be given clear reasons to visit rural areas. This means placing the emphasis on the attractions and not just the bungalows.

By focusing on natural attractions we aim to attract visitors to sustain existing protected areas, encourage setting up of new ones as well as raise profiles for both the island bungalows and the conservation areas.

For more information, visit : <http://www.positiveearth.org/bungalows>

The second website on Vanuatu birds is designed to promote Vanuatu as a birding destination as well as to record the distribution and abundance of native birds. It is also hoped that it will provide an avenue for overseas birdwatchers who travel to Vanuatu to provide informative feedback on their observations.

For the future of protected areas, it is important to encourage specialist visitors such as birdwatchers, scuba divers and other people interested in the natural environment. These visitors can also give something back if there is a means for their observations to be captured. People interested in nature are often more adventurous and therefore more likely to visit rural Vanuatu, and also likely to use the services provided by island bungalows.

For more information, visit the Vanuatu birds website at:

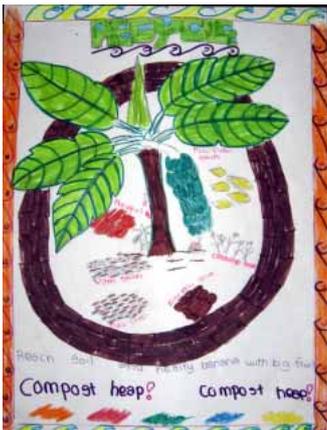
<http://www.positiveearth.org/vanbirds>

## Over 200 students enter WTEC environment competition



Environmental Camp participants playing Web of Life Game

WTEC's Environment Education Curriculum Support Project (EECS) organized a creative competition for students in Santo in late November 2004. The competition attracted more than 200 student entries. Winners of the competition went on a 3 days environmental camp to



Vathe Conservation Area in Matantas. The project officers were baffled not only with the high degree of interest and enthusiasm by the students as reflected in the number of responses, but also with the quality of the artwork and the environmental messages that they convey. To reciprocate with student's enthusiasm, EECS

organized two 3 days camp instead of one as originally planned.

This project has become quite popular with schools in both urban and some rural areas of Santo. The EECS Project is aimed at supporting the teaching of environmental science under the national curriculum and providing opportunities for students to develop practical skills on how to address environmental issues.

The Project kicked off early in 2004 with an initial half a day teacher's workshop. Forty six (46) teachers from both primary and secondary schools in Santo attended the workshop. The workshop objectives were to first inform the teachers about the project goals and objectives and also to put together ideas and topics that teachers need support on outside of classroom. Activities done with students during the year included 4 classes in foreshore cleanups (marine conservation), 2 trips to dumpsite (waste management), 2 trips to Melcoffe Sawmill (Reforestation), and 4 nature conservation trips (Loru

Protected Area). The trips included students from Santo East and Sarakata Primary Schools. Other activities under this project included schools



environmental talks, environmental drawings and Narabul Theatre performances. WTEC wishes to thank teachers and students from both Santo East and Sarakata schools, Andrew Ala of Luganville Municipal, Rodney Aru of Melcoffe Sawmill, Chief Kaleb, Kal, War and Mule of Loru Protected Area, Chief Solomon, Bill and others of Vathe Conservation Area and public transport drivers George Timothy and Kennedy for making it possible for us to complete the planned activities.

WTEC is in the process of securing further funding to continue this project.

## WTEC looks at forest conservation from the inside out

Since June 2004 WTEC has been running a new forest conservation project that is taking a fresh look at the future needs of forest conservation projects and nearby communities.

Called Support for Community Based Forest Conservation Initiative (FCI), the emphasis is on meeting the needs of surrounding communities rather than focusing on management plans and enforcement. It also aims to raise the standing of conservation projects at the provincial and national level and improve the availability of information.

For many forest conservation projects, their future will largely depend on whether the wider needs of the local population can be met through the land and resources available. With a rapidly growing rural population and increasing pressures to convert native forests for food and money, many of these conservation projects will not survive if current trends continue.

