

# Palau Conservation Society Newsletter

## February 2018



Pictured is a Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*). This photo was taken at Skojio (Meyuns Seaplane Ramp). Every year a small flock of Ruddy Turnstones migrate to the same location in Meyuns to make Palau their home from October through March. Photo credit: Belau National Museum - National Program for Monitoring Forest and Coastal Birds

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Palau Conservation Society  
*protecting our natural heritage*

# Lets talk about SLM

## Sustainable Land Management

We have all seen it — unplanned neighborhoods, streams of brown sediment running down from the newest development, landslides after heavy rains, a barren wasteland where a once beautiful mangrove used to thrive... These examples are evidence of un-sustainable land

management practices.

As Palauans and residents, our lands are extremely important to our families, our livelihoods, food security, and culture. Because our main industry, tourism, is so closely linked to the environment, land degradation is also a threat to economic prosperity in Palau for the long term. A few of the problems— the cutting down of forests, unplanned land use, drought, sea level rise, the loss of soil fertility, watershed degradation, invasive species and unsustainable development activities. **What will the costs of land degradation and unsustainable development be?**

In the coming months, PCS is excited to assist the Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment and Tourism by facilitating efforts to develop the Sustainable Land Use Management (SLM) Action Plan in support of the National SLM Policy that was developed in 2010. With our partners, this collective effort will continue the work of turning Policy into “on the ground” actions. Funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), PCS has already led one stakeholder meeting and in the coming weeks and months, will be holding additional stakeholder interviews, focus groups, and meeting with governors to develop content and gain diverse perspectives.

For many communities, *the challenge of achieving SLM comes down to short-term profit over long-term sustainability* (GEF). By moving forward with the SLM Action Plan, we are proud that Palau is choosing what’s best for its people, the economy, and the environment in the long term.



Stakeholders attend SLM planning meeting.



Hikers at Ngardok Nature Reserve in Melekeok State.

### Take a hike with PCS!

Some of our favorite PCS supporters participated in a tour of Babeldoab this February. The enthusiastic group of women visited a number of protected areas in the states of Aimeliik, Ngaremlengui, Ngaraard, Ngarchelong, Melekeok, and Ngchesar. The trip, that included lunch and luxury transportation provided by Biib Bus Tours, was a prize from Live Auction at the 2017 PCS Gala. By all accounts, participants had a great time enjoying the fresh air, hiking, and planting trees, not to mention a chance to experience Palau’s unique biodiversity. PCS would like to thank all the states and

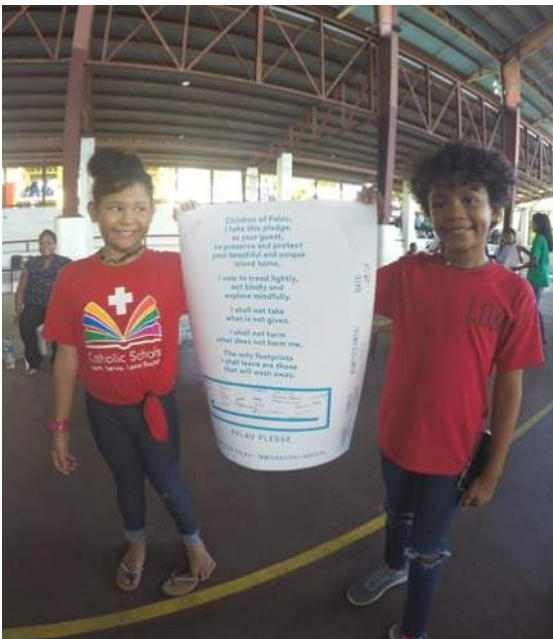
PAN staff who made this trip possible. Special thanks to trip participants: Judge Skebong, Judge Rudimch, Judge Salii, Umerang Imetengel, Yvette Salii, Brengyei Katosang, Everdil Rechebei, and Uroi Salii.



## Maris Stella students take the Palau Pledge

"Now that we are asking all tourists to make a pledge to Palau's environment, what are we doing as Palauans to protect our beautiful islands?" This was the question posed to students from Maris Stella Elementary on January 30.

As part of Catholic Schools Week activities, 250 students packed the Mindzenty Gym to learn about the Palau Pledge, a national effort created to educate tourists on how to experience Palau in a way that respects both Palau's culture and environment. Tourists are now required to sign the Pledge as they pass through Customs promising the children of Palau to "tread lightly", "explore mindfully", and to "not take what is not given."



Students were excited to watch the Palau Pledge in-flight video that features a big purple giant who visits Palau. The giant, meant to represent mass tourism, steps on coral, takes things from the ocean to eat them, and litters. Throughout the short video, Palauan children try to educate the giant on the right thing to do. At the end of the presentation, Maris Stella students, led by First Lady Debbie Remengesau, stood up to recite the Palau Pledge and sign their name to it.

