

BLUE VENTURES CONSERVATION

The Voyage of the Vezo

- Blue Ventures researchers trace Vezo migration
- Social research and CBM programmes initiated
- Velondriake Dina legalised
- News from Fiji and Malaysia.

The Voyage of the Vezo - documenting Madagascar's indigenous coastal migration

Seventy thousand people live in the coastal villages of southwest Madagascar. Most of them are Vezo; a traditionally semi-nomadic people whose cultural identity is based around a seafaring existence. Since the Vezo's arrival in Madagascar some 2000 years ago, this unique tribe has migrated in search of better fishing grounds, moving with the seasons and the movements of favoured fish species.

For generations migration has served as a safety-valve to over-population and diminishing resources in a particular fishing area – when resources are no longer adequate enough to sustain a village's growing population, people move to previously unexploited areas that were either uninhabited or sparsely populated. The combined pressures of climate change, rapid population growth, occupation of the coast by urban and tourism developments, industrial fishing and foreign markets driving new export fisheries, have drastically changed the context in which migration now takes place.

Today large numbers of fishers are migrating ever-increasing distances from their home villages, often travelling over 1000 kilometres from their home villages, as far as Mahajunga in the North and Fort Dauphin in the South. Little is known about this contemporary migration; how many fishers migrate, why they are migrating or how important migration is to Vezo livelihoods.

The increasing importance of migration to maintaining Vezo livelihoods is reflected in the growing incidents of conflict arising between migrants and incumbents in destination areas. Furthermore, efforts to establish networks of marine protected areas (MPAs) throughout the southwest of Madagascar currently have only a limited understanding of migration and the impacts it has upon fisheries and marine ecosystems along the route.

IN THIS ISSUE



New SOCMON programme initiated in Velondriake P3

Study aims to assess conservation methods and practices in Velondriake



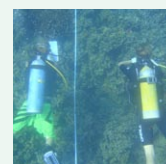
Miss Velondriake beauty pageant held in Andavadoaka P3

Contest to raise awareness of family planning initiatives



Velondriake Dina legalised P4

Greater protection for conservation initiatives in Velondriake



Research updates from Malaysia and Fiji P7

New Blue Ventures sites begin research projects.



Above: An entire Vezo family sail in a Pirogue in search of untapped waters.



Right: Migrants are only able to bring the bare essentials with them and are reliant on using what they find on their travels to provide material for shelter.

Migration of the Vezo from south to north in search of better fishing grounds is an ancient tradition, and the communes of Befandefa and Morombe – in the vicinity of the Velondriake community-managed MPA - are two of the largest sources of migrants in terms of fishers involved, sending thousands of fishers each year to the islands of Belo-sur-Mer and Nosy Barren – areas of exceptional marine biodiversity conservation importance.

In May, working in collaboration with a regional research initiative coordinated by Progeco, Blue Ventures initiated a study of the contemporary migration of fishers in Madagascar. Blue Ventures' conservation scientists Bravo Rahajaharison and Dr. Garth Cripps spent 8 weeks accompanying local families travelling north from Andavadoaka to the Barren Islands – a total distance of over 1000 km - in a bid to investigate the patterns, causes and effects of the Vezo journey..

