



**THE IUCN WORLD COMMISSION ON PROTECTED AREAS
OCEANIA**

**Australia, New Zealand, Pacific Islands and PNG
Newsletter No. 1 2009**

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1. WCPA OCEANIA UPDATE

Dear WCPA Colleagues,

Welcome to WCPA in 2009! All the very best for 2009 for us all as a global force for conservation and to us all individually for both professional and personal achievement and well being.

Victorian Fires Sadly the year has not begun well with the devastation of the Victorian fires with the wrenching scale of the loss of life, injury and life possessions and the huge losses to the environment and wildlife. Our thoughts as parks professionals go to the people of Victoria, their friends and relatives and particularly to Parks Victoria. Naturally we contacted Mark Stone, Parks Victoria CEO immediately to express WCPA's sympathy and support. Fortunately no staff were actually killed but many had friends and relatives killed or injured and many had very challenging experiences in the aftermath. We will be providing a submission to the Royal Commission into the fires (see Member opportunities).

Moreton Island Oil Spill Our thoughts also go to our colleagues in the Queensland EPA who have worked so hard in recent years to conserve the marine environment of Moreton Bay. It is profoundly disturbing when the work of many people over many years can be disrupted by a single incident in this major way.

Change to Oceania You will note that we have become a much larger region. Nik Lopoukhine, WCPA's Chair who was reelected at the WCC in Barcelona has restructured WCPA's governance and where possible will align Vice Chairs with IUCN Regions. We are in the IUCN region of Oceania which is Australia, New Zealand, the Pacific Islands and PNG. I will be the overall Vice Chair for the Region and serve on the Steering Committee, but will appoint Deputies in NZ, Pacific Islands and PNG to make the task possible. In February I attended the CBD Programme of Work on Protected Areas Workshop in Fiji. This enabled me to meet with many of the central protected area figures in the Pacific and start consultations with Pacific colleagues to ensure the new arrangements work well.

The WCPA Pacific Group

Over 30 WCPA members have responded positively to contributing their expertise to a Pacific Group which will be established to share knowledge and to provide technical assistance when requested. The Federal environment department has offered to host a list server and the group should be up and running once Deputies have been appointed.

The Year to Date. We have already been busy this year. First I have had the time consuming but necessary task of rebuilding the Commission for the next four years of the IUCN cycle between World Congresses. Thank you all for your (mainly) quick responses to the four year call for renewal – I'm told we have the best and most complete renewal in the world! Please keep up this great record by remembering to advise myself and Delwyn Dupuis in gland (Delwyn.dupuis@iucn.org) of any changes to your contact details.

Second, a small team of members has been centrally involved with responding to **Australia's Strategy for the National Reserve System** (see below).

Ausaid review of Environment and climate change strategy for Australian development assistance

We also put in a submission to this review. It is available to any members who are interested contact me at penelope.figgis@ozemail.com.au

Upcoming highlights to date of the year ahead are:

- WCPA Marine Members Meeting Adelaide 6th May
- WCPA will be involved in events around the visit of Julia Martin Lefevere, IUCN Director General 1-2nd June
- WCPA is a partner in a major forum on climate change and across jurisdiction support for whole of landscape responses called Linking Landscapes Conference in Lismore in October,
- WCPA will support a possible major forum on a sustainable vision for Northern Australia

Best wishes Penny (**Note I have changed my email to penelope.figgis@ozemail.com.au**)

Member Opportunities

- **Fire Royal Commission** WCPA will be producing a Submission to the Victorian Fires Royal Commission. This effort is being lead by members Grahame Douglas and Roger Good. If you wish to assist in this effort please contact Grahame at grahame.douglas@rfs.nsw.gov.au and Roger at roger.good@bigpond.com
- **Newsletter Editor wanted.** The Newsletter is a time consuming task but a critical one for a functioning network. I would like to bring out shorter more regular newsletters. Would you like to be the editor? I can assist and still clip and send materials but it would be wonderful to get a more IT competent person to put together this communication tool.
- **Newsletter items wanted** Please think of contributing important pieces of information to be shared with colleagues - a short paragraph and information link is all that is required.

