

January Newsletter

A Happy New Year to all our supporters and followers. As we delve into 2018 and all the exciting projects ahead we'd like to reflect on our 2017 activities and say a huge thanks to all those who were involved in making our work possible.



Review of our work in 2017

Our Wharram Catamaran, Anam Cara is back in New Zealand and we are very grateful to Rowan Keys as Skipper and Fran Lewis as First Mate for sailing her back from Vanuatu. 2017 was a challenging year for us since Chris Bone lost his mum at the beginning of the season

which meant he was sadly and unexpectedly diverted to the UK. Despite this, and with the support of the small team and numerous volunteers we have managed to go ahead with many of the planned activities.

Vanuatu Projects

The Vanuatu team consisted of Eryn Hooper, our environmental scientist, along with marine biologists Risu Kalotiti and Sarah-lyn Wilson. Richie Rigg and Claudia generously provided transport to the isolated islands.



Banks Islands

The team carried out 2 months of great on the ground work with communities on Vanua Lava and Gaua in the Banks islands. They delivered marine monitoring programmes, education and awareness sessions on key marine issues.



In 2017 we implemented our first Virgin Coconut Oil (VCO) program in Vanuatu with the women on Gaua. We presented a series of workshops and school education sessions, which brought the concepts of resilient reefs to the forefront. School sessions were also held, highlighting the importance of having a strong reef with healthy fisheries so that the effects of cyclones and other impacts of global change are reduced.



The women's VCO program gave the women a new skill and provided the opportunity for the women to earn an income from a sustainable resource. 17 women were trained and the team received some very encouraging feedback. We will be working on funding applications to allow an important follow up visit in this community as well as introducing the skills on Vanua Lava where the team received a letter from the women's cooperative requesting our assistance.



The Vanuatu Marine Team were also involved with delivering the Torba Province women's environmental network workshop alongside local NGOs Island Reach and Won Smolbag. The week long workshop included participants from throughout the most northern Province of Vanuatu. Key issues covered included leadership as a women, disaster management, environmental monitoring and climate change, as well as providing information on government departments that can provide support. We were able to secure funding that supported two Ni-Vanuatu presenters from Efate to share their stories as

female leaders. This was a brilliant opportunity to build local capacity within the OceansWatch Vanuatu team which is something we always strive to do.



We also continued to provide support to the Secretariat of the Pacific Communities project RESCCUE in Vanuatu in developing a marine monitoring toolkit with the communities in North Efate. Vanuatu Fisheries Department have been very involved and the trained champions have been taking the lead to teach their communities and run independent monitoring days. It's been great to be involved in such a pioneering program that allows communities to take the lead in managing their resources effectively. We are very excited to have two champions joining our environmental Scientist at the Pacific Oceans Pacific Climate conference in Wellington in February to co present a poster on the work carried out.



Solomon Islands

Chris Bone has been very busy with the OceansWatch Solomon Island team setting up carbon trading programs. We are going to be piloting projects using The Nakau Programme working with our carbon trading partners to save some of the last remaining habitat for critically endangered species. Our first project with the TeAnu tribe from Vanikoro will be run by new OceansWatch staff member Eddie Pae. Dr Sean Weaver from The Nakau Programme has been working with Chris to get the project up and running. We ran a seminar for the Solomon Islands Government (SIG) and the Solomon Islands Climate Change Working Group that was well attended. We now have strong support for this program from SIG.



Working with the Solomon Islands Landowners Advocacy and Legal Support Unit and the Environmental Defence Office in Australia we are working to support local communities to take loggers and miners to court. Our legal work is spearheaded by Ruddy Oti from Nende Island.

At community level, the local team are continuing to run education and awareness programs to inform land owners of their right to free prior informed consent and about how mining and logging consent processes are supposed to be carried out under Solomon Islands Law (which is not how the loggers and miners want to do it). A year ago miners had easy access to communities, 6 months ago they were turned back from villages by roadblocks. In early December mining representatives got off the plane to be met by our team and other activists, after a somewhat heated discussion they were put straight back on the plane to Honiara. We are very happy about the paradigm shift that's happening in Temotu and say a big thank you to our donors who have helped make this happen. Fingers crossed that the funding comes through for the Carbon Trading project.



In October Tinakula Island erupted, just after our biodiversity team tried to land (it was too dangerous due to high seas). Many rare birds are thought to have

died. Luckily some of the rarest species, the Santa Cruz Ground Dove had recently been captured for illegal export and we managed to track them down before they left the country. After some careful negotiation with the exporters the birds were secured and are now safe, being looked after by Joe Wood, supported by Birdlife International and overseas Zoos. In early December our local Rangers, lead by Titus Meoblir and Nelson Nyieda managed to land on Tinakula and have confirmed that a few birds did survive the eruption. We shall now send a few birds to overseas breeding specialists as an insurance policy, monitor the birds on Tinakula and work towards eliminating rats on another islands as an alternative home for some of the birds we are still caring for



Nelson Nyieda, our Lata office manager and forest ranger leave up a crevice on

Tinakula volcano to survey for Santa Cruz Ground Dove.



The Loru Project

As part of our learning about Carbon Trading, Chris Bone and Eddie Pae visited a Carbon Trading project that's been developed in Vanuatu. Here the community is already reaping the benefits through a protected ecosystem and money for the community to develop a sustainable income, pay school fees and improve housing. To take the Loru message back to communities in the Solomon Islands Chris [filmed Eddie interviewing community members](#) about their experiences.

We'd like to say a huge thanks to all our volunteers this year, who have been working for the cause from all corners of the world. The generosity of people's time, money and support is amazing and we couldn't do the work to help the people and environments of the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu without this. A big thanks to Sytze Riemersma for the loan of Anam Cara for this year's trips and to our donors and partners: Goodbye Sandfly, The Rufford Foundation, The Canadian Fund for Local Initiatives, CEPF, The Old Dart Foundation, The Pacific Development and

Conservation Trust, Birdlife International, the New Zealand High Commission and Rainforest Ark.

How sailors can help us and themselves.

Ever since we started OceansWatch we have used yachts to access the remotest communities. These yachts all needed insurance and we have been really happy with the services of a company called Edward Williams. To support our work Edward Williams will make a donation to OceansWatch if yachts are insured with them through [this link](#).

If you would like to contribute to our projects for 2018 you can donate a single amount [here](#).

If you would like to help OceansWatch create the biggest reserve in the Solomon Islands - Your donation of \$10 per acre will go towards the implementation of the [Reef Islands Marine Park](#):

Since OceansWatch started working in the Temotu Province of the Solomon Islands in 2010, the biggest threat to the marine and terrestrial environment and the livelihoods of the local people is the recent invasion of Asian and Australian Mining and Logging companies. These companies promise to provide roads and help development and they bribe the locals to sign away their rights. In reality the people lose the resources that sustain their lives, the young girls are sold to the Asian workers and the promises are not fulfilled. Make a small regular donation to help us [Save the rainforest](#) . If you think you have other ways to help you can contact the team at operations@oceanswatch.org. We wish all our supporters and followers a very happy 2018.