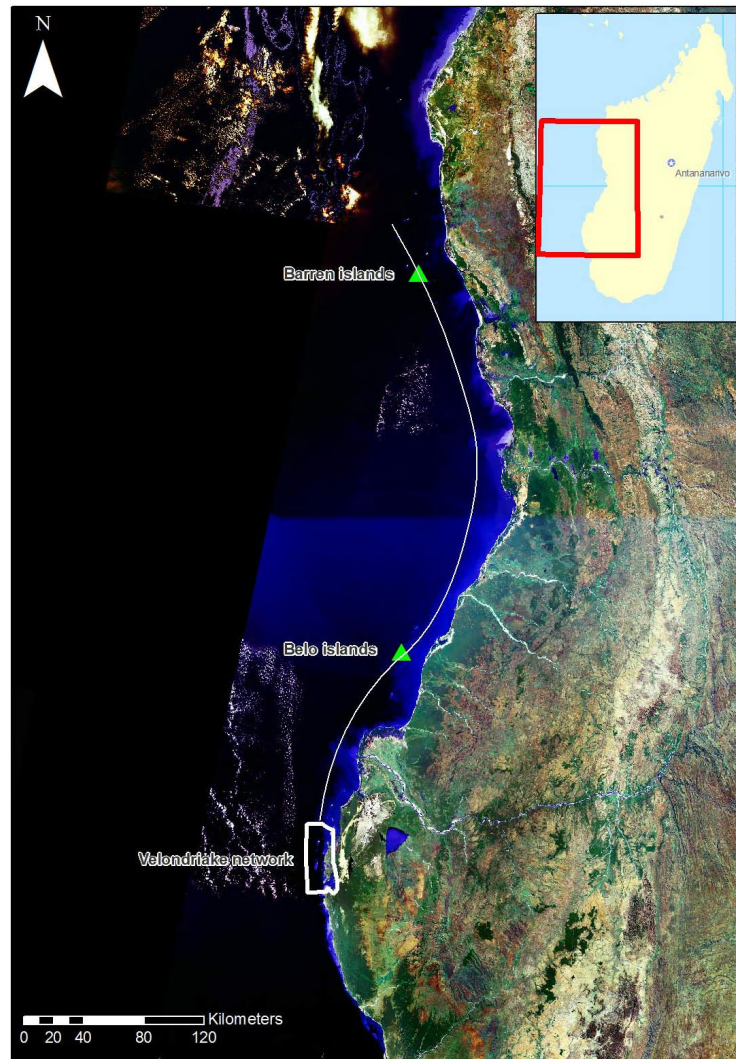
This research will feed directly into ongoing marine environmental management efforts being developed by communities, NGOs and national institutions throughout Madagascar, in order that management strategies recognise and reflects the socio-economic importance of migration to the livelihoods and culture of Vezo people.

During the course of the expedition research was carried out in both the areas of origin and destination, accompanied throughout by Vezo fishing families involved in the migration. Amongst other assessments the team carried out key informant and focus group interviews, as well as quantitative household surveying, to gain a better understand the nature of the migration.

Migrants travel exclusively by sea in open pirogues; traditional dug-out sailing canoes. The large pirogues required for the journey mean that only fishers with a certain wealth are able to migrate. The long voyage can be extremely hazardous, often taking place far offshore in some of the remotest coastal areas of Madagascar. The destination islands are typically low lying, many being completely submerged at spring high tides. Owing to the dangers of living offshore during turbulent weather conditions,

Vezo fishers typically migrate north at the end of the annual cyclone season (late March or early April) and return just before the cyclone season starts (early-mid December). However, surveys showed that an increasing number of fishers are staying permanently in the Maintirano area, and many informants reported that at least two-thirds of young migrants do not return to their villages of origin in the South.

Traditionally fishers have always migrated north for better net and line fishing of fin-fish. From the early 1990s they began to migrate in larger numbers to fish specifically for sharks and sea cucumbers and it is the lucrative demand for these two commodities from Asian markets that has begun to change the nature of the migration.



Above: Tracing a route from the Velondriake network to the Barren Islands, Dr. Cripps and Bravo travelled over 1000 km.



Above: Many of the islands used as resting points by the Vezo on their epic voyage are little more than exposed sandbanks, barely breaching the waves.

Along with the migration for shark and sea cucumber fishing, a second, smaller northward migration that is more traditional in nature is continuing alongside the shark and sea cucumber-driven migration. This migration is primarily of fishers who are no longer able to catch enough fin-fish in their areas of origin (particularly Morombe) and who are moving northwards, mostly seasonally, to ensure a continued livelihood. From the shark and sea cucumber migrant fishermen these fishers have come to learn of the good fishing grounds around the same islands and are increasingly migrating to similar fishing grounds.

This study sought to understand the drivers of the Vezo migration - the push and pull factors that make fishers move. Results revealed many of the stark environmental realities that fishers in southwest Madagascar now face and highlighted that these are intimately linked to the management challenges of marine conservation in the region.