Representations

Australia's Strategy for the National Reserve System In January a small team of members put together a Submission to the *Australia's Strategy for the National Reserve System* which was released before Christmas (attached). We put the position that the document needed a good deal of improvement, in particular to avoid any lessening of clear quantifiable and time bound goals in favour of more amorphous and easily avoided strategic directions. We also put it to government that the strategy must be seen as a critical national strategy to protect the nation's 'natural infrastructure' and needs Prime Ministerial involvement to elevate its importance.

In February WCPA joined with WWF Australia, and the Nature Conservancy to follow up with representations directly to Minister Garrett and to departmental personnel. We believe this effort has led to substantial improvements in the document. The document still has to pass the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Committee (NRMMC). Hence a good deal of work has gone into an extensive series of follow up letters to the PM and key cabinet minister and relevant state Ministers.

AUSAID Environment and climate change strategy for Australian development assistance WCPA quickly mobilized to put in a last minute submission to the Ausaid review of *Environment and climate change strategy for Australian development assistance*. Unfortunately many of our conservation colleagues in the Pacific were not aware of this important draft. The document was deficient in its understanding that assisting Pacific nations to implement protected areas of varied governance can be a central tool in achieving Australia's stated goals.

News of Members

- Congratulations to **Nathan Males** CEO of the Tasmanian Conservation Trust for being selected as one of the top 5 finalists for the IUCN WCPA young conservationist award.
- Congratulations to **Prof. Bob Beeton** of the University of Queensland for being awarded an AM – Member of the Order of Australia.
- Congratulations to **Stuart Chape** for his editing role in the significant publication ***The World's Protected Areas***
- Thanks to **Prof Elery Hamilton-Smith** has recently retired from the position of Chair of the WCPA Caves and Karst Taskforce. Elery has shown great dedication and excellent work all over the world whilst carrying out this important role.
- Congratulations to his successor **Jay Anderson** of Western Australia.
- **Dr. Stuart Blanch** has moved from WWF to head up the Northern Territory Environment Centre.

Note if you have news you would like to share please let me know.

2. INTERNATIONAL NEWS

WORLD CONSERVATION CONGRESS IN BARCELONA

Last October, more than 8,000 of the world's leading decision makers in sustainable development: from governments, NGOs, business, the UN and academia. Together in one place for 10 days: to

debate, share, network, learn, commit, vote and decide. The objective: ideas, action and solutions for a diverse and sustainable world. It was an exciting and stimulating conference which had a really profound sense of urgency. Many Australians, New Zealanders and Pacific Island colleagues took part in both the Forum with its many sessions on every conservation area to the General Assembly of Members. There is a very substantial amount of information, speeches and all resolutions on the IUCN website at http://www.iucn.org/congress_08/

MARINE PROTECTED AREAS WORKSHOP, BAHRAIN

A recent workshop on World Heritage and Marine Protected Area was held in Bahrain. The goal was to begin productive cooperation for the conservation on marine protected areas in the Arabian seas region, and at the global level. All the presentations given at the workshop are now available as PDFs from the following link. <http://sites.google.com/site/danlaffoley/marine-world-heritage--bahrain>
Also see the excellent Marine Protected area blog site
<http://blog.protectplanetoocean.org/2009/03/bahrain-action-plan-created-to-scale-up.html>

GLOBAL PUBLICATIONS ON PROTECTED AREAS

Two recent publications of immense importance to the protected area policy field have been recently released.

