

SOCIETY FOR CONSERVATION
BIOLOGY OCEANIA
FIJI 2014
Post-Conference Report



Third Regional Conference for the SCB Oceania Section,
July 7-11, 2014
Suva, Fiji

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Executive Summary

The Society for Conservation Biology Oceania (SCBO) section 2014 conference was co-hosted with the University of the South Pacific at their Laucala Bay campus in Suva, Fiji, from July 9-11, 2014, with two prior days of workshops on July 8-9. One hundred and eighty-nine registered delegates and 51 USP student volunteers from a broad cross-section of the Oceania region participated in a packed program with the main theme of “Resilience Island Ecosystems and Communities”. One hundred and fifty-two oral presentations were delivered across three running sub-themes: Vulnerable ecosystems, communities and species; Adaptive and community-based management of socio-ecological systems; and Conservation in a Changing Oceania. Plenary speakers were carefully chosen to represent a range of topical issues from across Oceania, with particular focus on issues relevant to the Pacific Islands of Oceania.

The SCBO has a firm commitment to capacity building, through the outreach of its chapters and training and mentoring for young scientists throughout Oceania. Through the fundraising efforts of the Local Organizing Committee, the SCBO was able to support travel and accommodation awards for young Pacific Islanders and chapter members. The conference featured multiple events for delegates from Oceania chapters, and special recognition of outstanding student presentations through five student awards. A full day workshop was devoted to boosting student writing and presenting skills.

The SCBO conference was broadly deemed a success by multiple measures. The conference generated a profit of approximately FJ\$28,012.75 (~US\$14,859). The SCBO Board launched a special issue of Pacific Conservation Biology on “Conservation of Biodiversity in the Pacific Islands of Oceania” to coincide with the conference, and additional funding was secured to produce a separate special issue of Pacific Conservation Biology with papers presented during the Species Conservation symposium. The conference was publicized on local and regional media. Finally, an outcomes resolution was produced that provides a strong policy platform for the SCBO to promote at various regional and international fora. Many delegates reported to the Local Organizing Committee that they really enjoyed the scientific content, networking opportunities, and Fijian hospitality.



Past SCBO President Carolyn Lundquist and conference planner Dwain Qalovaki having a taste of Fijian kava during the student networking evening. © Carolyn Lundquist

Introduction

The Society for Conservation Biology Oceania (SCBO) section Fiji conference 2014 was several years in the making. After successful SCBO conferences in Sydney (2007) and Darwin (2012), and the International Congress for Conservation Biology in Auckland (2011), we wanted to find a venue in the Pacific Islands of Oceania to broaden the reach of the Society and engage, in particular, our young Pacific Islander scientists and conservationists. We were very pleased that the University of the South Pacific (USP) in Fiji agreed to co-host the event with SCBO section, wonderfully supported by the Wildlife Conservation Society.

The SCBO 2014 conference was held in Suva, Fiji, from July 9-11, 2014, with two prior days of workshops on July 8-9. It was attended by 189 registered participants and 51 USP student volunteers hailing from a broad cross-section of the Oceania region, including: Fiji, Australia, New Zealand, Samoa, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Kiribati, French Polynesia, New Caledonia, as well as Japan, USA and India.

This is a brief overview of conference planning, highlights, outputs and our financial report. We are pleased to report that through the efforts of our sponsors and planning committee, the SCBO Fiji conference was able to generate a profit of approximately FJ\$28,012.75 (~US\$14,859), prior to deduction of wire transfer fees and any differences subject to exchange rates.



SCBO Board members celebrate the conference success at the closing banquet. © Carolyn Lundquist.

Conference Planning

The Local Organizing Committee (LoC) was chaired by SCBO Fiji Board member (through 2013), Dr. Stacy Jupiter, Director of the Wildlife Conservation Society Fiji Country Program. The LoC consisted of 18 additional committed representatives, including students, from

USP, NGOs and the SCBO Fiji Board (Table 1). The LoC began planning in August 2013, initially with monthly meetings, and then bi-monthly meetings from January 2014.