Without doubt the main driver of migration is the strong demand for sea cucumbers and shark fins; both represent high value commodities that can be simply dried or cured and retained for sale later. Virtually every fisher interviewed reported that the better fishing of these species in the north was why they had made the journey. However many other causes underlie this primary driver. Over-population, sedimentation, over-fishing and climate change have all greatly diminished the health of marine ecosystems in the regions of migrant origin. The fisheries these habitats support are becoming increasingly exhausted and fishers are no longer able to adequately live from their dwindling productivity. Morombe fishers in particular stated that there are no alternative ways of earning a living, there are simply too many fishers fishing for too few fish, and that they must move to seek out less crowded places to fish. As such, the more remote and healthy coral reefs further north, which continue to support productive and profitable fisheries, represent a significant pull factor to migrants.

Every year southern Madagascar experiences a lean season - a period when the price of rice and of other basic staples can rise by up to three times. This coincides with the rainy season when diseases such as malaria are more prevalent, and pulls an additional one million Malagasy seasonally beneath the poverty line. It is also a period of intemperate weather when the Vezo are often unable to head to sea to fish. Some migrants who have families report that they migrate so that they can save for this time (known locally as the "dead period") and so ensure that their families can continue to eat when times are particularly hard.

A common characteristic of poor resource dependent coastal communities is their reliance on open-access coastal and marine resources. The ready availability of these is what draws people to coastal areas when they can find no alternatives elsewhere. This open-access culture makes the Vezo vulnerable to the inevitable over-exploitation of marine resources, and moreover to competition for dwindling resources with powerful economic forces beyond their control, such as hotel developments, industrial fishers, shrimp farms and protected areas inappropriately established without inclusive consultation.

In the past the Vezo used migration as a coping mechanism when an open-access resource was over-exploited. Yet increasingly migrants' destination areas are already "occupied" by people and interests that have more clearly defined ownership of the resources; Inevitably in such circumstances conflicts arise.

In addition to targeting areas for their fishing potential, migrants target the offshore islands and settle in certain coastal areas because they are remote from the local population. The uninhabited offshore islands of Belo-sur-Mer are sacred to the local non-Vezo coastal residents; strict fady (local taboos) govern what can be done on the islands (for instance alcohol, women and infants are forbidden on some islands, and fishing activity is strictly controlled on all).



Above: Commercial trawlers often confront the Vezo on their voyage, a stark reminder of the reason they must travel so far in order to make a living..

Traditionally Vezo migrants visiting these areas respected these fady, however in more recent years the sheer number of migrants and the growing importance of shark fishing 10 to 20 km further offshore from the islands has gradually eroded Vezo compliance with traditional taboos, deeply offending local people. The high marine biodiversity of the islands of Belo has also been adversely affected by migrants, and populations of nesting sea-birds have been dramatically reduced as a result of rat infestations brought about by human settlement of the islands.

Migration does not come without peril. Shortly before their departure from the island of Andriamitaroky (south of Belo-sur-mer), a family of twelve from Bevato (within the Velondriake network) set off from the island for Nosy Be to the west of Belo-sur-mer in a caravan of 3 pirogues. Not long after their departure, strong winds from the south brought in a storm in which the family was caught at sea for 18 hours. The storm resulted in the loss of one pirogue and the majority of the fishers' possessions before the remaining boats landed at Nosy Be in the dead of night. The family all survived but were left with no food, little water and little material with which to fish, thus reason for the migration.

The high risks taken by fishers during each voyage provides a powerful illustration of the strength of the push and pull factors identified in this study and with many families standing to earn much more from the voyages than in their home villages, studies like this one will provide data on migrant fishing habits and practices that could prove crucial to future MPA design and maintenance

An interview with Dr Cripps on the BBC world service, describing the research with the Vezo, can be found at the following link:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p003v0n8>

Velondriake launches new social research programme

The Velondriake marine protected area's 7,000 residents are spread among 26 villages spanning over more than 40 km of remote coastline and islands. Communication between these villages is extremely difficult – transport between most communities is generally possible only by sea, and mobile phone coverage is only available in two of the northernmost villages.