FCI is concentrating on community planning as a means of giving people the opportunity to play a greater role in choosing their futures. By exploring and developing better ways of using the available land and natural resources and highlighting the effect of population growth, the project will encourage communities not to leave such important matters to chance. Through this process, communities can plan for a better future that includes the survival of their conservation projects.

The project has been designed by WTEC and the current work is being funded by the Netherlands Committee of the World Conservation Union (NC-IUCN) until the end of December 2005.

## JUST A WALK IN THE PARK AND MORE...

By Donna M Llewellyn, WTEC Legal Advisor (VSA Volunteer)

One of the greatest pleasures of my assignment has been the opportunity to work with children of Santo, Vanuatu. My official assignment as Legal Advisor for Wantok Environment Centre has taken on a new meaning when over the past six months I have also managed an "Environmental Education Curriculum Support Project". The project focus is to provide practical environmental knowledge and learning outside the classroom. In this context, I recently evolved into camp mother for two school holiday environment camps (involving aged 9-12 years) held over six days at the Vathe Conservation Area (VCA), Big Bay in North Santo. For many participants it was their first experience of camping away from home and family within a pristine conservation park. The environment camp programme included two nights camping in *marae* style at the VCA *nakamal* with cooking and hospitality undertaken by the local community of Matantas.

On the first day we travelled by minibus and truck from Luganville town, north for one and a half hours to the conservation area. After the de-numbing of butts, welcome and introductions by the local chief, our first activity was a 3-hour forest walk to investigate the wildlife and all the different trees within the park. The resilience of children was shown by all except one who walked in *savat* (jandals) for the whole camp. My attire of walking boots and jungle jane clothing was rightfully perceived as the white man's combat against the mosquitoes... The second activity was a night walk and hunt for coconut crabs. By torchlight along the beach we found monstrous specimens and learnt about the habitat and lifecycle of this endangered

species.

The first night of bed time story telling disclosed many a custom story from the different islands of Vanuatu. A special request came that I tell some custom stories of "*black man blong New Zealand*" (Maori) which was initiated by the question "Is it true that Maori people are free and were not kidnapped by the whiteman?" (i.e. blackbirding). After a condensed and basic version of New Zealand's colonisation, the Treaty of Waitangi, land and custom issues and recent developments in Treaty settlements – it was summed up from the mouths of babes that it seemed to them like Maori had been struggling and only gained independence over the last 25 years, just like the Ni-Vanuatu people...



One of winning entries in competition

Every morning of camp I felt like I had slept with a bunch of roosters who woke and crowed before the dawn at 4am. Our third activity was a 4-hour walk to the Jordan River and the places of first known settlement of Vanuatu by Spanish explorers (De Quiros: 1606). The excitement of actually being at the place and river the children learn about in their history curriculum was infectious. After some swimming races and relaxation we headed back to camp. That afternoon, some free time to prepare items for the evening concert was then followed by our next activity of environmental games and a

quiz. Here the true benefits of a camp were demonstrated when I was informed that the conservation park was not only about preserving the environment, but was about the protection of "life" for the future. The evening concert of skits, songs and poems relating to the environment produced unexpected learning and reinforcement of environmental concerns for the local villagers who were our guests of honour.

During the days of camp, we swam everyday in the sea and river. Urban children experiencing first hand the various activities, functions and dependence of the local community for their river resource. The success of the camps was also seen when on the last morning no-one wanted to go home and it was like rounding up a herd of obstinate elephants.

I feel privileged to experience the enthusiasm, motivation and interest of children towards the natural environment. We were fortunate to have no major injuries or accidents during the camps. However, I feel it was by no accident that we hope the environment camps have left an

everlasting experience and awareness for young minds. What better way for an environmental lawyer to be at the cold face with future generations...