The World's Protected Areas Status, value and prospects in the 21st Century

Based on input from more than 100 experts, this book aims to provide the most detailed assessment ever of the worldwide distribution and conservation status of national parks and reserves. It examines the relationship between people and protected areas, investigates threats and opportunities, cites the history of protected areas, provides expert conservation advice and celebrates the success of protected areas around the world. It is edited by Stuart Chape, Mark Spalding and Martin Jenkins, and includes a foreword by Achim Steiner and Julia Marton-Lefèvre. Available from University of California Press: www.ucpress.edu

Relaunch of the World Database on Protected Areas

Since 1981 what is now UNEP-WCMC has been managing the only global database on the world's national parks and reserves, working in close collaboration with IUCN and its World Commission on Protected Areas. This database has now been completely redesigned, and was relaunched in October at the World Conservation Congress in Barcelona. The new online tool includes many new features aimed at increasing access to the maps and associated data on the world's protected areas, including employing Google Earth to help users to visualise sites. To access: www.wdpa.org

THE WCPA TASK FORCE ON CITIES AND PROTECTED AREAS:

The Task Force is promoting use of urban protected areas for public education and engagement on climate change issues, and this will be included in a volume on urban protected areas of the WCPA Best Practice Guidelines Series. The Task Force is also cooperating with a new London-based NGO, InterClimate Network, in experimenting with innovative ways of public engagement, i.e., implementing UNFCCC Article 5. More information: www.interenvironment.org/cipa/trzyna.htm

TERRESTRIAL CARBON AND BIODIVERSITY

The role of natural systems as part of the climate solution, not just a passive 'victim' of the problem, is probably the major emerging issue for those involved in biodiversity conservation. IUCN WCPA convened its own forum on the topic with the Hon. Bob Carr in August and has made some preliminary representations to government.

On this theme important work is being done by a prestigious group from science, economics, and public policy with expertise in land management, climate change, and markets in developing and developed nations, called the Terrestrial Carbon Group which includes WCPA member Prof. Hugh Possingham.

The Terrestrial Group has issued a paper arguing carbon is an untapped part of the climate change solution. The Group's paper recognises that over the coming decades, vegetated land in developing nations will be increasingly threatened with conversion to agricultural and plantation use, and to human settlements and infrastructure. This will cause greenhouse gas emissions, underscoring the ongoing importance of terrestrial carbon in the climate change solution. Terrestrial carbon is a critical untapped element that could provide up to 25% of the climate change solution." To download the full paper and for further details, please visit the website www.terrestrialcarbon.org

LIFEWEB - MATCHING DONORS TO PROTECTED AREA PROJECTS

LifeWeb is a global initiative to support the creation and improve the management of protected areas. Officially launched in May 2008 during the COP 9 meeting of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), LifeWeb creates a global partnership for the CBD Programme of Work on Protected Areas (PoWPA). The website will act as a clearing-house or on-line marketplace for matching protected areas needs with appropriate resources.

Parties and indigenous and local communities will be invited to provide their candidate sites along with the respective need for support. Potential donors will be invited to show their commitment and provide information on their funding streams. A coordinator will facilitate the interaction between potential donors and recipients. Meetings will be organized to complement this process and forge partnerships. It will be based on voluntary participation in an open and flexible manner.

For more information <http://www.cbd.int/lifeweb/>

3. AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL NEWS

ROYAL COMMISSION INTO VICTORIAN FIRES

WCPA will make a submission to the Royal Commission into Victoria's devastating bushfires. Retired Victorian Supreme Court judge, Justice Bernard Teague, will chair the Royal Commission which has been given broad terms of reference and will make recommendations on fire preparation and land use planning and management systems as part of its wide-ranging review of the fires. This will cover protected area management.

The Royal Commission is scheduled provide an interim report by August 17 to enable early recommendations to be implemented before next summer's bushfires season. The final report will be due by July 31, 2010.

If you have expertise to offer on this important submission please contact grahame.douglas@rfs.nsw.gov.au and roger.good@bigpond.com

AUSTRALIAN PROTECTED AREAS CONGRESS QUEENSLAND

Many WCPA members gathered at the APAC Congress in Queensland last November. It was an excellent conference which reinforced the broad inclusive agenda of modern protected area thinking as well as underscoring the vital need for urgent action. We held a members meeting on the evening of the November 26th. Nik Lopoukhine (Chair WCPA) and David Sheppard (Head IUCN PA Program) both addressed the meeting on Barcelona and the future of WCPA over the next four years. A beautiful film *For Life's Sake*, produced for WCPA's main event in Barcelona on the values of parks was shown.