News of important events and decisions taken by regional leaders can take several days to make their way to communities in outer villages, often at the end of long transmission lines of person-to-person communication. Adding to these communication limitations, different families, clans and communities all have different perspectives on marine resource problems and potential solutions. Yet despite these challenges, since 2006 these 26 communities have been working closely together to develop Velondriake – the largest community-managed marine protected area in the Indian Ocean.

In the past, Blue Ventures and the Velondriake Association developed communication strategies largely based on opinions and knowledge levels in Andavadoaka, Velondriake's central village wherein which both organisations are based, applying experiences from Andavadoaka across the broader Velondriake region. New conservation or awareness-raising messages were trialled in Andavadoaka for comprehension and acceptability and then a tour of the region would be held to spread this message. In this way, Blue Ventures was able to spread the success story of the first octopus reserves piloted in Andavadoaka. Similarly, management challenges experienced



Above: Blue Ventures Socmon surveyors: Edgard Andronic, Joeline Jean-Baptiste, and Dominique Alie Razafisana.

in Andavadoaka with issues such as poaching from reserves and difficulties with enforcement of the Dina (the local law governing the marine protected area) prompted Velondriake to develop awareness-raising efforts to other villages highlighting the poaching problem and clarifying the process for Dina enforcement.

This communications strategy was effective at disseminating information in villages similar in composition and socioeconomic composition to Andavadoaka, but not as effective in other villages. To compensate for this, Velondriake has tried in the past to respond fluidly in village meetings to the differing opinions and knowledge of all its constituent communities. More recently, Velondriake and Blue Ventures have realised that for maximum effectiveness, a system of social data gathering that will provide current and useful information to Velondriake and Blue Ventures leaders is needed before teams arrive for educational and resource management meetings in the villages.

In January of this year, Blue Ventures initiated a new Socmon (socio-economic monitoring) program that employed community members themselves to act as surveyors. Initial surveys have focused on knowledge and attitudes towards marine resource management and have identified a number of knowledge gaps for upcoming communications activities.

The Socmon program is gathering feedback data on the perceived effectiveness of Blue Ventures' conservation, alternative livelihoods and family planning programmes with the goal of scientifically measuring the impact of these programs on local knowledge, attitudes and behaviours. As well as ensuring a level of accountability for projects and staff, this information will be used to continuously improve methods employed for these programmes and to help managers to evaluate where programmes should be developed or refocused.

'Miss 2009' pageant promotes safe sex in Andavadoaka

Blue Venture's family planning project prides itself in being the 'sexy' project. Not just in actual subject matter, but in its approach to selling what is often perceived as an unpopular behaviour change. To tackle the social barriers to behavioural change, project staff are constantly innovating new, fun and engaging ways to promote family planning and safe sex.



Above: Pageant hosts Fanja and Taylor introduce a contestant.



Above: The event drew a large crowd from around Velondriake

Most recently, a beauty pageant for young women took place at a local bar, 'Chez Dada.' Four female contestants competed to show their knowledge and ability to persuade peers to protect themselves from sexually transmissible infections and unwanted teen pregnancy. A panel of judges evaluated the performances and awarded prizes to participants. The 'Miss 2009' title was given to Mademoiselle Krisy, 20, who dazzled judges and audience members with her compelling plea to peers to protect themselves by using condoms. Krisy also made strong arguments as to why young girls benefit by waiting until they are married or have a stable income before starting families. The event was hosted by charismatic Blue Ventures staff, Fanja and Taylor, who entertained and educated with endless banter and message reinforcement.

The night also featured performances from "Armistice", a local singing group who have written songs to educate their peers about HIV, AIDS and condom use, and "Hatsify", a local theatre group that performed an educational play about the potential dangers of unprotected sex.

The pageant forms part of an ongoing social marketing strategy to tailor messages that speak more directly to each target audience in promoting condom use and family planning.

"Hatsify" performances have attracted consistently high attendance from students, parents and village leaders, with positive and constructive feedback being relayed to the group following each event. The group was originally formed in 2008 when a Blue Ventures medic, Rebecca Hill, organised a successful theatre competition that got young people excited about peer sex education.

