

Tuvalu releases the first inventory of its vital marine resources

Tuvalu, which lies about halfway between Hawaii and Australia, is an archipelago of nine low-lying islands, spread over 900,000 km². With a total landmass of 26 km² (about a quarter of the size of Paris) and a population of over 11,000, this young island nation finds itself at the forefront of a planetary issue: climate change. And unless existing trends are addressed immediately, the very future of Tuvalu is at stake.



Changing and increasingly erratic weather patterns, flooding due to sea level rise, increasing ocean temperatures, and longer periods of drought are already putting Tuvalu's vulnerable environment under pressure, affecting the country's freshwater supply as well as its local food production. Traditional root crops have become difficult to cultivate due to the infiltration of saltwater into the ground water supply. Providing the nation's nutritional base, marine resource are, more than ever, vital for Tuvalu.

The first marine biodiversity inventory of the archipelago

The publication "Tuvalu Marine Life" was coordinated by the nongovernmental organisation "Alofa Tuvalu" as part of its 10-year "Small is Beautiful" plan to document the island nation's unique marine life, taking into

consideration global warming and paying special attention to endemic species, fishing methods, tides and spawning sites. The project was selected by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as one of the "Remarkable Actions for the Decade of Sustainable Development".

In early June, at the Paris Tropical Aquarium, Alofa Tuvalu, a French-Tuvaluan non-governmental organisation, presented copies of the publication Tuvalu Marine Life to Tine Leuelu, Ambassador of Tuvalu to Belgium, and to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, UNESCO, The Fondation d'entreprise Total, and the Agence française pour le développement.

For the first time ever, data have been collected on hundreds of fish species, and at least 79 of these are of interest and are listed in the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's Red List, and 29 of species are considered to be "Near Threatened" or "Threatened".

For Tine Leuelu, Ambassador of Tuvalu to Belgium: "Alofa Tuvalu has been very instrumental in several projects (e.g. relating to renewable energy, conservation) that help Tuvalu because of the reality of what is going to happen to us. I am very grateful to receive 'Tuvalu Marine Life'... because the richness of Tuvalu is its marine life... and we need to conserve it."

Tuvalu Marine Life is a starting point — not a conclusion

While it contributes critical new knowledge to the international community, Tuvalu Marine Life also aims to help Tuvalu manage its marine resources. The publication represents a unique history and testimony of Tuvalu's marine environment as of 2013.

The publication is also the start of environmental awareness campaigns toward a wide audience especially young people. A first pictures exhibition and children's workshop began on June 4th at the Tropical Aquarium, and the "Tuesday for Environment" monthly event addressed Pacific and biodiversity-related subjects. Two weeks after it was made available online, Tuvalu Marine Life had been downloaded over 5000 times. At the end of September it had been downloaded 25,000 times!

A worldwide endeavour

The publication “Tuvalu Marine Life” represents seven years of work. It was made possible by The Fondation d'entreprise Total, AFD/CRISP (Agence française pour le développement/Coral Reef InitiativeS for the Pacific), Sue Devitt Beauty, Tuvalu Fisheries and Kaupule's, Alofa Tuvalu and numerous other gracious support from around the world.

In mid-July, in Tuvalu, Alofa Tuvalu hand delivered the publication to Willy Telavi and Apisai Ielemia, who were the Prime Ministers in charge during the project implementation. Electronic copies were provided to the Tuvalu Fisheries Department and Funafuti Kaupule (Town Hall) as well.

For more information:

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Links to various related resources:

Preamble

http://www.alofatuvalu.tv/US/05_a_tuvalu/05_page_tml/05_tml_preamb_us.pdf

Synthesis report

http://www.alofatuvalu.tv/US/05_a_tuvalu/05_page_tml/livret2light.pdf

Scientific report

http://www.alofatuvalu.tv/US/05_a_tuvalu/05_page_tml/livret4light.pdf

Fieldwork report

http://www.alofatuvalu.tv/US/05_a_tuvalu/05_page_tml/livret3%20light.pdf

Photos

www.flickr.com/photos/alofatuvalu

Videos

www.youtube.com/user/alofatuvalu



*Sebastapistes cyanostigma, one of the species never recorded before in Tuvaluan waters
(image : Thomas Vignaud, ©Alofa Tuvalu).*