



PBIF News Briefs

First Quarter 2007

PBIF launches new website!

Go to www.pbif.org for more information

New PBIF Website

We are excited to announce that our new look and feel went live on January 10, 2007! The new website features a general taxonomy search, Papua New Guinea Herpetofauna Database, an image gallery with 4,000 photos (and counting), Pacific-wide bibliographies and more.

Papua New Guinea Herpetofauna Database

A new online taxonomic service is available on the Herpetofauna of Papua New Guinea. The NSF funded project, led by the Bishop Museum, surveyed ten previously unstudied regions with a primary focus on increasing knowledge of the region's herpetofauna. Logistical support was also provided to a team of researchers to improve understanding of various other vertebrate and invertebrate taxa as well. Additional goals of the project included the discovery of new species, resolving systematic discrepancies, the production of identification keys, improvements to the PNG National Museum, and the training of local students in herpetology, field biology and conservation.

Herpetology is the branch of zoology concerned with the study of amphibians and reptiles. 'Herpetos' is a Greek word mean-

ing 'creeping' and the term 'herpetofauna' refers to animals within that branch of taxonomy. Taxonomic work on the Papuan herpetofauna dates back to the mid-1700's however the Bishop Museum is leading the way in their current research efforts. Beginning around 2000, there has been a marked increase in the rate of species descriptions. The Papuan herpetofauna consists of 350 frogs and 400 reptiles (two crocodiles, 17 turtles, 251 lizards, and 130 snakes). This total of 641 species includes 612 terrestrial and freshwater species and 29 marine species. Of the terrestrial species, 82% are endemic to the Papuan region. For more information, see <http://www.pbif.org/taxonomy/default.html>



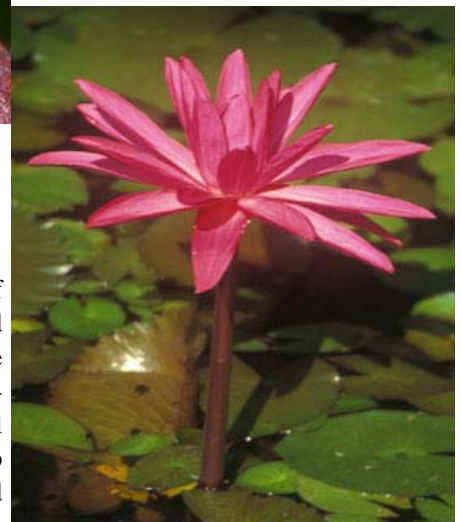
Photographer: F. Kraus 2005

Island Data CD-ROM

When PBIF was created in 2004, three of the four top informational needs identified by regional representatives involved the creation of regional, sub-regional, and national taxonomic databases. This initial focus on taxonomy is due to a partnership with the Global Taxonomy Initiative and

an agreement with the Global Biodiversity Information Facility to provide a Pacific biodiversity portal to the global system. This plan allows for Pacific-based taxonomic data to both be shared with the globe as well as repatriated back to the islands from which it came.

In support of our taxonomic pursuits, in July of 2006 PBIF released a prototype of the Island Data CD-ROM, a Pacific-wide checklist of plant and animal species by country. Members of the Pacific Island Roundtable for Nature Conservation were among the first to review the CD. Initial feedback on the prototype was incredibly positive however the checklists are a work in progress and will undergo much revision before distribution to a wider audience. The CD includes a checklist of species by island nation as well as a comprehensive biodiversity bibliography of relevant Pacific-based literature. Our aim in the future is to include photographs, species distribution information and specific species information such as invasive or threatened/endangered status. If you have any information relevant to this project, please contact abaum@usgs.gov.



Photographer: J. Maragos 2005

PBIF Image Gallery

PBIF continues its effort to digitize and catalogue the work of local scientists in order to preserve and disseminate vast amounts of Pacific-relevant imagery. Naturalist Angela Kepler and Coral Reef Biologist Jim Maragos have each donated thousands of images to be catalogued in the PBIF image gallery and will be available on the website copyright free.

Global Taxonomy Initiative Project Updates

Just over 2 years ago, 60+ regional representatives convened in Wellington, NZ and generated 15 high-priority bilateral/multilateral projects aimed at increasing the depth and capacity for taxonomic knowledge in the Asia/Oceania region. The Pacific Biodiversity Information Forum has been tracking the progress of each project over the two year term and is pleased to report significant progress.

As of December 2006, four projects have been funded and five others have either been submitted for funding or are making significant progress through related projects. Given the limited funding and the time constraints on all members involved, this is fantastic progress and clear evidence of everyone's commitment to overcome such resource limitations. Additionally, in October 2006 the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity released a letter of support to the GTI project leaders. It is our hope that each project champion will continue to move these projects forward and persist in increasing taxonomic knowledge and capacity for the region.

Photographer: A. Kepler 2005



NOAA IDEA Center

The National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration's Integrated Data and Environmental Applications (NOAA IDEA) Center is an initiative designed to advance NOAA's mission objectives to help meet critical regional needs for ocean, climate, and ecosystem information to protect lives and property, support economic development and enhance the resilience of Pacific Island communities in the face of changing environmental conditions. The center will have three themes: coastal and marine ecosystems, climate vulnerability and adaptation, and hazards risk management.

A unique opportunity for collaboration exists between IDEA and PBIF. The IDEA Center primarily focuses on non-living resource data while PBIF manages information on Pacific Island organisms. The IDEA Center hosted PBIF in a meeting last November to discuss complementary objectives and efforts are underway to increase cooperation.

Biodiversity Indicators

In November 2006, as part of our ongoing support to the Pacific Island Roundtable, PBIF hosted a 3-day workshop to develop a suite of indicators used to monitor the success of the Action Strategy for Nature Conservation in the Pacific Islands Region. Meeting attendees included members from the Secretariat for the Pacific Regional Environment Program, Pacific Island Forum, Pacific Biodiversity Information Forum, Bishop Museum, The Nature Conservancy, Pacific Islands Ecosystem Research Center and an environmental consultant. Response to the workshop was overwhelmingly positive and a list of potential indicators was drafted and presented to the Roundtable management com-



Photographer: J. Maragos 2005

mittee in March. Both meetings were held in preparation for the 8th Pacific Islands Conference where the Action Strategy for Nature Conservation will be reviewed, evaluated and possibly revised.

Upcoming Events

- May 2-6, 2007 Marine Geological and Biological Habitat Mapping, Noumea, New Caledonia
- May 22, 2007 International Day for Biological Diversity
- June 12-18, 2007 Pacific Science Congress, Okinawa, Japan
- July 25-27, 2007 Hawaii Conservation Conference, Honolulu, Hawaii
- Oct. 22-26, 2007 8th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas, Papua New Guinea
- Oct. 29 - Nov. 3, 2007 Inaugural International Geographic Union Commission on Islands, Taipei, Taiwan

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