A recent survey conducted by the Blue Ventures Socmon team showed that two-thirds of the local population living in Andavadoaka have attended a sexual health education event at some point in the last year. Half of the respondents to this survey also reported that they use condoms at least some of the time to protect themselves from STIs. In surrounding villages where educational programmes run by the programme have not been as strong as in Andavadoaka, just 16% of respondents reported using condoms with any regularity.

Surveys conducted prior to the establishment of Blue Ventures' family planning programme in Andavadoaka showed that one third of women were opposed to family planning because of a lack of information and misconceptions, in particular a fear of potential negative side effects. Today, two years into the programme, 40% of women in Andavadoaka report using a family planning method or have used one in the recent past.

In the regional survey that preceded the community education programmes outside Andavadoaka, 16% of women claimed to never have used birth control methods due to a personal opposition to the use of contraceptives. However, more common reasons for not using birth control included a lack of knowledge and familiarity with available methods and lack of access to family planning services. Following educational programmes in each of the 26 villages in the region carried out in 2008 and 2009, the family planning project staff reported a much more widespread demand and enthusiasm to the establishment of the weekly family planning clinics now being run in three villages in the region.

As the festivities surrounding the Miss 2009 pageant drew to a close, Nahoda Alex, a respected village elder, expressed the community's satisfaction at seeing Andavadoaka youths persuading their peers to take responsible control of their sexual behaviour. It is widely recognised throughout Vezo villages that personal stories and testimonies from community members themselves are invariably the most effective way of raising awareness and spreading new ideas.

Community based monitoring system developed in Velondriake

Crucial to the success of the Velondriake MPA is a feedback mechanism that delivers important scientific results of management efforts and effectiveness back to communities and their leaders. Without such a system, communities are unlikely to fully appreciate the benefits they receive from resource management and may not react to new problems and challenges.

In order to meet these challenges, a community monitoring system simple enough to be easily understood by villagers whilst effectively conveying important scientific messages must be developed. This is the task given to Blue Ventures' staff member Lalao Ravavaorinorotsihoarana in developing a Community Based

Monitoring system (CBM). Two local villagers; Tolotra, from Antsotsomoroy, and Brigitte, from Andavadoaka, are also currently assisting with the CBM project.



Above: CBM researcher Brigitte assists with the concluding contest.

Methodologies developed by similar community-based organisations in Fiji and Thailand were consulted and adapted to the Velondriake region given the area's unique social and ecological context. Next, it was considered paramount that CBM activities should be highly participative and open to anyone, irrespective of their level of education or status within the community, with a focus on the assessment of natural resources and fishing sites that are of greatest importance to local fishers. Finally, a simple yet effective monitoring methodology was developed to engage participants in counting selected key resources over multiple straight line transects for habitat status and through random timed swims for fish.

After surveys are completed, results are tabulated by Blue Ventures volunteers and a discussion of their meaning for the MPA is facilitated by Lalao. The next afternoon, the village is called together for a game-show competition that focuses on the participation of the entire audience, not just the volunteer monitors involved in the surveying. The aim of the competition is to ensure widespread dispersal of the results of the monitoring and their implications for natural resource management.



Above: Audience participation - as encouraged by Tolotra here- is crucial to the dispersal of information and therefore the success of this project

So far, of the four villages that have piloted the new methodology, results from three have indicated a marked increase in resource status or abundance in marine reserves and areas adjacent to reserves when compared with control sites far from reserves. The remaining village displayed a greater resource abundance in an area close to the reserve than in the reserve itself but this was explained by the fact that this area also formed part of a reserve belonging to a village not participating in the pilot scheme. In general, the results of the CBM have so far provided a very clear and powerful message to all participants; reserves seem to increase resources within protected areas and areas immediately adjacent to them.

This information is proving crucially important to Velondriake leaders in helping them understand the effects of management efforts and also in building widespread support for the expansion of current management strategies.

Velondriake Dina officially legalised

As part of ongoing efforts to make it easier for Velondriake communities to manage and police their own resources, the official Velondriake Dina was approved by the Malagasy District Court of Morombe on 20th of April, 2009. The Dina comprises a set of local laws which detail penalties for poaching from community reserves and using destructive fishing practices, such as beach seines netting or poison fishing, within the Velondriake area.