Following is my favourite poem - written by Benjamin Aru, Santo East School, aged 11 years:

### *Trees for Life*

*Trees for birds, insects and animals*

*Fish and man*

*For birds to sing and animals to hunt*

*Trees for pencil, rubber and paper, board and ruler*

*Clothes and baskets, timber and minerals*

*Making men richer and bigger*

*For food, water, shelter and clean air*

*And all life's blessings as countless as hair*

*For all is from trees*

*And trees for life*



Young students learning to ride a horse during the camp

**SANMA GOs AND NGOs IN COLLABORATION**

**Sanma Taskforce Environmental Resource Unit**

Sanma Taskforce Environmental Resource Unit (STERU) is a library set up by WTEC in collaboration with Sanma Province, Dept of Fisheries, VEU and Dept of Forestry. It carries a collection of books, pamphlets, CDs, videos, and posters.

The main aim of the library is to create the space and the environment where resources are made available to people interested in environmental issues, particularly teachers and their students. The library carries books on forestry, fisheries, climate change, reefs etc in Vanuatu as well as the South Pacific. There are also some general books including environmental education and laws. Most of the resources in the library are either provided by individuals or organizations or have been bought using EECSP allocated funds.

Use of the resource library has been quite good over the past few months. Some teachers brought their classes out to spend time in the library. Primary school students are also coming in alone to sit on the mats and read. The library still needs more books especially environmental books written for primary school level readers.

STERU is open during normal working hours and everybody is welcome to use it. WTEC staff are also readily available to assist should it be needed.

The resource unit is seeking further donations of books or funds to buy books. Donations of up-to date materials are also welcomed throughout the year.

**Krab Kokonas Taskforce**



*Coconut Crab Poster distributed for Awareness*

A total ban on the killing and selling of coconut crabs for three years (2004-2007) came into effect in Sanma Province in May 2004. This resulted from the work of Coconut Crab taskforce supported by WTEC Legal Advisor. The Taskforce is made up of members from WTEC, Sanma Province, Dept of Fisheries and Dept of Forestry.

Initiated by the Director of Fisheries, the Taskforce was setup in response to concerns over declining stock levels of coconut crabs in Sanma Province. The ban is envisioned to further enforce the closed/open seasons and quota system.

The Taskforce secured some funding from FSP Small Grants and produced a poster (inset above) and a weeklong tour of South Santo raising awareness

of the importance of the ban through talks, workshops and theatre performances. Response from communities so far has been positive.

Several restaurants in Port Vila including Breakers and Iririki Resort have also stopped serving coconut crab from their menus.



An undersized coconut crab

The challenge for the Taskforce now is to enforce and monitor the ban. Success of an initiative of this magnitude depends largely on people and communities' willingness to cooperate and observe the ban for the benefit of future generations.

**2004 WTEC FRIENDS AND VISITORS AT SANTO**

Wan Smol Bag Theatre trainers, Charleon and Evett, trained Narabul Theatre in waste management play

Ian Watts, a bat specialist from UK visited Loru Protected Area for a day during a honeymoon trip to Vanuatu. He donated a bat call detector machine to WTEC

32 birders who came in a cruise ship stopped by at Loru Protected Area for few hours of bird watching. This was organized through Destination Pacific

CI staff, Francois and Todd visited Vathe (Matantas) and WTEC office during quick visit to Santo

Sue Maturin, brought a group of birders from New Zealand out to Vathe Coservation Area for a week. Sue organizes this tour once a year.

Andrew and Sarah of Listening Earth visited Loru Protected Area birdwatching for few days

**WTEC STAFF PROFILES**

**DONNA LLEWELL** (Legal Advisor)

Donna has a 18 month volunteer assignment with WTEC in partnership with Volunteer Services Abroad, New Zealand (January 2004 - July 2005).

Donna is a Solicitor of the High Court of New Zealand and has been practicing law since 1995.

**MARIE KALSEI** (Administration/Program Support Officer)

Graduated from Onesua High School in 2001. Recently completed her probationary period and is now a full-time WTEC staff. Marie is the admin officer as well as provides support to project officers.

**ROY K. HILLS** (Director)

Roy, formerly the Director of Vanuatu Protected Area Initiatives from 1993 to 2004. VPAI is a registered as a non-Profit Organization in UK.