The APAC08 proceedings are now available online at the congress website www.apac08.org.au. The proceedings are currently available as an interactive pdf. Please download the document and save it to your computer's hard drive before opening. Any queries about these proceedings should be directed to [ASN Events](http://ASN_Events) by 31 March 2009. Orders can be placed for a printed version of the proceedings by downloading the form on the website and faxing it to ASN Events by 31st March 2009. The cost is \$40. The book of proceedings will be available after 31st March 2009. Congress Organisers, Australian Protected Areas Congress 2008 (APAC08) www.apac08.org.au

APPLIED ENVIRONMENTAL DECISION ANALYSIS (AEDA)

Prof. Possingham also draws Members attention to the AEDA website. "Members may be interested in Decision Point – www.aeda.edu.au/news - which has a lot of reserve system design research

presented in an accessible way (and in the future some biodiversity-carbon economy work). That is we summarises the 100 or so papers that AEDA publishes each year into bite-sized chunks".

AEDA was established to develop tools and test methods to support transparent decision-making for environmental management. Where possible, guidance is provided for organisations wishing to use these new tools. The research being done by AEDA underpins major natural resource management efforts such as state-of-the-environment reporting, ameliorating the impact of habitat fragmentation, water management, invasive and threatened species management and adapting to global warming.

The best way to keep up with AEDA is to read the monthly magazine – **Decision Point** which is available on line. The site also carries information sheets which present the latest in decision theory in an easy-to-follow and engaging format.

THE INTERNATIONAL FOREST CARBON INITIATIVE

Unless you are strongly involved in the carbon and biodiversity area it is a confusing area to understand. Australia's \$200 million International Forest Carbon Initiative is a key part of Australia's international leadership on REDD. The Initiative supports international efforts on REDD through the UNFCCC. It is jointly administered by the Australian Department of Climate Change and Ausaid. There is a useful fact sheet on the topic at

<http://www.climatechange.gov.au/international/publications/fs-ifci.html>

MINISTER STEPS IN TO SAVE SHOALWATER BAY

Back in September 08 the Federal Environment Minister Peter Garrett made a very important decision which got very limited national coverage. The Minister rejected a proposed rail line and coal terminal at Shoalwater Bay in central Queensland. The mining company Waratah Coal wanted to build a rail line and coal port as part of a \$5.3 billion project to produce 25 million tonnes of coal a year for export.

In making the decision the Minister said the proposed coal terminal would destroy the ecological integrity of the area. "This decision is based on clear advice from my Department that the Waratah proposal would have clearly unacceptable impacts on the high wilderness values of Shoalwater Bay and on the internationally recognised Shoalwater and Corio Bay wetlands," he said. WCPA has commended the Minister on this outstanding decision for nature conservation.

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN MARINE PARKS PROCLAIMED

The outer boundaries of South Australia's network of 19 new marine parks were RECENTLY proclaimed. This long awaited development will help protect the unique and diverse marine environment of South Australia for future generations. The boundaries are available for public comment until 27 March 2009. To find out more about South Australia's new marine parks network, go to: www.marineparks.sa.gov.au or phone: 1800 006 120.

TOURISM AND PROTECTED AREAS TASK FORCE NSW

Late 2008 the New South Wales government tabled a report into tourism and National Parks. The inquiry was led by Brian Gilligan and the Vice Chair was a member of the panel. The inquiry covered the complex issues at the heart of the right relationship between parks and tourism. While many believe a better relationship can lead to building support for parks others deeply fear the thin end of the wedge and that parks could become yet another area dominated by human commercial motives. The Inquiry Report can be accessed at:

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/parks/tourismtaskforce.htm>

NORTHERN MARINE PLANNING INFORMATION AVAILABLE

Late 2008 the government released the North Marine Bioregional Profile. It is one of four national Plans that together will identify the conservation values of Australia's oceans and the actions needed to protect them, including the areas required for the national marine protected area network. It brings together the best available information for the North Marine Region covering the unique shallow basin and shelf communities and habitats of the Arafura and eastern Timor seas. The North

Bioregional Profile is the starting point for developing a Marine Bioregional Plan for the Region, which will be released in early 2010.