The final legalisation means that the Dina now has unquestionable de jure legal status giving villagers enforcement rights over their reserves and fishing sites in their area. Villagers can now enforce their Dinas knowing that should a transgressor refuse to pay a fine, the case can be forwarded to the district court in Morombe which will hear the case. Previously, prior to obtaining this official status, it was unclear to communities what legal standing the Dina had and what role the courts would play in hearing cases of Dina infractions.



Above: Installation of a sign designating the protection of the Vatoavo mangrove reserve, an area that will benefit from stronger protection provided by Dina legalisation

Preliminary approval was granted to the Velondriake Dina, several months after being first submitted to the court on the 31st of October, 2006. The Dina was created through a series of public meetings in each of the Velondriake villages from June to August in 2006. During these meetings, villagers decided on the local rules they wished to put in place to govern marine resource use in their waters. Shortly afterwards, regional meetings were held to harmonise the different laws across all of the villages in Velondriake. Laws against theft from reserves and aquaculture areas were seen as the most important Dina developed by villages. Laws against destructive beach seining, poison fishing and dynamite fishing were also included in the Dina.

next challenge for Velondriake communities is to improve the local enforcement of the Dina, in order to reduce the rate of Dina infractions, in particular decreasing the number of destructive fishing practices being used in the area, especially by migrant fishers. Velondriake leaders will be taking part in a series of workshops and training sessions over the next few months to improve their understanding of the Dina, and discuss strategies for effective application and enforcement in order to avoid marine resource use conflicts and improve the sustainability of the region's fisheries.

Velondriake president visits Reunion.

On June 16th Velondriake President Samba Roger, winner of last year's prestigious J. Paul Getty Award for conservation leadership, left Madagascar to take part in a regional MPA workshop for managers of MPAs from around the western Indian Ocean region. After two full weeks in Antananarivo dealing with the paperwork and bureaucracy for his first overseas visit, Roger finally acquired a 4 day visa to visit the tiny island of Reunion several hundred kilometres east of Madagascar.

Roger attended the third annual conference of MPA managers organised by the Indian Ocean Commission. The aim of the conference was to continue to develop an active network of MPA managers from around the region to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experiences in order to support managers' efforts, in particular through enhancing management effectiveness. Roger was the sole representative at the meeting from a community-run MPA, with all other delegates coming from government agencies or international NGOs. Roger's experiences were greatly appreciated by the meeting participants, many of whom expressed interest in visiting the Velondriake area to see first hand the workings of the Indian Ocean's largest community-managed MPA.



Above: Mr. Roger (front row, centre) with his fellow conference attendees.

Roger reports learning a great deal about the interactions between government agencies and MPAs at the conference. During a Velondriake meeting held shortly after his arrival back in Andavadoaka, Roger explained to the Velondriake committee how most other MPAs in the western Indian Ocean region are currently managed by a strict top-down approach, where government agencies rule over their areas backed by administrators, generally with only a small degree of co-management by - or engagement of - local communities. Having discussed with workshop delegates at first hand the limitations of such nationally-enforced MPA governance structures, Roger emphasised to the committee the importance of Velondriake succeeding in achieving its goals of effective local management, which was widely recognised at the Reunion meeting as a great opportunity for local people.

Much to Roger's surprise, he found the French overseas territory to be in many ways similar to Madagascar. The acacia, flamboyant, palm, and ravinala (travellers tree) that characterise the island's flora are transplants from Madagascar. The ocean seemed reminiscent of Andavadoaka, with clean white beaches and a distant barrier reef similar to the offshore reefs of southern Madagascar. Roger also reported that even the local communities, though they spoke native French Creole, seemed remarkably Malagasy in appearance and he noticed many Creole words that were unmistakably of Malagasy origin.

News from Malaysia...

Blue Ventures has recently led a series of reef studies aimed at documenting the fish species diversity of Pulau Tioman, the home of Blue Ventures new Malaysian research programme.

The island, located 32 km off the east coast of the Malaysian peninsula, lies in the centre of the 'Coral Triangle', an area of ocean in the South China Sea home to over 600 species of reef building coral – encompassing 75% of all known species worldwide with the surrounding waters benefitting from protection against extractive or potentially damaging activities.

