



**Conservation of Sea Turtles within the Cultural Context
of Oceania - What we have learned**

Date: 22nd & 23rd November, 2023

**Location: Lower Campus, The University of the South
Pacific, Suva, Fiji**

Mode: Hybrid (*In person and Online*)

Fiji standard time zone (GMT+12)

Convened by Ika Bula Consultants (Shritika Prakash) in collaboration with IUCN/SSC Marine Turtle Specialist Group Regional Vice Co-Chairs of Oceania (George Balazs, Thierry Work and Denise Parker); The University of the South Pacific (Satalaka Petaia, Kelly Brown and Salanieta Kitolelei); Fiji Ministry of Fisheries (Neomai Ravitu and Saras Sharma) and members and associate colleagues of the Oceania Region.

AGENDA: WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2023 – DAY 1

ROOM: Marine Lecture Theatre, USP Lower Campus

[NB: Presentation recordings are available for Session 1-6, full details on page 10]

08:00 AM	Registration Desk Open	Volunteers
SESSION 1		
09:00 AM	Welcoming Remarks and Prayer	Co-conveners & Mr. Laitia Tamata Tamata's Consultancy tamata.jnr@gmail.com
09:10 AM	Address by USP Marine Studies Discipline Coordinator	Dr. Satalaka Petaia The University of the South Pacific satalaka.petaia@usp.ac.fj
09:20 AM	Address by Principal Research Officer, Ministry of Fisheries, Fiji	Mrs. Saras Sharma Ministry of Fisheries orcinus.megaptera@gmail.com
09:35 AM	Address by IUCN/SSC Marine Turtle Specialist Group (MTSG) Oceania Regional Vice Co-Chair <i>[Pre-recorded]</i>	Dr. Thierry Work USGS National Wildlife Health Center thierry_work@usgs.gov
09:50 AM	Keynote Presentation: Qoli Tabu, Qoli Savasava: the sacred, righteous, traditional and science beyond practices of the turtle	Dr. Joeli Veitayaki Blue Prosperity Fiji joeli.veitayaki05@gmail.com

	fishers of Qoma Island, Fiji and the implications of conservation.	
10:20 AM	Group Photo Morning Tea Break (Sponsored by Sustainable Ocean Alliance)	
SESSION 2		
10:45 AM	NOAA collaborations and recovery initiatives within Oceania/SE Asia <i>[Online]</i>	Ms. Irene Kelly NOAA Fisheries – Pacific Islands Region Irene.Kelly@noaa.gov
11:00 AM	The status of the conservation and management of sea turtles in Fiji -a brief overview	Mr. Aisake Batibasaga Isa Coastal Fisheries Management & Conservation abatibasaga@gmail.com
11:15 AM	1977-2023: Some Reflections on Fijian and Hawaiian Sea Turtle Populations	Mr. George Balazs Golden Honu Services of Oceania itsahonuworldinhawaii@hotmail.com
11:30 AM	WWF’s turtle conservation programs in Fiji: current projects and trajectory	Mr. Duncan Williams WWF Pacific dwilliams@wwfpacific.org
11:45 AM	Solomon Islands National Plan of Action- Turtle work	Dr. Stacy Jupiter Wildlife Conservation Society sjupiter@wcs.org
12:00 PM	SPREP’s Marine Turtle Programme	Ms. Karen Baird SPREP karenb@sprep.org
12:30 PM	Lunch Break (Sponsored by Golden Honu Services of Oceania - www.GeorgeHBalazs.com)	
SESSION 3		
01:30 PM	The growing concern about the trajectory of hawksbill turtles in Oceania: science, policy and where to from here?	Dr. Christine Hof WWF International chof@wwf.org.au
01:45 PM	Fiji’s sea turtle research and national management – how the Marine Collection at The University of the South Pacific can support these efforts.	Mr. Kelly Brown The University of the South Pacific kelly.brown@usp.ac.fj
02:00 PM	Ringgold Isles Expedition, Fiji	Ms. Shritika Prakash Ika Bula Consultants shritika.prakash@gmail.com
02:15 PM	Sea Turtle Conservation Project in Northern Lau, Fiji	Mrs. Katy Fatiaki Vatuvara Foundation

