

Waria Valley bio-diversity survey project

By PISAI GUMAR

THE rural people of PNG are skilled hunters, fishermen, gardeners and gatherers. For centuries they have survived off their natural environment with skills and knowledge inherited from their forefathers, to cultivate land, fish and hunt. Men clear bushes and fell trees, women plant and weed gardens, harvesting crops for market and family consumption.

But in their day to day activities little do they realise the destruction they are causing to their environment, especially now with population increase and ~~land~~ ^{land} ~~clearing~~ ^{clearing} for land and food production. Our forests are homes to various bird and animal species, a large array of herbal medicines, water sources from mountain creeks, still waters containing all kinds of fish. Daily livelihood needs are slowly causing irreparable damage to our biodiversity resulting in erosion and endangered plant and animal species.

The Waria River one of the 10 river systems in Morobe province is beginning to show the effects of this trend. Sediment is building along Waria River. Various fish and prawn species have disappeared, the result of human and alluvial mining activities upstream.

The river has changed its original course due to sediment build up causing damage to food gardens. In 2007, Coral Cay Conservation (CCC) a United Kingdom based Non Government Organization came into the area to address the situation.

The first task was to educate the local Zia communities about climate change and environmental damage. They believed that disasters such as droughts, sea swells, flooding rivers and continuous rain was because 'The Lord is testing us our belief'.

To help change the trend Mr. Cosy Yosi, a forester by profession together with Darwin Initiative a branch of the UK government through Coral Cay Conservation program initiated



From left, A green tree python and a tree frog. Above: Farmers setting up a tree nursery.

the Bio-diversity conservation survey project in Waria Valley. Andy Farmer and Jeff Dawson together with a Unitech Forestry graduate Oscar Pileng began surveys not only into biodiversity conservation project but also ways to improve socioeconomic livelihood, children's education, youth participation in self sustainable projects including sports and etc.

The aim of the projects biodiversity surveys was to collect baseline data on number of different animal species and plant groups. This data will be useful in future for the Government, environmental groups and Non-Government Organization's for various purposes such as Environmental monitoring.

Monitoring the environmental impact of such projects is crucial. Measuring the effect as well as ensuring rules and guidelines must be followed. However, in order to assess effect you need to be able to compare available data. The baseline data collected by this project can be used to compare so that environmental change can be monitored over time.

This information can allow better management strategies and guidelines to be developed so that similar projects in the future can be carried out with less environmental damaging effects. WVCP furthered into estab-

lishing protected areas for groups and communities. If clan groups or communities wish to establish a protected area within their land then the data collected can help them get an area legally protected.

Eco-tourism has a large potential as a sustainable income generator within PNG. Many tourists, especially those from overseas, come to PNG for the natural environment and wildlife. Marketing is an essential tool in developing tourism in an area. The wildlife data collected can be used for this purpose as well as providing information for visitors whilst in the Waria valley.

In addition the project involve in developing sustainable livelihood projects and doing environmental education in the local primary schools. The livelihood projects include inland aquaculture, chicken projects and piggeries including water supply dam for future.

The aim is to increase the amount of protein in the community and subsequently reduce pressure on the environment. These can also help provide a small income for the families to assist with paying school fees, medical expenses, transport fares, salt, kerosene, cleaning detergents, etc. The reforestation component



From left, A green tree python and a tree frog. Above: Farmers attending a fish farming course.

luplant conservation Project. replant so that future generations can harvest them for building houses at a lesser cost and making canoes. This includes identification of economic tree species to be transplanted to the nursery for future usages. As well as providing environmental education lessons in the local primary schools, the project has also produced a number of educational posters, teacher and student workbooks. It supplied number of various readable books for the resource centre at Zare-Angse which were donated by schools and colleges in the UK.

It's the first of its kind that any such biodiversity surveys have been conducted within the Waria Valley. However, from Zia perspective, many were ignorant due to the fact that the locals were expecting cash handouts. Interestingly, the expectation mentality was turned into tangible livelihood sustainability programs.

But as the project progresses there were hiccups among the communities and landowners where the actual work started. Towards the end of the 2008, the project found and identified 117 bird species, caught 11 bat species, observed 12 other mammals and found over 70

The resource inventories give an estimate of the harvestable timber available for a sustainable eco-forestry programme. The primary reforestation area at Mewana in Zare Angse village is making good progress with over 200 seedlings in the nursery and 70 various tree species were planted. The commercial tree species planted which are all valuable and will be locally prized for building. The project winds down in March 2009. It is funded by the Darwin Initiative, a branch of the UK government.

nical base education for 80 to other countries in similar units graduate.

Husband on the run

By PISAI GUMAR

THE young woman who suffered third degree burns when her husband poured kerosene on her and set her alight at West Taraka last month is slowly improving.

According to the Angau Memorial Hospital, where Lisa Bomai was admitted on October 29, she is undergoing

surgical treatment for the burns that scarred the upper parts of her body.

Her husband, who police named as Gebi Torowai, is on the run, leaving West Taraka, where they had lived and escaping to Papua Compound.

Police said, Torowai, who also goes by the name of Nebare, may have fled to Goroka or to his home in

Gumine, Chimbu Province.

The police warned Mr Torowai to surrender to police or other authorities.

"He cannot keep on running or hiding as the long arm of the law will eventually get him.