In November 2013, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the SCB and the USP, under which USP agreed to co-host the event at its Laucala Bay Campus and where responsibilities were delineated for both parties and the LoC. The USP agreed to provide: a bank account for the event and provide financial reporting on incoming and outgoing funds; conference planning services; lecture theatres, tutorial rooms, IT support, cleaning services and security during the conference; and a meeting website (<http://www.scbo2014.usp.ac.fj>) equipped with registration facilities. The SCB agreed to: review and sign all necessary contracts; recognize USP as a sponsor without payment of a sponsorship fee; and communicate with USP as necessary during conference planning. The LoC had primary responsibilities to: organize deposit of seed funding into the USP bank account; determine the meeting theme and scientific program format; develop a conference logo; identify and invite plenary speakers; provide content for the conference website and marketing materials; release timely calls for symposia, workshops and abstracts; seek local and international sponsorship; review submissions and develop scientific program; plan social events and field trips; and oversee conference logistics.

Table 1. Members of the Fiji Local Organizing Committee

Name	Institution	Role
Stacy Jupiter	Wildlife Conservation Society	Chair, sponsorship, scientific program, travel awards, general coordination, PCB special issue, field trips
Gilianne Brodie	University of the South Pacific	Student events, sponsorship, conference outputs
John Bythell	University of the South Pacific	Conference administration
Margaret Fox	Wildlife Conservation Society	Conference logistics
Richard Kingsford	University of New South Wales	SCBO President, sponsorship, scientific program, travel awards, student awards, conference outputs, PCB special issue
Swee Kok	NatureFiji-MareqetiViti	Silent auction
Amit Kumar	FSPI	Youth engagement
Carolyn Lundquist	New Zealand National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research	SCBO Board, Scientific program, travel awards, student awards
Sangeeta Mangubhai	Wildlife Conservation Society	Scientific program, workshops
Cara Miller	Whale and Dolphin Conservation	Scientific program, conference outputs, field trips
Yashika Nand	Wildlife Conservation Society	Conference logistics
Aman Narayan	Econesian Society	Student events, volunteers
Tamara Osborne-Naikatini	University of the South Pacific	Volunteer coordination
Dwain Qalovaki	Wildlife Conservation Society	Conference logistics, sponsorship, media, field trips
Milliana Ravuso	BirdLife International	Scientific program, field trips
Anitelu St. John	University of the South Pacific	Conference logistics, IT coordination
Randy Thaman	University of the South Pacific	Scientific program
Nunia Thomas	NatureFiji-MareqetiViti	Scientific program
Moana Waqa	Econesian Society	Student events, volunteers

Conference Overview

The theme of the conference was “Resilient Island Ecosystems and Communities”. One hundred and fifty-two oral presentations were delivered across three running sub-themes: Vulnerable ecosystems, communities and species; adaptive and community-based management of socio-ecological systems; and conservation in a changing Oceania. Accepted symposia included:

- Using biogeography to set the scale of conservation in Melanesia
- Advancing the integration of connectivity processes into marine conservation planning
- Integrating science with participatory conservation
- Exploring the resilience of Pacific Island species, habitats, ecosystems and communities
- Traditional ecological knowledge and conservation
- Spatial management of coastal seascapes for ecological functioning, ecosystem services and food security
- Species conservation
- Integrated land-sea planning
- Fisheries by-catch in Oceania: assessment and solutions
- Prioritising conservation actions on tropical islands
- Pacific reptiles: declines, extinctions and new species
- Socioeconomic considerations in conservation planning: past, present and future
- Systematic conservation planning for marine mega-fauna.

We carefully selected our plenary speakers to represent a range of topical issues from across Oceania, with particular focus on issues relevant to the Pacific Islands of Oceania (Table 2). Opening remarks were delivered by SCB President-Elect James Watson and closing remarks were given by SCBO President Richard Kingsford.