Palau Conservation Society and the Palau Legacy Team look forward to visiting more schools in the coming months to promote the Palau Pledge and get more students and their families involved.



### Four ways to give to Palau Conservation Society:

- Online: [www.youcaring.com/Palau](http://www.youcaring.com/Palau)
- Send a check: PO Box 1811 Koror, Palau 96940
- Sign-up for allotment through your employer (Palau residents only)
- Drop off your donation to our office—2nd floor Bai Ra Maiberel

# Birdlife International and PCS commemorate 15+ years of partnership



Palau Conservation Society (PCS) was pleased to host staff from Birdlife International in mid-January as the two organizations commemorated over 15 years of partnership. Birdlife is the world's largest nature conservation partnership with over 120 partners around the world and three million members. Its mission is to *conserve birds, their habitats and global biodiversity, working with people towards sustainability in the use of natural resources*. PCS is the only partner located in Micronesia.

During their time in Palau, Regional Director of Birdlife Pacific Margaret West and her team engaged PCS in a capacity building workshop focused on information sharing, policy, and advocacy. The team discussed protection of threatened bird species such as the Dellerok (Far-eastern curlew or Palauan Money Bird) and critical bird habitats such as the Peleliu Lkes. There was also time to visit Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in Kayangel, Peleliu, and parts of Babeldoab. The workshop was made possible because of generous support from the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and the European Union.

Birdlife International, in partnership with PCS and various states, has provided support to a number of local projects in Palau. A few notable achievements include: research and field work that led to the establishment of the bird sanctuary in Ngaremlengui, island restoration (invasive alien species) in the islands of Kayangel, and educational outreach regarding the large number of migratory shorebirds that call the Peleliu Lkes home.

As states and members of the tourism industry begin to explore "birding tourism" as a way to generate revenue among bird-loving tourists, the work of protecting birds in Palau has become ever more important. PCS and Birdlife look forward to continued partnership in collaboration with state and national governments.



Partnership for  
**nature and people**

*"Birdlife is the world's largest nature conservation partnership with over 120 partners around the world and three million members... PCS is the only partner located in Micronesia."*



## Green Business Spotlight: Sam's Tours

Protecting the environment makes good business sense. Starting in this issue, PCS will be highlighting businesses who have made strides to keep Palau pristine.

In its 28th year of operation, Sam's Tours is one of Palau's premier dive shops. We had a chance to sit down and chat with owner Sam Scott to discuss life in the dive shop business and relate that back to the environment and conservation. Sam's Tours has been a great supporter of PCS over the years and we truly appreciate him sitting down with us.

### What are the biggest threats you see facing Palau's environment and your business?

Overfishing. People are fishing at dive sites. Over the years I have seen a decrease in the fish population. It seems that poaching is happening more. There are less Kemedukl (Bump head parrot fish) and less Maml (Napoleon wrasse). While these species are protected, there is clearly a demand and it's impacting the dive sites and divers' experiences. What people should realize is these kinds of species are worth more alive in the ocean than they are dead on someone's plate.

### What are some practices you have adopted to protect Palau?

We use reef hooks, of course. In fact, we have specially made, high quality Sam's Tours reef hooks. No gloves—divers are not here to grab on to the reef. It's really important to have an observant staff willing to respectfully correct guests' behaviors. We have a list of "Environmental Rules" posted on the wall for divers to see and we have a zero tolerance for repeated bad behavior. The worst offenders could get banned from diving with our shop?

### Have you ever banned anyone?

Yes.

### What advice do you have for young people who want to get into the dive business?

I would like to see the program a few years ago reinstated to get younger Palauans to take up diving and get certified through a training program. For those who want to work in the industry, consider working at a dive shop. My dive mentor was the legend Francis Toribiong who taught me so much about diving.

### Any other thoughts for the future?

I want the dive industry in Palau to last as long as possible. We are already impacted by global warming, so we must do our part to protect what we can. My children are Palauan and I want my children and children's children to be able to see what makes Palau one of the best diving locations in the world! With the Palau National Marine Sanctuary and other initiatives, I do think that Palau is moving in a positive direction.





## **PCS staffers earn Project Management Certificate from USAID Climate Ready**

Congrats to Bernie Besebes and Zina Wong who earned a certificate of completion for their involvement in a 5 - month course conducted by USAID Climate Ready in conjunction with University of the Pacific.

On Feb. 9, Bernie, Zina and 25 of their classmates gave their final presentations followed up by a closing ceremony where certificates were presented. The course focused on improving skills to manage disaster resilience within communities.