		katy@vatuvara.org
02:30 PM	Status of critically endangered loggerhead turtles nesting sites in New Caledonia and conservation challenges [<i>Online</i>]	Mr. Hugo Bourgogne WWF France/IRD) hbourgogne@wwf.nc
02:45 PM	Telemetry surveys from Northern Lau and bridging the understanding of turtle migration and behaviour patterns from nesters from Lau [<i>Short Video</i>]	Mr. Semisi Meo Conservation International smeo@conservation.org
03:00 PM	Afternoon Tea Break (Sponsored by Vatuvara Foundation)	
SESSION 4		
03:10 PM	SAT-NC project: connections between New Caledonia marine turtle nesting sites and feeding grounds in the South-West Pacific	Dr. Marc Oremus WWF France moremus@wwf.nc
03:25 PM	New genetic stocks and satellite tracking in PNG: new data and insight for management	Dr. Christine Hof WWF International chof@wwf.org.au
03:40 PM	ShellBank: marine turtle traceability toolkit and global database of DNA, status, progress and what we have found in Oceania so far	Dr. Christine Hof WWF International chof@wwf.org.au
03:55 PM	Sea turtle stranding and salvage programme in Hong Kong waters: the virtopsy approach [<i>Online</i>]	Prof. Brian Kot City University of Hong Kong briankot@cityu.edu.hk
04:10 PM	Turtle Cooling Project: what, where, when, why and how marine turtles are feminising in Oceania, and what are the new novel mitigation methods to mitigate	Ms. Elouise Haskin WWF Australia EHaskin@wwf.org.au
04:25 PM	Wrap up Day 1 presentations	
04:30 PM	USP Marine Collection Tour at Discipline of Marine Studies [Led by Kelly Brown]	
05:30 PM	Bula Networking Event [Led by Wantok Moana Student Association] <i>Venue: Seafood Village, USP Lower Campus</i>	
07:00 PM	End of Day 1	
AGENDA: THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 2023 – DAY 2		
ROOM: Marine Lecture Theatre, USP Lower Campus		
08:00 AM	Registration Desk Open	Volunteers
09:00 AM	Opening Remarks	Co-conveners
SESSION 5		

09:10 AM	Tackling plastic pollution: Findings from the coastal litter assessments	Ms. Suzanne Turaganiwai Pacific Ocean Litter Youth Project (POLYP) Fiji suzanne.turaganiwai@usp.ac.fj
09:25 AM	Stewards of the ocean	Miss Loma Mataika Uto Ni Yalo Trust loma.mataika@gmail.com
09:40 AM	Turtles in children's drawings of the sea in Fiji and New Caledonia	Dr. Elodie Fache Institute of Research Development elodie.fache@ird.fr
09:55 AM	Traditions and knowledge around sea turtle use in Fiji	Mrs. Salanieta Kitolelei The University of the South Pacific kiabukarau@gmail.com
10:10 AM	Turtles, Kastom and Management in Vanuatu	Mr. Francis Hickey Vanuatu Cultural Centre francishi@vanuatu.com.vu
10:25 AM	Pacific Ocean Litter Youth Project (POLYP) Fiji Art Display & Morning Tea Break (Sponsored by Conservation International)	
SESSION 6		
11:00 AM	Turtle Use Project: drivers and motivations of turtle use and trade from a community perspective – Fiji	Mr. Duncan Williams WWF Pacific dwilliams@wwfpacific.org
11:15 AM	Turtle Use Project: drivers and motivations of turtle use and trade from a community perspective – PNG	Ms. Elouise Haskin WWF Australia EHaskin@wwf.org.au
11:30 AM	Empowering Dau-ni-vonu for Turtle Conservation: A case Study from Kavewa Island	Miss Karalaini Rereavosa WWF Pacific krereavosa@wwfpacific.org
11:45 AM	A case Study from Kavewa Island	Mr. Emosi Time Kavewa Island timeemosi945@gmail.com
12:45 PM	Lunch Break (Sponsored by IHG Hotels Fiji, Grand Pacific Hotel and Holiday Inn Suva)	
SESSION 7		
01:45 PM	Panel Discussion Facilitator: Shritika Prakash [IUCN/SSC MTSG Oceania Member & Principal Consultant, Ika Bula Consultants] Panelists:	