He caused physical and mental harm to his wife and must answer for his actions," a

police officer said. The officer said the relatives of the woman were also after him and he should surrender to police for his own safety.

Angau Hospital staff said the woman had suffered serious trauma from the burns and her body had been swollen.

This meant surgical treatment had to be delayed.

More scientists for Waria project

THE Waria Valley Community Conservation and Sustainable Livelihood Project (WVOP) is to get two environmental scientists to assist with the biodiversity survey work.

Project manager Andrew Farmer said Coral Cay Conservation would be sending the two scientists next month.

Mr Farmer said the additional expertise would allow the project to concentrate on other areas including education and sustainable livelihood.

He said the project had also recruited two volunteers from the University of Technology for the festive period.

The project has been working in the area for

over six months conducting biodiversity surveys.

This would be used to plan for sustainable use of the resources.

The project has a year and half more to run.

"The project works closely with the community and produces regular community newsletters in three languages.

They will be produced in English, tok pisin and Zia, the local language.

"We respect cultural values and wish to assist alongside traditional practices for a sustainable future.

We work hard and feel that hard earned achievements are more solid than quick fixes,"

Mr Farmer said.



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protect Waria valley

By PISANGMAR

Under the guidance of

THE bio-diversity conservation survey in Waria valley, Morobe province Oscar Pileng, the project has initiated reforestation schemes by completing after one year.

Waria valley conservation project, sponsored by Coral Cay Conservation and Darwin Initiative, has given an estimate of the amount and identified 117 bird species, caught 11 bat species, observed 12 other mammals and found more than 70 types of reptiles and frogs, many of which wait for

mal identification. Project manager Jeff Dawson said the primary aim of the project was to carry out a number of baseline bio-diversity surveys in the valley of which 75% of the work had been completed.

Mr Dawson said the project aims to continue with bio-diversity surveys, assist implementation of more livelihood observations through which a large number of different animals had been recorded, including frog calls and bat echolocation calls.

Malahang Technical local primary schools.

Malahang Technical

Right up this Christmas with YAMAHA

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show discipline, commitment and perseverance, during the closing ceremony of their academic year on Dec 2.

Addressing the students and parents was Vanimo-Green River district education programme manager Cliff Sindol, who said high quality education could only be achieved if students took ownership of discipline, commitment and perseverance and apply them in their daily learning.

He said the high academic record the school once maintained was diminishing and encouraged students to take special pride in past records and strive to uphold them.

"The school is developing into a better learning institution and the intake of first Grade Seven students this year and a new classroom building under construction and moral values were no longer valued. Mr Saweni said as disciplining awarding of academic prizes to top students in all classes.

Also present was Vanimo village ward council member Leo Deklin who told the parents their responsibility was paying the children's school fees and other requirements.

The ceremony ended with the awarding of academic prizes to top students in all classes.

Bio-diversity Survey for Waria villagers

By PISAI GUMAR

THE Waria Valley of Morobe Province is moving into a bio-diversity survey to conserve the flora and fauna with help from British scientists.

The main focus of the project is on surveying and conserving forest areas and building a sustainable livelihood for the people and to supplement education for the children.

Coral Cay Conservation, a European-based non-government organisation, in partnership with the PNG Forest Resource Institute, Unitech and local non-government organisations Bris Kanda, Village Development Trust

and the Waria Valley community are to jointly carry out the project.

A team heading the survey spent weeks in the Waria valley on bio-diversity surveys and sampled and released about 50 bats using mist nets. They identified dozens of butterfly species, many unique to Papua New Guinea, and are building up a list of rodents and marsupials as well.

"It is great seeing hornbills, cockatoos and parrots everyday, but we are also looking at less noticeable species of birds," said project manager Andrew Farmer.

The team is also surveying trees and vegetation under

the guidance of Oscar Pileng, a Unitech forestry graduate.

Project scientists Jeff Dawson and Oscar Pileng are collecting socio-economic information from members of the community to help plan strategies for sustainable livelihood in the area.

Mr Farmer said that communities initiate small manageable schemes to help themselves but are limited by certain issues and the survey should identify these problems and suggest solutions.

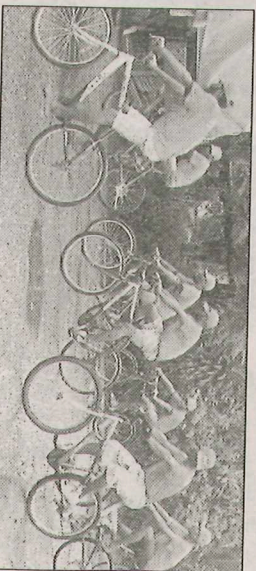
The project was initiated by Mr Cossy Yosi and funded by the Darwin Initiative, an overseas-based NGO group. The villagers were very supportive of the project.

City residents hit by Digicel fever



TOP: Customers crowd the cashiers with cash to purchase mobile phones at one of the many Digicel outlets at Top Town.

RIGHT: Bikers in Lae join in the celebrations to mark the launching of Digicel in the country yesterday.



Pictures: FRANCO NEBAS.

ON THE MOVE: Digicel, the new mobile phone company in the country has taken Lae city residents by storm. Since Friday people flocked in big numbers despite the rain to buy mobile phones which were going for as little as K89 with SIM cards already inside. Yesterday, Digicel Lae joined Port Moresby in its nationwide launch. It held a parade throughout the city which ended at Eriku.



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