Facilitated setting up of WTEC

Initiated megapode conservation with Chief Willie Bongmatur in North Ambrym.

Provided technical support to Loru Protected Area and Vathe Conservation Area.

**WARAKAR SER** (Project Field Officer)

Warakar is the Chairman of Loru Protected Area and a long time supporter of VPAI work out in the field. Warakar was instrumental in setting up of WTEC. He now works as the field officer.

**STEPHEN TOTTERMAN** (Eco-tourism Support)

Stephen is a freelance volunteer giving his time to WTEC. Steve has particular interest in bird watching but has done so much more than bird watching

throughout 2004. The island bungalows and conservation areas website and the Vanuatu birds websites have been put together primarily by Stephen. Most of all, Steve has done all the traveling needed to put these websites together at his own cost. Tenkiu tumas Steve!

**PHYLLIS MAIKE** (FCI Project Officer)

Joined WTEC in December 2004 as a project officer for the IUCN funded tropical forest conservation project.

Worked as Program Assistant and acting Associate Director for Peace Corps Vanuatu until end of November 2004.

Prior to working at Peace Corps, managed the EU/WWF funded environmental project in Wan Smol Bag.

**THANK YOU**

Wantok Environment Centre (WTEC) would like to take this opportunity to thank each and every individual and organization who has contributed and supported the efforts involved in setting up this organization. Particular thank you to all the current foundation members who have voluntarily spent their time and effort, meeting in the evenings and over the weekends to make this happen. Also thank you to Vanuatu Environment Unit and other government organizations and NGOs. Most of all than you to all rural conservation initiatives for the commitment.

WTEC is now set up with a full constitution and proper office procedures to guide its operations. We look forward to future collaboration, support and cooperation with you all.

**WTEC MEMBERSHIP DRIVE**

WTEC is a member based NGO. Individuals and organisations with keen interest in environmental work and resource use management are encouraged to join WTEC. We have the following membership categories:

**Foundation Members:** this category includes: (a) those individuals who have played an active role in the establishment of the organisation prior to its incorporation; (b) individuals who have worked as project officers or as full time volunteers or counterparts under the organisation for a period of more than one year in total and have demonstrated a strong commitment to realising the goal of the organisation. Members must accept the goal, objectives and principles of the organisation and act in a way that is consistent with the best interests of the organisation at all times. Membership be only terminated by a consensus vote of the Management Committee or by a letter of resignation. Members may be required to pay annual membership fee. Foundation members are voting members of the organisation.

**Rural Conservation Initiatives:** This category comprises of community-based initiatives or projects concerned with the sustainable use or conservation of natural resources or wildlife in Vanuatu. Members must agree with the goals, objectives and principles of the organisation to be eligible for membership and may be required to pay a membership fee set by the Management Committee. Associate Members are voting members of the organisation.

**Conservation Members:** individuals, representatives of Govt and NGOs, representatives of international organisations and other interested parties with an active interest in conservation or

environmental issues in Vanuatu. Must agree with the goals, objectives and principles of the organisation to be eligible for membership. Only members based in Vanuatu will have voting rights

**Friends of WTEC:** all other interested groups not covered by above categories, particularly those interested in contributing financially to the organisation. Members of this category may be subject to a membership fee and are non-voting members.

Members will get quarterly newsletter updates on WTEC work. For more information contact:

Wantok Environment Center  
PO Box 145  
Luganville, Santo  
2nd Floor Sanma Province  
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**UPCOMING EVENTS**

- WTEC is having an official launching of the organization on January 21st 2005. Government officials and other working partners will be attending the ceremony
- WTEC Management Committee Meeting planned for January 21 and 22 2005.
- Marine species surveys carried out between February and June by a Peace Corps volunteer, in some of our marine conservation areas including Narong Marine Park in Uri, Wiawi Protected area both in Malekula and Para Conservation Area in South Santo.
- Field trips ranging in duration from a week to a month to Northwest Malekula, the current project site for the IUCN funded tropical rainforest conservation.