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Dr Joeli Veitayaki [Scientific Advisor, Blue Prosperity Fiji] 2) Mr. Aisake Batibasaga [IUCN/SSC MTSG Oceania Member & Consultant, Isa Coastal Fisheries Management & Conservation] 3) Dr. Christine Hof [IUCN/SSC MTSG Australasia Member & Global Marine Turtle Conservation Lead, WWF International] 4) Mr. George Balazs [IUCN/SSC MTSG Regional Vice Co-Chair - Oceania & Independent Global Sea Turtle Scientist, Golden Honu Services of Oceania] 5) Mr. Francis Hickey [IUCN/SSC MTSG Oceania Member & Manager, Vanuatu Cultural Centre]
03:15 PM	Closing remarks Day 2
03:30 PM	Afternoon Tea (Sponsored by Ika Bula Consultants)
03:45 PM	Tour to Fiji Museum (Pay to Visit) [Led by Salanieta Kitolelei]
05:00 PM	End of Event

Workshop Participants

The two-day event was attended by a substantial number of participants, both in-person and online. On the first day, 89 participants were present, while on the second day, 68 attendees joined. The majority of the participants hailed from Fiji. Representation from countries across Oceania and beyond was notable, including Australia, France, Germany, the Hawaiian Islands (USA), Hong Kong, New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, the United States of America, Vanuatu, and Tuvalu.



Participants on Day 1 of Sea Turtle Workshop at The University of the South Pacific, Suva, Fiji
(Photo credit: USP)



Participants on Day 2 of Sea Turtle Workshop (Supplied: George Balazs)



Networking event on Day 1 organized by the Wantok Moana Student Association. Participants engaged in discussions while enjoying “kava”. (Photo credit: Janice Taga)



Panel Discussion on Day 2 of the Workshop (Pictured L-R: Mr. Aisake Batibasaga, Mr. Francis Hickey, Dr. Christine Hof, Mr. George Balazs and Dr. Joeli Veitayaki)



A visit to the Fiji Museum on Day 2 of the workshop (Photo: Janice Taga)

Take-Home Points from the Oceania Sea Turtle Workshop 22nd-23rd November, 2023.

1. Collaboration with traditional leaders is crucial for managing sea turtle populations effectively due to their influence within communities.
2. International cooperation and partnerships play a crucial role in managing and conserving regional sea turtle populations.
3. The 5-year Pacific Bioscapes Programme at SPREP aims to strategize actions for turtle conservation and monitoring in the region, emphasizing the importance of partnerships, planning, and community involvement.
4. Communities are the cornerstone of successful sea turtle conservation efforts, requiring their active participation and support.
5. Collaborative efforts are needed to collect, digitize, and analyze data for better management strategies.
6. Implementing techniques of flipper tagging, satellite tracking, and genetic studies is essential to identify connectivity between turtle stocks.

