

OUR ENVIRONMENT OUR HERITAGE

Biodiversity Awareness Day, 2006

The World Conservation Union (IUCN), UNEP & WWF defines Biodiversity as the "variety of life in all its forms, levels and combinations which includes ecosystem diversity, species diversity and genetic diversity". In simpler terms, biodiversity means a variety and number of species, habitats and genetic variability contained in species.

The Government of Samoa through the Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment and Meteorology (MNREM) commemorated on the 22 May 2006 the National Biodiversity Awareness Day in Samoa. The theme for the 2006 occasion is "Species Conservation" which focuses mainly on Samoa's diversity of species and ecosystems some of which are known to be threatened, vulnerable and endangered. Examples of these include endemic birds such as the manumea and ma'oma'o, marine wildlife species such as turtles, whales and dolphins and habitats such as the forests, mangroves and coral reefs.

The eventual loss of biodiversity in particular the identified species and ecosystems have been caused mainly by human activities. The rapidly growing human population with the demand for goods and services has consequently put pressure on the fauna and flora resources. Similarly, the rate of economic development is growing at an alarming rate where the extent of damages to the environment and its natural resources - biodiversity is becoming too large to be replenished naturally over time.

Losing biodiversity can also mean a loss in the quality of life. As stewards of biodiversity, it's our call to educate ourselves and work together to make proper decisions for our environment and the biodiversity it provides. "Managing and conserving ecosystems and species is managing people"

Conservation Efforts

Marine Conservation Section

The Marine Conservation Section conducted the following activities as part of their awareness campaign linking to the 2006 Pacific Year of the Sea Turtle (YOST) and Samoa's National Biodiversity Awareness Day. These included working together with the communities and students through presentations and discussions to promote the protection of species and ecosystems that have been severely threatened by human activities.

1. Tagging and releasing turtles at Malua Theological College

A 'Turtle Tag and Release' activity was conducted on 29 April 2006 at the Malua Theological College turtle pond. The collaboration on turtle conservation and protection between the two parties has been

in existence for about 3 years now under the Division's Marine Species Conservation Program whereby the Division is from time to time requested for technical advice and/or the tag and release of turtles back to the sea.

The focus of this activity was to tag and release turtles back into the sea. Sixteen turtles (Hawksbill and Green turtles) were tagged and released back into the sea at Taumeasina.



2. Aleipata Community Workshops on Turtles

The Section conducted 3 evening Educational Workshops on Turtles for the 11 villages of the district of Aleipata. While the waters and shores of the district are currently considered the most important remaining nesting grounds for the Hawksbill turtles in Samoa, these workshops aim at educating and at the same time developing the awareness of the villagers on turtles and related issues. Additionally, the Ministry conducts on going assessment surveys on the status of nesting turtles in the country including the Aleipata district. Thus, the workshops also aim at publicizing and relaying the results of these surveys back to the villagers for further awareness.

The series of workshops were conducted in 3 groups of villages for the 11 villages. The participation of men, women and youth was strongly encouraged as the Ministry sees education at the grassroot levels as the basis for turtle conservation as well as the conservation of the environment as a whole.

The workshops overall have been fruitful and the communities themselves saw these as an opportunity to learn about these marine animals as well as the various initiatives which the Ministry is currently implementing within the Aleipata MPA for environmental and species conservation purposes. On top of that, this was also a chance to inform the communities on the existing Government legislations and regulations specific to turtles which some were and are not aware of.



3. Student Field Trips to Mangrove Conservation Areas

To really appreciate and understand the value of ecosystems such as mangroves, students from various schools are taken on field trips to conservation areas such as the Moataa Mangroves and Saanapu Mangroves. During the field trips students are able to identify the 2 common mangroves found in Samoa and their importance to the marine wildlife and people.

4. Poster on Whales and Dolphins of Samoa

Very few people in Samoa realize that whales and dolphins are found in our waters. Dolphins such as spinners and rough-toothed are normally seen around both islands of Savaii & Upolu. Humpback whales are sighted during their migration season which is around August to November with other whales such as the pilot and false killer whales being resident.

Whales and dolphins have been threatened from past whaling, by-catches and entanglements in fishing nets and pollution. These threats have listed many species of whales and dolphins (eg, Humpback and Sperm Whales) as Endangered.