<http://www.environment.gov.au/coasts/mbp/publications/north/bioregional-profile.html>

CARING FOR COUNTRY BUSINESS PLAN OUT

Caring for Our Country is the Commonwealth initiative to succeed the Natural Heritage Trust. Six national priority areas have been identified: a national reserve system; biodiversity and natural icons; coastal environment and critical aquatic habitats; sustainable farm practices; natural resource management in remote and northern Australia; and community skills, knowledge and engagement. A Business Plan 2009-10 was released recently. The business plan outlines targets and priorities for conserving and restoring wildlife habitat, wetlands and soils around the country. Further information on Caring for Our Country, including a copy of the Business Plan, can be found at: www.nrm.gov.au

CRC TOURISM AND PROTECTED AREAS REPORT

Sustainable Tourism Cooperative Research Centre (STCRC) was established under the Australian Government's Cooperative Research Centres program in 1997. At the Australian Protected Areas Congress in November the STCRC released the Tourism and Protected Area Management Research Snapshot publication which groups key STCRC research conducted over the past four years into five distinct themes: visitors; interpretation and communication; economic evaluation; partnerships; and planning and management.

The summary publication has been developed as a resource for protected area managers, tourism operators wishing to improve their park based business or who are seeking new business opportunities, communities adjacent to national parks, environmental, state and national parks government agencies, academic and education institutions and students. This publication and many more are available for FREE download from www.crctourism.com.au/BookShop.

MURRAY RIVER RED GUMS – progress and set backs

The Victorian Government has recently accepted the majority of the recommendations by the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) for a series of new national parks and reserves in the floodplain forests of the Murray River and its tributaries. A number of important wetlands recommended by VEAC for increased protection as nature conservation reserves were not accepted by the government (mainly in the under-reserved Victorian Riverina bioregion) and will remain available for duck hunting. Also boundaries in the Gunbower National Park were shifted, and the size of the Lower Goulburn River and Warby-Ovens National Parks, again to allow for an increase in the areas available for duck hunting. The full recommendations by VEAC are available at <http://www.veac.vic.gov.au/riverredgumfinal.htm>

BIOBANKING BENEFITS INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

In New South Wales the *Land Alive* project has funded the development of land management plans for five Aboriginal land owners. The plans of management scope the BioBanking potential, identify current or emerging land management issues and incorporate local cultural land management knowledge. The project will continue to work with participating land owners in 2009, building greater understanding of the BioBanking Scheme and biodiversity values on relevant land holdings. This is the first step for Aboriginal Land holders to participate and benefit from the BioBanking Scheme.

In 2009 the Land Alive project will be offering accredited training in conservation land management, oral history recording and small business management to participating Aboriginal land owners. This is the cornerstone of the capacity building objective of the project and seeks to build on existing experience and skills in the Aboriginal community. More information on Land Alive and the current project activities can be found on the web at <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/landalive/index.htm>

\$15.7 MILLION BOOST FOR INDIGENOUS RANGERS

The Australian Government will provide \$15.7 million over two years to support 22 Indigenous ranger groups, working on land and sea management activities in the Northern Territory. The investment

supports the development of ranger groups in a number of regions across the Top End including the Darwin/Daly, West Arnhem, East Arnhem, Katherine, Ngukurr, Victoria River and Borroloola/Barkly. More than \$9million is committed through the Working on Country Northern Territory program delivered by the Department of the Environment, Water and Heritage to create over 61 new ranger jobs. The remaining funding of \$6.5 million is provided by the Aboriginals Benefit Account.
<http://www.environment.gov.au/minister/garrett/2009/pubs/mr20090304.pdf>

BIODIVERSITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE PAPERS

Readers will be well aware of the Garnaut Climate Change Review and various reports which can be found at <http://www.garnautreview.org.au>. The Garnaut Climate Change Review is supported by a number of supporting commissioned papers. The paper on 'Biodiversity and climate change' prepared by Monash University's Australian Centre for Biodiversity considers six climate change scenarios and the effect is projected to be very extreme for 2 scenarios, extreme for 1 scenario, high for 2 scenarios and moderate for 1 scenario. The paper is on-line at: [http://www.garnautreview.org.au/CA25734E0016A131/WebObj/04Biodiversity/\\$File/04%20Biodiversity.pdf](http://www.garnautreview.org.au/CA25734E0016A131/WebObj/04Biodiversity/$File/04%20Biodiversity.pdf)

Another paper, 'Impact of climate change on Australia's areas' notes that global warming impacts on alpine precipitation and its impacts on alpine flora and fauna, and ecosystem functioning are expected to be among the first quantifiable indications of climate change (pg.3). Loss of native flora/fauna and an increase in feral species is identified as one implication of climate change in the alpine zone (pg.5). This paper is online at: [http://www.garnautreview.org.au/CA25734E0016A131/WebObj/01-JAlpineareas/\\$File/01-J%20Alpine%20areas.pdf](http://www.garnautreview.org.au/CA25734E0016A131/WebObj/01-JAlpineareas/$File/01-J%20Alpine%20areas.pdf)

The paper, 'Impacts of climate change on Australia's World Heritage properties and their values' identifies excessive human visitation, exotic pests and diseases as a potential impact of climate change on natural World Heritage values of ecological and biological significance (pg. 11). The paper is online at: [http://www.garnautreview.org.au/CA25734E0016A131/WebObj/01-KWorldHeritage/\\$File/01-K%20World%20Heritage.pdf](http://www.garnautreview.org.au/CA25734E0016A131/WebObj/01-KWorldHeritage/$File/01-K%20World%20Heritage.pdf)

A Climate Change Primer for Regional Natural Resource Management Bodies. The report recognises the key role that invasive species play in reducing ecosystem and landscape resilience and increasing the vulnerability of these systems. The report is online at: <http://www.greenhouse.gov.au/impacts/publications/nrm.html>

AN AUSTRALIAN CORAL SEA HERITAGE PARK

On 10th September 2008, the Pew Environment Group and partners launched a Coral Sea report which calls for a large no-take oceanic park to be created throughout Australia's portion of this unique area. The Coral Sea is an Australian ecological and historical treasure. It has more than 25 spectacular coral reefs, remote islands, towering underwater mountains and deep-sea canyons. Its abundant wildlife includes sharks, majestic ocean fish such as tuna, marlin and swordfish, as well as threatened sea turtles, whales, dolphins, manta rays, seabirds and a diverse range of corals and reef fish. The proposed Australian Coral Sea Heritage Park would be a safe haven for globally threatened species that are rapidly declining around the world. Extending east from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park the Park would encompass our maritime boundary with Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and New Caledonia. With more than one million square kilometers, this new Park would be the world's largest.

The Coral Sea also has a rich maritime history. In May 1942, it was the site of a naval engagement that turned the tide of World War II in the Pacific. Over time, many commercial vessels have run aground on its shallow reefs, resulting in significant loss of life – along with a few great tales of survival. Today, a growing dive tourism industry is concerned to see the Australian Government protect this magnificent area. To find out more about the campaign see:

Pew: www.globaloceanlegacy.org/coralsea/

ACF: http://www.acfonline.org.au/default.asp?section_id=272

AMCS: http://www.amcs.org.au/default2.asp?active_page_id=562#

CAPE YORK PARK HANDBACK

Last year conservation groups welcomed the handback of nearly 182,000 hectares of land in Cape York Peninsula to its Traditional Owners and the creation of the Aboriginal-owned Kulla (McIlwraith Range) National Park. The new joint managed National Park will cover almost 160,000 hectares of this Aboriginal land and includes unique tropical-rainforest wilderness. This hand back and new National Park comes out of a unique partnership between the Cape York Land Council, Balkanu, the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF), The Wilderness Society and the Queensland Government, working together to return lands to Traditional Owners and protect areas of outstanding environmental and cultural significance.