During the course of the study, Blue Ventures researchers identified 24 species of fish previously unrecorded in the region. This finding represents an 8% increase to fish species diversity on Pulau Tioman - a significant increase to the island's documented marine biodiversity.



Above: Pulau Tioman, home of Blue Ventures Malaysia

Blue Ventures also played a leading role in the Tioman Reef Clean-up 2009 on the 16th-18th of May. The aims of the programme were to clean local reefs of litter, nets and other anthropogenic debris, as well as conducting a mass removal of crown of thorns starfish, *Acanthaster planci*, from the reefs surrounding Pulau Tioman. Crown of thorns (COT) starfish pose a serious threat to coral reefs across the Indo-Pacific, feeding on coral polyps and are able to remove entire coral colonies of their vital symbiotic algae (zooxanthellae) that provide the coral with food via photosynthesis. COTs occur in such densities around Pulau Tioman to pose a major concern to the region's reef health and biodiversity. The clean-up programme was a joint effort between the Marine Department of Pahang, Blue Ventures and other participating organisations working to keep the local COTs population in check.

Before the clean-up, Blue Ventures volunteers produced a video of how to responsibly collect COTs. The video featured volunteers conducting a pick-up and provided tips on how to remove the starfish in such a way that coral is not damaged by divers. This video was shown during the opening ceremony and briefing and was made available to all dive operators wanting to conduct their own clean-ups. The tutorial video is currently available for viewing on youtube at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XPboe-5D3OA>

Over the course of the weekend, over 1600 COTs were removed from Tioman's reefs by project participants.

Volunteers and staff from Blue Ventures Malaysia have been working in partnership with local schools to organise and carry out beach clean-ups in the villages of Tekek and Mukut. These were run alongside school programmes designed by students from the University of Kebangsaan with support from Blue Ventures volunteers. The programmes began with a presentation explaining the threats posed to local marine life by marine litter and debris. Rubbish collected was sorted into recyclable and non-recyclable elements and a discussion about how it could be reduced, reused or recycled was conducted with participants. Finally, students used plastic bottles collected on the clean-up to make and decorate bottle rockets. The bottle rockets were then launched in the school yard much to the children's delight. The programme was attended by 38 students in Tekek and 18 in Mukut and 29 sacks of rubbish were collected from the two clean-ups.



Above: A Blue Ventures volunteer takes part in the Pulau Tioman reef clean up

News from Fiji...

Based on the island of Leleuvia in central Fiji's Lomaiviti province, Blue Ventures is working with local and national partners on an ambitious multidisciplinary marine research and conservation programme. Planned activities incorporate applied marine, fisheries and socioeconomic research, field-based training in conservation science, and community engagement in adaptive marine resource management.

Central family planning is becoming increasingly recognised as a vital Research objectives have been developed in collaboration with the National Fisheries Ministry, and focus on addressing areas of key data-deficiency, in particular through assessment and monitoring of coral reefs and artisanal fisheries in Kubuna waters. Conservation strategies are being planned by the Fisheries Ministry to safeguard the sustainability of the artisanal fisheries underpinning Lomaiviti's economy, whilst addressing the primary direct threats to the region's formidable marine biodiversity. Critical threats include poison fishing, poaching within marine protected areas, illegal long-line shark fishing and turtle fishing.

Within Fiji Blue Ventures is also supporting national research and training activities through a working partnership with the University of the South Pacific (USP), in which students from USP's School of Marine Science receive intensive 6-week training scholarships in coral reef and fisheries monitoring techniques. Scholarships are offered year-round, based out of Blue Ventures' field base on Leleuvia Island.



Above: Leleuvia island, home to Blue Ventures research site.



Left: Expedition leader Howard Foster is interviewed by Fiji television about the inaugural Blue Ventures Fiji expedition.

Blue Ventures alumnus elected to prestigious fellowship.

The Kinship Conservation Fellows program strives to develop a community of leaders dedicated to applying market-based principles to conservation and environmental issues. To this end the program provides instruction in market-based approaches, business principles and leadership to a select group of high potential conservation leaders. Invited academic and business leaders provide this world-class training.