7. Genetic studies are crucial for tracing populations impacted by trade, aiding in the identification and mitigation of threats.
8. Identifying and prioritizing specific conservation actions or zones is essential for implementing efficient measures to protect sea turtles.
9. Improving understanding about nesting and foraging habitats of sea turtles is pivotal for their conservation.
10. Virtopsy assists in establishing the biological health profiles of sea turtles, aiding in the identification of the reasons behind their fatalities.
11. Acknowledging and addressing threats to sea turtles caused by climate change is critical.
12. Encouraging community-driven evaluations of conservation efforts, organizing coastal cleanups led by youth groups, and transforming marine debris into art can promote involvement and raise awareness about the significant threats faced by sea turtles, particularly stemming from marine pollution.
13. Recognizing the perspectives of children, as depicted in their drawings of the sea turtles emphasizes issues that require attention.
14. Acknowledging and respecting cultural knowledge regarding the use of sea turtles is vital for sustainable management.
15. A holistic conservation approach involves scientific research, capacity building, empowering local communities, and representatives for effective protection and management of sea turtle populations.
16. Collaborating with communities ensures stronger support and recognition for safeguarding sea turtle populations.
17. Effective communication between government and communities is fundamental in managing sea turtle populations successfully.
18. Teaching the cultural significance and importance of conserving sea turtles in school curricula enhances understanding and appreciation.
19. Refinement of legislation should integrate new research findings and customary knowledge to bridge knowledge gaps effectively.
20. We all have a shared responsibility in ensuring a healthy sea turtle population.

Zoom Recordings: Presentations ([Available for Download - Click Here](#))

A downloadable folder containing videos for each session (in a zip file) is now accessible. Use the timestamps provided to locate and enjoy listening to your preferred presenter. You are welcome to access and download the sessions at your convenience. Please be aware that the files are of considerable size.

<p>Session 1: 0:00:17 Prayer by Mr. Laitia Tamata 0:04:05 Dr. Satalaka Petaia 0:12:00 Mrs. Saras Sharma 0:22:20 Dr. Thierry Work 0:26:40 Dr. Joeli Veitayaki (Keynote speaker) 1:12:03 End of Session 1</p>	<p>Session 4: 0:00:00 Dr. Marc Oremus 0:19:20 Dr. Christine Hof 0:34:15 Dr. Christine Hof 0:52:30 Dr. Brian Kot 1:11:45 Ms. Elouise Haskin 1:25:50 End of Session 4</p>
<p>Session 2: 0:01:05 Dr. Irene Kelly 0:20:35 Mr. Aisake Batibasaga 0:41:30 Mr. George Balazs 1:06:30 Mr. Duncan Williams 1:29:29 Dr. Stacy Jupiter 1:39:30 Dr. Karen Baird 1:56:03 End of Session 2</p>	<p>Session 5: 0:00:03 Miss Loma Mataika 0:19:30 Miss Suzanne Turaganiwai 0:38:35 Dr. Elodie Fache 0:53:00 Mrs. Salanieta Kitolelei 1:29:25 Mr. Francis Hickey 1:41:49 End of Session 5</p>
<p>Session 3: 0:02:00 Dr. Christine Hof 0:27:10 Mr. Kelly Brown 0:47:19 Miss. Shritika Prakash 0:58:35 Mrs. Katy Fatiaki 1:11:25 Mr. Hugo Bourgogne 1:30:00 Conservation International (Video) 1:35:52 End of Session 3</p>	<p>Session 6: 0:00:48 Mr. Duncan Williams 0:30:55 Ms. Elouise Haskin 0:56:12 Miss. Karalaini Rereavosa 1:02:00 Mr. Emosi Time 1:10:55 End of Session 6</p>

Conservation
Workshop

24 November, 2023

UNINEWS

Conservation of Sea Turtles within the Cultural Context of Oceania



The Discipline of Marine Studies at The University of the South Pacific (USP) wrapped up its two-day sea turtle workshop aimed to shed some light on the 'Conservation of Sea Turtles within the Cultural Context of Oceania'.

The workshop was convened to create more awareness of the need to protect sea turtles, explore their significance in the fabric of Pacific Cultures, and identify practices that would strike a balance between meeting cultural needs and ensuring a thriving turtle population.

In her address, Fiji's Ministry of Fisheries Principal Research Officer, Saras Wati Sharma, said, "The conservation and protection of sea turtles is a matter of great importance locally and regionally."

"The responsibility to ensure their survival rests on our shoulders, and workshops like these serve as a testament to our commitment to safeguarding our marine environment."

She added, "At the national level, the Ministry has engaged in several initiatives, a key one being our involvement in the formalisation of the establishment of the Fiji Marine Turtle Steering Committee."