LEFT: SCB President-Elect receiving a garland as chief guest. RIGHT: Plenary speaker Taholo Kami explaining how to engage in high level policy processes to advance conservation in Oceania. © Carolyn Lundquist

Table 2. Plenary speaker presentation topics

Speaker	Title
Taholo Kami, Director of IUCN Oceania Regional Office	Biodiversity conservation in the Pacific – significant shift required
David Keith, University of New South Wales	Risk assessment of ecosystems: concepts, challenges, opportunities
Konai and Randy Thaman, University of the South Pacific	<i>Kakala Hingoa</i> – sacred plants and conservation in the Pacific Islands
Eve Macdonald-Madden, University of Queensland	Searching for black swans among the shrinking ice
Chris Filardi, American Museum of Natural History	Throwing away the keys to paradise: unlocking conservation lessons among Pacific islands
Bob Pressey, James Cook University	Making protected areas make a difference: impact evaluation as a tractable scientific challenge and an essential policy tool

SCB Chapters engagement

SCB Chapters Committee representative Marit Wilkerson ensured ample opportunity to engage and showcase SCB Oceania Chapter representatives. In the Oceania region, SCB has chapters at: Victoria University in Wellington, New Zealand; University of Sydney, Australia; and University of Queensland, Australia. SCB chapter activities were featured during presentations in the symposium on “Integrating science with participatory conservation.” A special lunchtime event was arranged to provide information on “How and why to start an SCB chapter”. Finally, an evening social event was organized for chapter members to network and meet each other. The SCB Chapters Committee provided US\$3,000 for Chapter Leaders travel and accommodation awards, which was matched by the LoC.

Travel awards

With sponsorship from the New Zealand Pacific Island Countries Participation Fund, ARC Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies, and the U.S. Embassy in Suva (via a grant to researchers at Columbia University), the LoC was able to provide travel support for seven Pacific Island students and young researchers who would not have otherwise been able to participate in the conference. The International Seafood Sustainability Foundation additionally provide funding support to two presenters, and the University of the South Pacific Faculty of Science, Technology and Environment provided FJ\$20,000 (~US\$10,400) to support travel and accommodation for Pacific Islander presenters in the Species Conservation symposium.

Student awards

All student abstracts submitted to the conference were initially screened based on: (1) scientific rigour; (2) novelty; (3) creativity of approach; (4) relevance to conservation and management; and (5) clarity of presentation. Judges from the SCBO Board judged the top scoring twenty presentations delivered at the conference. Five awards, which included a certificate and a 1 year subscription to Pacific Conservation Biology, were given to:

- Yolarnie Amepou, University of Canberra
- Rebecca Jarvis, Auckland University of Technology
- John Lamaris, University of Papua New Guinea
- Edgar Pollard, University of the South Pacific
- Sandra Vogel, University of New South Wales

Workshops

Prior to the main SCBO conference, four workshops were scheduled over 2 days on diverse topics, including:

- A hands-on introduction to applied social network analysis for community-based conservation
- Scientific writers and presenters workshop: two essential skills to becoming a good scientist
- Working forward to implement more effective sea cucumber fisheries management in the Pacific Islands
- Bridging the research implementation gap

The workshops focused on practical, capacity-building activities. The scientific writers and presenters workshop was targeted at university students seeking tips to get their research noticed. The Wildlife Conservation Society Fiji Country Program supported participation of Fiji Fisheries Department staff from around the country to learn insights from their colleagues from the Vanuata Fisheries Department and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community about latest developments in sea cucumber management. The social network analysis workshop showcased the latest tools for identifying properties of social networks, as well as brainstorming ideas to weave networks together to improve conservation implementation. The implementation gap workshop drew from activities in the Frog Design's Collective Action Toolkit to explore conservation issues concerning multiple priorities and scale mismatch in Oceania.



Participants and facilitators of the Scientific Writers and Presenters Workshop. © Stacy Jupiter

Evening events and field trips

An opening cocktail and poster session was held at the Japan ICT lecture theatre on USP campus on the evening on July 9. Guests were treated to three separate performances showcasing Pacific cultures by the local celebrated dance troupe VOU (<http://www.voufiji.com>). Student members of the Econesian Society organized a student networking evening on July 10, during which they invited respected members of the conservation community to provide advice and share how they entered their respective conservation professions. A final cocktail was held at the Fiji Museum on July 11, with entertainment by the Tom Mawi jazz band. Student awards were presented, as well as winners of the silent auction. The silent auction raised FJ\$2,500 (~US\$1,300) to support local NGO NatureFiji-MareqetiViti to lead development of a national protected area on Taveuni Island in Fiji.