## **PCS awarded grant to host Micronesia Challenge intern for next 9 months**

Palau Conservation Society (PCS) welcomed Zacateca Adelbai to its staff on Jan. 31. For the next nine months, Zaca, as she's known, will serve as an intern as part of the Micronesia Challenge Young Champions Internship Program. Zaca is currently a sophomore majoring in Liberal Arts at Palau Community College (PCC). Previous to attending PCC, Zaca attended Xavier High School.



Zaca's past experience includes volunteering as a research assistant for Dr. Christopher Kitalong. She and other students focused their research on socioeconomics, marine biodiversity, and other projects that promote a clean Palau and local marine and terrestrial ecosystems. She currently serves as the President of the Associated Students of PCC. The youngest child, Zaca is the daughter of Patrick Adelbai and Pampelina Gallen Adelbai. She identifies as both Palauan and from Pohnpei.

Zaca's work with Palau Conservation Society is funded through the generous support of the Micronesia Challenge, a regional initiative that challenges countries in Micronesia to protect 30% of near-shore marine resources and 20% of terrestrial resources by 2020. Palau accomplishes this through its Protected Areas Network (PAN) and as a nation, is well on its way to achieving this goal. Zaca will specifically focus on outreaching to PCS members and the business community.

Zaca considers herself a person who has "gained a passion for conserving the environment, not only because it's fun to do but also quite effective in Palau where our economy really is based on how well we preserve the natural beauty of this small island."

# PCS goes house to house in Kayangel



Going house to house is not just for political campaigning. In early February, PCS staff members Fabio Siksei and Godinez Ngiltii, with the support of the local community, went door to door on the main island of Kayangel as part of outreach efforts centered on water security.

The project entitled “Building the resilience of communities and the ecosystems to the

impacts of climate change in Micronesia and Melanesia” focuses on building food security and improving water security for Kayangel state. In an effort to improve community resilience to climate change, this project targets issues such as water conservation, fisheries conservation, household gardening, and alternative fishing through the promotion of deep water fishing (versus reef fishing). PCS staff shared information with over 20 households on the island. Residents received complimentary reusable water bottles as well as important reminders on how to conserve water that included: **saving water when brushing teeth and washing dishes, only washing full loads of laundry, repairing leaky pipes, mulching to hold water, and being careful not to pollute water sources.** This is especially important for low lying atoll islands like Kayangel whose main source of water lies underground and can be in short supply and vulnerable to human activity and climate related events like drought or salt water intrusion.

Fabio and Godinez also had the opportunity to deliver gardening supplies and equipment to PJF-Kayangel Elementary to support the development of a school garden. The next step in this project will be to provide household gardening tools to residents—composters, start-up soil, and seeds. The community will also be provided with a shredder (to assist with composting) and electric fishing reels for deep water fishing. PCS would like to thank the leaders of Kayangel and our partners at Kayangel PAN for their continued support and partnership in conservation.

*This project is made possible because of funding support from the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB) through the International Climate Initiative Project with the Nature Conservancy (TNC) and Micronesia Conservation Trust (MCT).*

## Kids corner: nature jokes

- Why did the leaf go to the doctor? — It was feeling green.
- How can you tell the ocean is friendly? — It waves.
- Why is grass so dangerous? — Because it's full of blades.
- Why did the sun go to school? — To get brighter.
- How do you cut a wave in half? — Use a sea saw.
- What did the tree wear to the pool party? — Swimming trunks.
- What kind of shorts do clouds wear? — Thunderwear!

Send us a joke on Facebook or email [admin@palaupledge.com](mailto:admin@palaupledge.com)

# INTRODUCING The Palau Pledge Challenge



Now that we are asking visitors to protect Palau's environment, we must ask ourselves:

*What am I doing to protect Palau?*

## Take the Palau Pledge Challenge

The Palau Pledge Challenge encourages teams of youth from throughout Palau to take action to protect their environment.

Teams can participate by doing just about anything!

### DETAILS AND RULES FOR ENTRY

- Youth from grades 1-12 are eligible to participate
- Teams can consist of 2 - 50 people
- Prizes for top three winning teams (1st - \$500, 2nd - \$250, 3rd - \$100)
- Deadline to submit entry is April 1, 2018. Please submit entry to PCS Office.
- For more info, contact PCS at 488-3993 or [admin@palaupledge.com](mailto:admin@palaupledge.com)
- More details on Facebook - Palau Conservation Society
- Learn about Palau Pledge at [www.palaupledge.com](http://www.palaupledge.com)
- Ideas: Write and perform a song \* Make a short film or commercial \* Organize a shore/beach clean-up \* Invent something \* Help your school reduce plastics \* Create a piece of artwork that inspires people to protect Palau \* Your own creative idea!



You can make a difference by donating to PCS!



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