"This is in recognition again of the cultural and traditional importance of these iconic species for Fiji and given that five of the seven known species of marine/sea turtles exist in Fiji and a number of these nest and forage in and around Fiji's waters."

Fiji, with its rich marine biodiversity, is home to several species of sea turtles that play a vital role in maintaining the health of the Blue Pacific Continent.

This workshop provides a unique platform for collaboration,

bringing together experts, researchers, policymakers, and stakeholders from various sectors.

USP Marine Studies Discipline Coordinator Dr Satalaka Petaia stressed that the workshop has provided training and capacity-building opportunities for students and regional partners.

"Conserving marine resources is okay, but conservation without considering the needs and aspirations of the people who depend on those marine resources would be a waste."

Dr Petaia explained that marine resource conservation, whilst important, should not deprive those who depend on marine resources for their livelihood or prevent them from fulfilling unique Pacific cultural practices.

"Formulation of management plans must encompass the need to ensure that we promote ecological sustainability and social-cultural sustainability. This is the type of conservation and management that we need in the region, making sure that the cultural values and beliefs of the people are taken into account."

USP Marine Collection Curator Kelly Brown also emphasised the university's commitment to supporting such projects to ensure all goals set out are achieved on time, adding that this is the second workshop conducted so far that places a focus on sea turtle protection.

The exchange of knowledge and ideas during two-day sessions undoubtedly contributed to developing comprehensive strategies for the sustainable management of sea turtle populations.

The two-day workshop was convened by Ika Bula Consultants in collaboration with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)/Species Survival Commission (SSC) Marine Turtle Specialist Group - Oceania, Fiji's Ministry of Fisheries and hosted by USP.

Ranked by the Times Higher Education
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Acknowledgements

The local co-organizing team (Shritika Prakash, Kelly Brown, Salanieta Kitolelei, and Saras Sharma) would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to the dedicated individuals and organizations whose unwavering support and active participation made the Oceania Sea Turtle Workshop a success. Our sincere appreciation goes to IUCN/SSC MTSG Regional Vice Co-chairs- Oceania, Thierry Work, Denise Parker, and George Balazs, whose leadership guided the proceedings. We would also like to thank all the presenters for sharing their knowledge and expertise and the participants for engaging in discussions throughout the two days.

We are immensely thankful to The University of the South Pacific, namely, Professor Surendra Prasad (Head of School - SAGEONS) and Dr. Satalaka Petaia (Discipline Coordinator, Marine Studies), as well as the dedicated members of the USP Marketing Team. Our gratitude also extends to the Government of the Republic of Fiji Islands and Fiji Ministry of Fisheries (Neomai Ravitu - Director), POLYP Fiji, and the Wantok Moana (USP Marine Studies) Student Association for their involvement and support. Our deepest appreciation to Karan Narayan for his outstanding effort and commitment in creating the workshop logo.

A heartfelt acknowledgment is owed to our sponsors and their representatives: Komal Kumar and Danian Singh of the Sustainable Ocean Alliance; George Balazs of Golden Honu Services of Oceania; Katy Miller of Vatuvara Foundation; Kristian Miles and Semisi Meo of Conservation International; Krishnil Prasad of IHG Hotels and Resorts- Fiji; Lachlan Walker, Portfolio General Manager – IHG Hotels & Resorts, FNPF Owned Hotels; Mohammed Feroz, General Manager, Holiday Inn Suva; and Shritika Prakash of Ika Bula Consultants, whose generous support played a pivotal role in making this event possible.