Conference participants had the option to participate in one of four field trips to visit the stunning biodiversity of Fiji. These trips included:

- Bird watching at the Savura Forest Reserve
- Spinner dolphin viewing at Moon Reef
- Visit to the Nabalasere Waterfall and Wailotua Bat Cave
- Hiking in Colo-i-Suva Forest Reserve



LEFT: Members of VOU dance troupe performing during opening ceremony. RIGHT: Field trip encounter with the Nabalasere waterfall. © Carolyn Lundquist

Finance Report

Financial administration of the SCBO conference account was handled by the Vice Chancellor's office at the USP. Total income for the conference was FJ\$140,151.26 (~US\$68,366) and expenditure was FJ\$98,027.72 (~US\$47,818), generating a profit of FJ\$42,123.54 (~US\$20,548) (Table 3).

Table 3. Financial report produced by USP administration staff, as of April 10, 2015 in FJD.

SCB Oceania Congress 2014	
Financial Report 2014	
	FJD
Income	
Sponsorship	
Oceania Society for Conservation Biology	6,588.67
Taronga Conservation Society	13,264.79
ARC Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies, James Cook University	11,905.39
Rufford Foundation	3,073.56
SCB Chapter Travel Awards	4,248.08
Pacific Island Countries Participation Funding (New Zealand Government)	9,539.77
Total sponsorship	48,620.26
Registration	
Society for Conservation Biology Registration	91,531.00
Total Income	140,151.26
Expenditure	
Administration and planning	
Printing/Photocopy	2,388.00
Computer Parts & Accessories	2,704.86
Rent of Equipment	1,850.00
Rent of Premises	1,610.00
Conference administration and planning	10,000.00
Staff payment	3,833.86
Workshop Expenses	31,000.00
Total Administration and Planning	53,386.72
Travel and entertainment expenditure	
Hospitality/Exp on Meetings	5,713.14
USP Halls for participant accommodation	6,585.00
Chapter and Pacific Islander travel awards	18,280.52
Conference participant packages and gifts	3,182.30
Conference entertainment	750.00
Field trips	1,440.00
Plenary speaker travel and accommodation	8,690.04
Total travel and entertainment expenditure	44,641.00
Total Expenditure	98,027.72
Surplus	42,123.54

The LoC was able to raise cash sponsorship from:

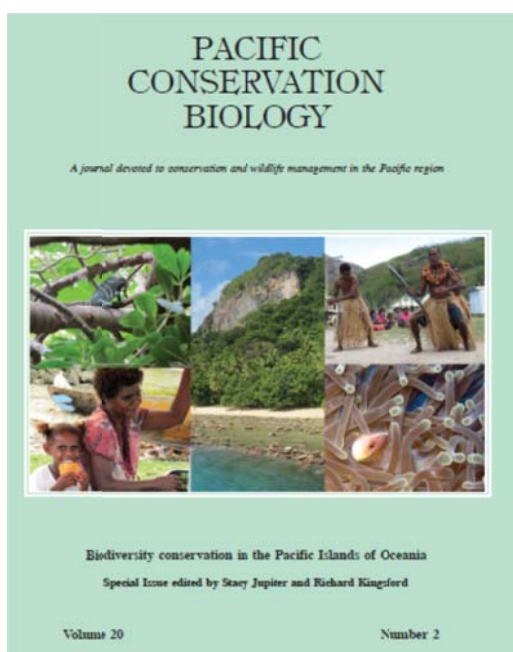
- The New Zealand Government Pacific Island Country Participation Fund to cover travel support for 3 Pacific Island students;
- The Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies, Taronga Conservation Society and the U.S. Embassy (via a grant to Columbia University who ran a workshop at USP the week prior to the SCBO conference) to cover travel support for four additional Pacific Islanders;
- The International Seafood Sustainability Foundation to cover participation of two conference delegates;
- The IUCN Oceania Regional Office to cover production of a special issue of Pacific Conservation Biology with papers from the Species Conservation symposium;
- The Rufford Foundation to cover costs of the water bottles given to conference participants; and
- The USP Faculty of Science, Technology and Environment to cover participation from Pacific Islanders in the Species Conservation symposium and the student networking evening.