During the program the Fellows, mentored by the academic staff, also develop a viable biodiversity business project. The other participants, each with a wealth of conservation experience in their own right, help to contribute their practical experience to these projects.

Dr. Garth Cripps was selected as one of the 2009 Kinship Conservation Fellows and has been further developing BV's efforts to develop sustainable financing for the creation and management of marine protected areas.

The project is titled: "Realising the environmental and social potential of marine reserves through market forces - a proposal for ecosystem services payments to expand community-managed marine reserves in Madagascar".

This project seeks to demonstrate to fisheries stakeholders the direct economic benefits of marine protected areas, by carrying out a detailed cost benefit analysis of the fisheries no take zone closures that have been pioneered by Blue Ventures throughout southern Madagascar. So far the Blue Ventures model has been replicated over 50 times in the region; this project is working with fishers and fisheries collection companies to understand the impact this model for conservation has on the fisheries bottom line. If the results prove positive, the project will work with partners throughout the region to identify alternative mechanisms for financing future marine reserves and ensuring their long-term sustainable management. In this way Blue Ventures is hoping to move marine conservation financing in the region beyond the limitations of traditional grant-based funding.

Sea bird conservation in the Aleutian Islands of Alaska; prevention of deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon; a 1,000,000 acre extension of the Yellowstone park through a partnership with the native Indian Crow Tribe land; a national scheme for the payment of forest and marine ecosystem services in Belize; cheetah conservation in Botswana and decreasing bush meat trade in Uganda... these are just some of the 18 innovative and ambitious conservation projects that Kinship Conservation Fellows from around the world are putting into action alongside Garth Cripps' programme.

It is probably the meeting of this diversity of practitioners, together with top academics, that makes the Kinship Conservation Fellows program such an exciting opportunity. It makes for a rich learning experience and an environment where inchoate ideas can be fashioned into successful market-based solutions to conservation problems.

Since its founding Blue Ventures has strived to achieve conservation and improve the well-being of natural resource dependent people using a business approach. This model has been based very much on eco-tourism. The Kinship philosophy is very much aligned with what BV wants to achieve and is an exciting opportunity to help us broaden and develop this biodiversity business model further.

Conferences and workshops

The largest marine conservation conference ever held - the world's first International Marine Conservation Congress - took place in late May in Washington DC, attracting over 1200 delegates from around the world. The interdisciplinary meeting sought to put conservation science into practice, engaging natural and social scientists, as well as managers, policy-makers, and the general public.

Major themes addressed at the meeting included climate change, poverty and globalisation; issues highly relevant to the marine conservation and fisheries management efforts being pioneered by Blue Ventures in Madagascar, Fiji and Malaysia.



Above: IMCC Logo

Blue Ventures presented experiences from designing community-managed marine protected areas, and was also featured at a special seminar discussing success stories in marine conservation. The seminar, held at the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History, highlighted Blue Ventures' work working with turtle fishermen to safeguard threatened sea turtle populations in southern Madagascar.

In early June marine ecologist Ida Vincent represented Blue Ventures at the 8th Indopacific Fish Conference in Perth, Australia, presenting results of fish studies carried out on coral reefs in Velondriake between 2007 and 2008.

2009 Publications

Robinson, G. and Pascal, B. (2009). From hatchery to community - Madagascar's first village based Holothurian Mariculture programme. SPC Beche-de-mer Information Bulletin #29.

Gough, C., Thomas, T., Humber, F., Harris, A., Cripps, G., and Peabody, S. (2009) Vezo Fishing: An introduction to the methods used by fishers in Andavadoaka, Southwest Madagascar. Blue Ventures Conservation Report

Gough, C., Harris, A., Humber, F. and Roy, R. (2009). Biodiversity and health of coral reefs at pilot sites south of Toliara WWF Southern Toliara Marine Natural Resource Management project MG 0910.01. Blue Ventures Conservation Report.

Mohan, V (2009). Providing sexual and reproductive health services for communities in Velondriake, southwest Madagascar: Project Development Plan 2009-2011. Blue Ventures Conservation Report.

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