A special thanks for the invaluable support from a young and dynamic group of volunteers from Ika Bula Consultants, USP, and Vatuvara Foundation, whose efforts were indispensable in smooth running of this event. We also express our deepest appreciation to the Rapporteurs Team—Alisi Soderberg, Shania Chand, Devavrat Bishwa, Danian Singh, Filimone Mate, Inoke Nakalevu, Joana

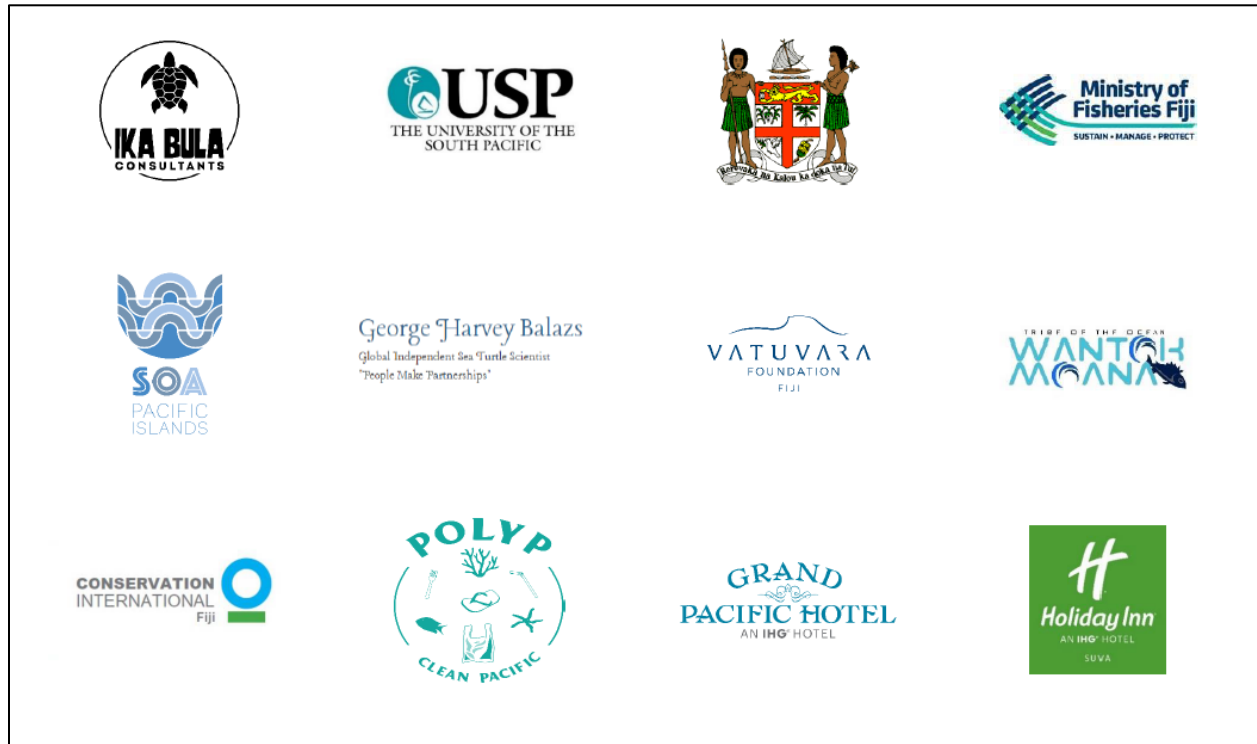
Kamanalagi, Osea Dukuno, and Tui Cakacaka—for their dedicated efforts in documenting and summarizing the discussions and outcomes of the event.

All your collective contributions have been instrumental in shaping the success of this gathering, and we are truly grateful for your commitment and collaboration.



Workshop support team comprising of USP alumni, current staff and students with George Balazs (Regional Vice Co-chair of MTSG- Oceania). **Front (L-R):** Salanieta Kitolelei, George Balazs, Shritika Prakash, Kelly Brown, Kimberly Samson; **Standing 2nd row (L-R):** Wendy-Jane Powell, Veronica, Courtney Powell, Ashmeeta Shalvina, Devavrat Bishwa, Janice Taga, Laura Williams; **Standing Back row (L-R):** Amelia Bai, Osea Dukuno, Waisiki Sevakarua, Mikaele Finau, Filimone Mate, Inoke Nakalevu.

This event was proudly brought to you by:



Contributor(s) of this document

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