

As this campaign comes to an end...



Students of Samoa Primary School, Vailele, were invited to read a portion from the booklet to mark the launch. Their reward: a Turtle bag.

Amidst a celebratory cocktail to mark the end of the YOST campaign at the SPREP headquarters in Samoa on 13 March 2007, the Director for SPREP, Mr Asterio Takesy, invited individuals to “welcome the next 5 years of sea turtle conservation.

“We know that one year of action will not save a species. We know that the conservation of sea turtles requires long-term commitment,” Mr Takesy said.

“As with the [1995] Year of the Sea Turtle, the most successful element

of this campaign has been in laying the foundation for ongoing sea turtle conservation to ensuring that over the next 10 years we do not lose our focus.”

The campaign had several facets: encouraging corporate philanthropy for a social and environmental good; education; communications; Samoa’s Turtle Bag drive; regional collaboration; regional satellite tagging; and the Turtle Research and Monitoring Database or TREDIS.

The closing ceremony, which was also attended by Samoa’s Associate Minister for Natural Resources and Environment, the Hon Fonotoe Laufofo and ANZ Samoa’s Managing Director Mr Peter A Johnson, followed the launch earlier in the day of the Pacific Sea Turtle Education Kit and the illustrated reader Lady Vini’s Big Pacific Adventure.

Lady Vini was the adult female hawksbill turtle that revealed remarkably fresh information through her journey crossing the exclusive economic zones of seven Pacific Island countries and territories.

What’s next? Regional marine turtle experts attended the Marine Turtle



And so our logo turtle waves goodbye as the 2006 Pacific Year of the Sea Turtle campaign has officially closed. There are strong calls to keep the momentum rolling to ensure that generations from now, sea turtles remain living legacies of the Pacific Island regions threatened, yet still vibrant biodiversity.

Action Plan review workshop in Samoa this March, to decide on conservation strategies for the coming five years. The revamped action plan will be submitted for endorsement to the 18th annual SPREP Meeting to be held in Samoa in September this year.

Another major step forward is the release of TREDIS for wide use in sea turtle research and monitoring in the Pacific region. SPREP's Associate Turtle Database Officer, Anne Trevor, said although TREDIS will continue to be developed, Pacific Island countries and territories can now use the database to advance turtle research through a standardised system.

With several successes, challenges remain. Mr Takesy adds that the "ultimate yardstick of the campaign's success will be the long-term adoption of national and regional turtle conservation measures, and changed attitudes at government and community levels."

For further information, check out the website: www.sprep.org/YOST or contact Lui Bell: LuiB@sprep.org

It was a bon voyage indeed:

From 7 March 2006, Lady Vini, a hawksbill turtle, travelled a distance of 4,743 km across the Pacific. Averaged over 228 days, her speed was almost one kilometre per hour.

Data courtesy NOAA, Pacific Islands Fisheries Centre, Hawai'i.

All kitted out

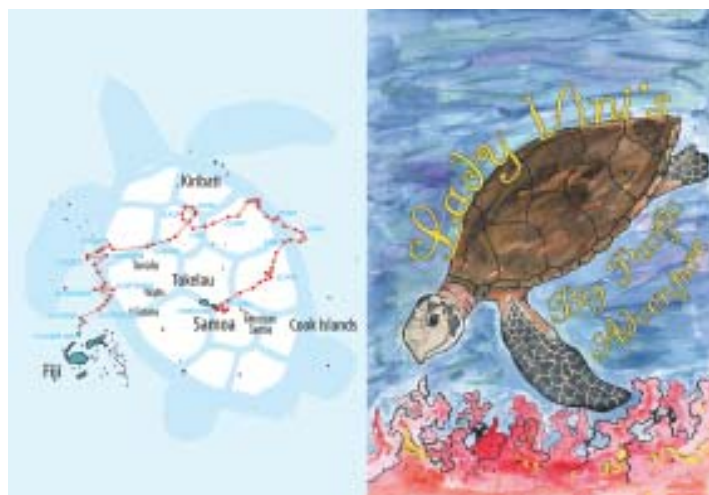
Young students around the Pacific region can now learn more about what they can do to protect their ocean and sea turtles through the Pacific Sea Turtle Education Kit that was launched in March 2007. The Kit was developed as part of the 2006 Pacific Year of the Sea Turtle (YOST) campaign.

The Kit contains a reader titled: Lady Vini's Big Pacific Adventure and an activities book aimed at upper primary and lower secondary school students and teachers around the Pacific Islands region. The idea is to spread the message of biodiversity so that generations from now, the current threatened population of sea turtles will grow in number and remain a living, healthy Pacific legacy.

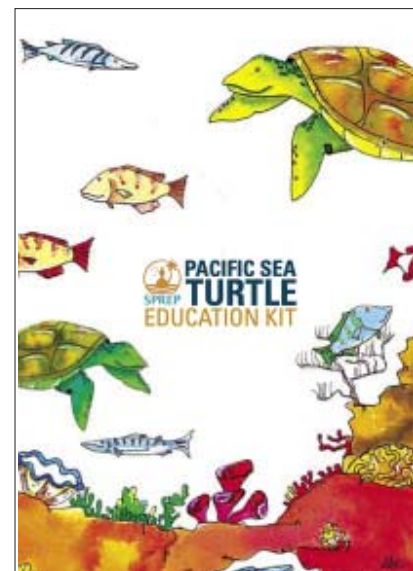
The Kit is about empowering individuals with information to think about the issues, to understand the impacts of their behaviour, and then to act responsibly. Think! Feel! Act! - are the three underlying components of Education for Sustainable Development or ESD. The Turtle Education Kit is a channel for ESD to promote interactive learning among students and teachers in creative ways.

Education and communications were significant components of YOST - the second of two Pacific turtle campaigns. The first was in 1995. Participant countries and territories of the 1995 marine turtle initiative had recommended that education be one of the priorities for a second sea turtle conservation and awareness effort.

YOST's key aims were: promote community conservation of sea turtles;



strengthen national legislation and policies to encourage sustainable management; and facilitate long-term partnerships for sea turtle conservation.



... may Pacific Years of the Sea Turtle continue forever!