There has been little (if any) awareness and importantly limited knowledge of the local people on cetaceans and the need for conservation. Thus, a Poster on Whales and Dolphins of Samoa has been produced and is currently undergoing printing. The Cetacean Poster for identifies and describes the different species of whales and dolphins which occur in the waters of Samoa. It primarily aims to build or/and improve the knowledge and understanding and at the same time raise the awareness of the Samoan people on these marine animals.

5. Marine Displays

Turtle, mangroves, coral reefs, whale and dolphin displays were displayed on Biodiversity Awareness Day. These species and ecosystems are regarded as threatened and vulnerable and in need of protection and conservation. The displays discussed the biology of these species and ecosystems and issues such as threats caused by human activities and natural phenomenon. A significant level of interest from students on these displays was noted during the occasion.



3. Student Field Trips to Mangrove Conservation Areas



4. Poster on Whales and Dolphins of Samoa



5. Marine Displays

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CHILDREN'S CORNER

Children aged 9-14 are invited to answer the following corner. The name of 3 students with top scores at the end of every month will be posted under the "Children's Corner" for special prizes. "Children's Environment Awareness 2006 Awards will be given to 10 students with top total scores in November during the 2006 National Environment Week".

Answer the following statements

1. What are some of the ways whales and dolphins communicate with each other?
2. Where do turtles nest in Samoa and what time of the year do they nest?
3. Name 2 research techniques on turtles that have been practiced in Samoa?
4. Which whale migrates from the polar region to Samoa to breed during the Months of August to November?
5. Why are marine turtles endangered?
6. What do you call whales that do not have teeth?
7. Give 3 examples why whales and dolphins are classified as mammals and not fish?
8. Where do mangroves prefer to grow?
9. Name 2 environmental influences which can affect mangroves?
10. How do mangrove areas protect the environment?
11. What is significant with the roots of mangrove trees?
12. Which mangrove species mostly grow at the waters edge?
13. Which mangrove area near Apia was used as public rubbish dump?
14. How many types of coral reefs are there in the world?
15. Name 1 area in Samoa where coral reefs are protected?
16. Give 1 natural threat on coral reefs of Samoa?
17. What are the 3 turtle species found in Samoa?
18. How do turtles give birth/ reproduce?
19. How do corals feed?
20. Name the 2 species of mangroves found in Samoa?

Unscramble the words below

1. denimce
2. fwilled
3. geannerded
4. nscovirneato
5. rvitomnenen
6. irbvistdyeo
7. peessic
8. goesvrmna
9. rltuet
10. oldnhisp



Word Find

- | | |
|-------------|--------------|
| 1. MAOMAO | 2. TAGGING |
| 3. DOLPHINS | 4. BIOLOGY |
| 5. ALEIPATA | 6. FORESTS |
| 7. HABITATS | 8. HAWKSBILL |

C	M	K	I	G	K	O	D	A	C	Y	A
A	A	A	A	A	A	O	A	P	B	L	Q
N	Z	X	C	E	L	R	R	T	P	S	A
M	A	O	M	P	E	B	I	F	W	T	J
T	V	U	H	A	B	I	T	A	T	S	P
W	B	I	O	L	O	G	Y	A	A	E	A
I	N	O	H	E	N	M	H	G	B	R	E
S	K	Q	E	I	Z	A	A	O	U	O	Y
E	L	M	G	P	N	B	J	O	I	F	N
F	D	G	N	A	I	H	E	P	A	F	U
W	A	J	A	T	E	F	I	M	L	R	T
T	A	Y	H	A	W	K	S	B	I	L	L

Fill in the Gaps

The theme for the 2006 occasion is 1 which focuses mainly on Samoa's 2 of species and 3 some of which are known to be threatened, vulnerable and endangered. Examples of these include endemic birds such as the 4 and ma'oma'o, marine wildlife species such as turtles, 5 and dolphins and habitats such as the forests, 6 and 7. The eventual loss of biodiversity in particular the identified species and ecosystems have been caused mainly by 8.

whales, coral reefs, diversity, manumea, ecosystems, Species Conservation, human activities, mangroves

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to acknowledge and thank the following companies/organization for sponsoring our National Biodiversity Day

- Telecom Samoa Cellular
- Business System Limited

and our heritage page and children's corner.

- SPREP
- Telecom Samoa Cellular
- Samoa Biscuit.

Produced by the Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment and Meteorology

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