The McIlwraith Range area is the largest area of tropical-rainforest wilderness left in Australia. It has the greatest diversity of Australia's orchid species and over half of its butterfly species. It is also home to endangered species such as the Cassowary and other species found nowhere else in the world like the Cape York Nursery Frog and McIlwraith Leaf-tailed Gecko. A joint management agreement for the area will ensure that this special region will be managed to the highest standards of nature conservation and in a way that is consistent with the Aboriginal traditions and customs of the area.

WORLD HERITAGE LISTING FOR BURRUP?

A campaign is underway to win World Heritage listing for the Aboriginal rock carvings on the Burrup Peninsula in Western Australia. The peninsula is believed to hold the largest concentration of rock art in the world and is possibly the first site of human habitation in Australia. The Burrup carvings are described by the National Trust as "one of the world's pre-eminent sites of recorded human evolution".

The site has been the subject of a major battle with Woodside Petroleum receiving intense criticism from archaeologists after it moved 170 of the ancient carvings on its lease on the Burrup to build a natural gas production plant, wharf and storage facilities. The World Archaeological Congress condemned the action in July and pressure is growing to secure more protection for the estimated 300,000 ancient carvings that are spread across 88 square kilometres of the peninsula. More information www.burrup.org.au/

4. NEW ZEALAND NEWS

NO PARK FEE INCREASES IN CHALLENGING TIMES

The New Zealand Department of Conservation manages a network of 12,800 km of tracks, 940 huts and 250 camp grounds and skiing opportunities on areas such as Mt Ruapehu in Tongariro National Park. It is estimated there are 33 million visitors annually to conservation lands (this includes repeat visitors). There are nine Great Walks on public conservation land. The Department of Conservation has announced it will not be increasing fees for huts and campgrounds on public conservation land this year.

"In these challenging economic times it is common sense to ensure that people can continue to enjoy the outdoors without worrying about increased charges," Al Morrison, the Director-General of Conservation said. "The family friendly policy of the Great Walks being free to under 18's will be retained," Mr. Morrison said.

GOOD NEWS ON SPECIES

New Zealand is known internationally for the severity of its invasive species problems which have led to many native species becoming endangered. However it is also known for its innovation and world leading recovery plans. Recently a new milestone was reached in the long running campaign to save the kakapo with confirmation that the population of threatened birds has cracked through the 100 mark. A handful of chicks born in the past few days on Whenua Hou/Codfish Island – the kakapo sanctuary off Stewart Island have survived their first few critical days, meaning the world's kakapo headcount is now officially 103 birds - more than double the total number of kakapo alive a little over a decade ago.

In other threatened species news Twenty *pateke*/brown teal, New Zealand's rarest waterfowl, are returning to Fiordland National Park in the first major release of the endangered species in the South Island. The release follows a successful captive breeding programmes spread throughout New Zealand supported by Banrock Station Wines. These achievements are a real tribute to the Department of Conservation (DOC) staff and many volunteers who have worked so hard to build up kakapo numbers over the years and their corporate and NGO partners.

KIA WHARITE INITIATIVE

Kia Wharite is a major new biodiversity initiative funded jointly by the Department of Conservation and Horizons Regional Council. Each organisation has committed initial funding of \$500,000 per year for each of the next five years. Both organisations will work through partnerships with iwi and landowners.

The project will seek to

- grow the kiwi population in the project area by 10 % every three years
- protect a minimum of 50 pairs of blue duck
- enhance forest condition in Whanganui National Park and protect bush on private land with landowner agreement.

FEARS FOR SEALS IN SQUID FISHERIES

Forest & Bird marine campaigners are trying to raise awareness of the large number of the endemic sea lions which are killed when they become entangled in the squid fishery's trawl nets and drown. The conservation organization is calling for the sea lion kill quota to be reduced to near zero to help the sea lion population to recover.