We are additionally grateful to the following organizations who donated to the silent auction: Top Symphony (Fiji) Ltd; Rivers Fiji; Dolphin Bay Divers Retreat; Fiji Museum; GIZ; Indonesian Embassy; MyFitness; NatureFiji-MareqetiViti; Paradise Beverages Fiji; Phoenix Islands Protected Area; Environment Consultants Fiji; and Daltron.

Media

SCBO President Richard Kingsford and LoC member Sangeeta Mangubhai were interviewed on [Radio Australia's Pacific Beat program](#). Pacific Beat also featured an [interview with plenary speaker Randy Thaman](#), while plenary speaker [Taholo Kami was interviewed on Fiji television](#). A press release was issued during the conference through the University of New South Wales.

Conference Outputs



SCBO President Richard Kingsford and LoC Chair Stacy Jupiter timed the release of a special issue of Pacific Conservation Biology to coincide with the SCBO conference. The special issue is focused on “Conservation of Biodiversity in the Pacific Islands of Oceania”, and features articles on:

- Isolated and vulnerable: the history and future of Pacific Island terrestrial biodiversity;
- Critical issues and new challenges for research and management of invasive plants in the Pacific Islands;
- Locally-managed marine areas: multiple objectives and diverse strategies;
- Agrodeforestation and the loss of agrobiodiversity in the Pacific Islands: a call for conservation;

- Principles for integrated island management in the tropical Pacific; and
- Conservation of biodiversity in the Pacific Islands of Oceania: challenges and opportunities.

LoC Gilianne Brodie is leading the development of another special issue of Pacific Conservation Biology using outputs from the papers delivered during the Species Conservation symposium.

SCBO President Richard Kingsford used his closing marks to invite comments on a draft conference resolution. The resolution calls for:

- Increased recognition of unprecedented rates of biodiversity loss in Oceania;
- Countries to fulfil commitments to reach Aichi Targets under the Convention on Biological Diversity;
- Partnerships with local communities by incorporating traditional knowledge and values;
- Evidence-based decision-making for conservation policy and management;
- Implementation of integrated management that adequately considers costs and benefits to societies and ecosystems; and
- Implementation of regular state of the environment reporting.

The full text of the resolution and call to action can be found in **Appendix 1**.

Appendix 1. Resolutions, Society for Conservation Biology (Oceania) – Conference in Suva, Fiji, 9-11th July 2014

Our quality of life, economies and social, cultural and spiritual values are highly dependent on the ecosystem goods and services provided by the biodiversity of Oceania. Healthy ecosystems support healthy sustainable economies and give them resilience to climate, environmental and economic change. The Pacific and its islands are clearly on the frontline in the battle for biodiversity conservation and against human-induced climate change and associated sea-level rise and increases in extreme events. At the Society for Conservation Biology (Oceania) Conference in Fiji, 200 of the region's conservation scientists called on international agencies, governments, communities and the private sector and other stakeholders to:

- recognise the unprecedented rate of biodiversity loss in Pacific Island, Australian and New Zealand environments, caused by logging, land clearance, habitat degradation, uncontrolled harvesting of resources (e.g., overfishing), invasive species, pollution and human-induced climate change and increasing sea level rise and extreme events;
- meet commitments to blue-green environmentally sustainable development and the Aichi Targets under the Convention on Biological Diversity;
- partner with local communities by building synergies between indigenous local knowledge systems and cultural values, sharing scientific knowledge and expertise and improving capacity through training;
- base decision-making for conservation policy and management on multiple lines of evidence, including scientific and indigenous local knowledge which often provides long-term insights into changes in biodiversity and ecosystem services;
- implement integrated ecosystem management across rich biocultural land and seascape mosaics, to adequately incorporate the costs and benefits to societies and ecosystems (e.g., climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction, improved health, livelihoods, ecological security);
- implement regular reporting of the State of the Environment including of threatened species and ecosystems at local community or resource-user, regional and national levels, informed by investment in local environmental monitoring and reporting and;
- recognise the value of the newly established Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) in providing timely accurate information on the state of biodiversity and ecosystem services for evidence-based policy and management aimed at sustaining future human wellbeing, biodiversity and ecosystem goods and services.