Once found right around the mainland New Zealand coastline, NZ sea lions now breed in just a few colonies in the sub-Antarctic islands, where they are highly vulnerable to disease epidemics and genetic "bottle-necks". NZ sea lions are found only in New Zealand waters and have been classified as a threatened species since 1997. Last year IUCN elevated their threat status by listing them as being in decline.

Department of Conservation researchers on New Zealand's sub-Antarctic islands where the sea lions breed have recorded a 31% fall in the number of NZ sea lion pups born this season, heightening fears about the impact of by-catch deaths. Forest & Bird marine advocate Kirstie Knowles says 95 sea lion deaths are far too many and pose a serious threat to the sea lion population's ability to recover. "There is no reason why a commercial fishery should be allowed to kill significant numbers of a protected, endemic marine mammal. A kill quota close to zero is the only level that will provide a realistic level of protection – this is achievable if the industry agrees to incremental reductions in the kill quota of 20% each year towards that target."

5. PACIFIC ISLAND & PNG NEWS

As we are just establishing our networks in the Pacific Islands and PNG this section is limited for this newsletter. Please contribute items of mutual interest.

CBD PoWPA WORKSHOP, FIJI

Participants from all the 14 Pacific small island States, resource persons from the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), a number of international and national non-governmental organizations, the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas, and representatives from indigenous and local communities gathered in Nadi Fiji in early February for a workshop on the implementation of the programme of work on protected areas (PoWPA) developed under the Convention on Biological Diversity. The meeting was supported by the European Community and the Government of Spain underscoring the global effort necessary for biodiversity conservation.

The workshop was built around the CBD blueprint of how to establish protected areas, how to manage them, how to govern them and what tools can be used to achieve the planned work. It assessed progress against charts clear targets. It evaluated the progress Pacific states were making and tried to identify gaps in capacity to progress the agenda. Many participants stresses the need

for an appreciation for indigenous and community conserved areas and multi-agency governance approaches for managing protected areas across a spectrum of protected-area categories.

Strong progress has been made in some areas such as the Micronesian Challenge and the Coral Triangle Initiative, both examples of broad partnerships and political commitments. A Papers and a Report on the workshop is available at <http://www.cbd.int/doc/?meeting=WSPAPAC-01>

UPCOMING

Tropical Rivers Futures Forum The Environment Centre NT is hosting the Tropical Rivers Futures Forum in Darwin on 9 April. All welcome – it's free too! The forum will bring together key river scientists, Indigenous leaders, government policy makers, water managers, pastoralists, farmers, conservationists and fishermen to discuss and debate the future of Top End rivers, and seek to develop a shared vision.

There will be ample opportunity to be involved, through asking the hard questions of panelists on the "Tropical rivers in 2030" panel, and through small group workshops. If you are interested in attending or knowing more, please contact Jenny Wells, Project Officer at the Environment Centre NT, at projects@ecnt.org

International Ecological Restoration Workshop August 23 – 27, 2009. This expert workshop is to be held during SER's 19th international conference in Perth, Australia. Its goal is to make significant contributions to the development of an *IUCN Best Practice Protected Area Guideline for Ecological Restoration* as called for at the IUCN World Conservation Congress held in October 2008. It will also build awareness and support for related initiatives such as the implementation of article 8 f (ecosystem restoration and species recovery) of the Convention on Biological Diversity. We would like to invite you to nominate at your earliest convenience but no later than **April 15, 2009**, an expert who can participate in the workshop.

The provisional agenda for the workshop will be forwarded to the selected experts in May 2009. The workshop will be conducted in English. We look forward to receiving your nominations. Please contact Karen Keenleyside (Karen.Keenleyside@pc.gc.ca) or Sasha Alexander (sasha@ser.org) to submit your nomination or to request additional details.

This workshop will provide participants with an opportunity to contribute their knowledge and experience to advancing the field of ecological restoration in protected areas and providing practical solutions to some of the worlds most pressing conservation challenges.

Details regarding the Society for Ecological Restoration International World Conference: Making Change in a Changing World can be found at <http://www.seri2009.com.au/>