

**Social Assessment**

**May 15, 2019**

**CEPF Grant GA19/01**

**Oceania Ecology Group Pty. Ltd.**

*Species Champions and Caretakers for the Giant Rats of Bougainville, Guadalcanal and  
Vangunu Islands*

**Solomon Islands and Autonomous Region of Bougainville**

## **Grant Summary**

1. Name: Oceania Ecology Group Pty. Ltd.
2. Title: *Species Champions and Caretakers for the Giant Rats of Bougainville, Guadalcanal and Vangunu Islands*
3. Grant Number: GA19/01
4. Grant Amount: \$19,885.45 (US dollars).
5. Grant dates: July 2019–December 2020
6. Countries: Autonomous Region of Bougainville, Solomon Islands (Guadalcanal and Vangunu Islands)
7. Date of document preparation: 15 May 2019

### **8. Indigenous People affected:**

Small communities of indigenous customary owners typically manage Solomon Island forests and adjacent reefs. Our project will focus on forest remnants within 6 Key Biodiversity Areas:

**Vangunu.** Zaira is a village of fewer than 200 people on the south eastern weather coast of Vangunu. Zaira community members are customary landowners of three adjacent regions known as the Dokoso, Sunqili and Tavomai Tribal Land Areas, consisting of primary forest surrounded by steep ridges of the caldera of a dormant volcano. The total area of 6000 ha combines 3500 ha of forest, and 2500 ha of marine areas and Kavachi Reef. These three areas have recently been combined into a community conservation area declared by the landowners, the ‘Zaira Community Resource Management Area’. This region is being managed by the six tribal groups living in Zaira village and the nearby similarly small villages of Ninive, Tiqe & Mbopo, headed by village chiefs (These tribal groups on south Vangunu Island are known as Dokoso, Kale Vangunu, Suqili, Tavoamai, Kadiki and Veala). The Zaira Community Resource Management Area is used for hunting, collecting wild fruit and nuts, and providing water and building materials. Sections are traditionally closed to hunting for five years at a time under a traditional management method known as ‘hopé’, for example the Dokoso section is currently closed to hunting, fishing and felling trees.

**Guadalcanal.** The Guadalcanal watersheds KBA is the largest KBA in the East Melanesian Islands region. It covers an area extending from lowland forest all the way to the highest point of the Solomon Islands Mt Popomanasaeu and covering a total land area of over 376,000 Ha. The project will work along side members of both the Uluna-Sutuhuri and Kakau tribes.

The CEPF KBA covers a region that is predominantly customary lands of the Uluna-Sutuhuri tribe. The high-ridgelines of Guadalcanal’s spine (known locally as Haiaja) are extremely important from a cultural perspective and outsiders have rarely visited montane forests. Many former village sites occur at mid-elevations. Many of these sites were abandoned only recently (c. 1980’s) and also very culturally important. The section of Uluna tribe that occupy the northern portion of the Uluna-Sutuhuri customary lands total approximately 800 people. Tyrone has been discussing mammal orientated research and conservation with Uluna tribal representatives Noelyn Biliki and Josh Kera.

The Kakau tribe are landowners of a region from Tasahe to Lunnga River on northern Guadalcanal. Kakau is a relatively small tribe estimated to be around 100 people. This project will mainly work within the primary forests protecting the watershed for Honiara’s water supply (Kovi River). This area is occupied primarily by a single extended family.

**Bougainville.** Bougainville is the largest island in the biogeographic Solomon Islands. At its highest point, Bougainville reaches 2,685m in altitude. The Kunua Plains and Mount Balbi KBA covers an area of over 75,000Ha. In 1989, armed conflict broke out on Bougainville and endured for approximately 10 years. This stemmed partly from disagreement relating to the Panguna Mine site that was operated by a foreign company. This recent conflict still has tangible implications for working and communicating with

people on Bougainville. Bougainville is now administered as an autonomous region of Papua New Guinea and will continue to transition toward full independence by 2020. The island is one of the most poorly surveyed islands of the region from a biological perspective.

The Kainake village community is located in the southwest of Bougainville Island. In 2013 the community founded a community-based organisation focused on environmentally sustainable development. The organisation has already established a conservation area covering 52 hectares of virgin lowland tropical rainforest. At least two species of monkey-faced bats are highly likely to occur in the Kainake Village region. Partnerships are being fostered with the Drug Discovery and Herbal Development Laboratory and the Centre for Conservation and Natural Products Research at the University of Papua New Guinea. The Kainake village itself has a population of 110. The project also incorporates 5 surrounding villages that support approximately 500 people. The organisation established a school in 2014 which now caters for 71 students who are attending early childhood learning, pre-school, grade 1 and grade 2.

#### **9. Summary of the proposed project:**

This project will establish species champions for three species of EMI priority mammal via the following aims: 1. Bougainville *Solomys salebrosus*: define the conservation needs and control overexploitation of the priority mammal *Solomys salebrosus* on southern Bougainville

2. Guadalcanal *Uromys*: confirm the identify and existence of a viable population of *Uromys* rodents in the Guadalcanal Uplands KBA, and assist communities to implement conservation actions 3. Marovo-Kavachi *Uromys*: define the conservation needs of newly discovered *Uromys* species in the Marovo-Kavachi KBA, and assist communities to implement conservation actions

The general approach to achieve the formulation of a recovery plan will involve a period of limited data collection. This will be followed by identification of species conservation requirements and work with communities to better design conservation areas and actions to safeguard them. Data collection will incorporate camera traps, live trapping and radiotracking to identify important areas and resources. Conservation actions will involve mapping important areas and setting lists of activities to be undertaken (e.g. potential bans on hunting or protection of critical resources as determined by communities).

**10. Potential impacts:** This section will assess expected project impacts (both positive and negative) on Indigenous People.

#### **Positive**

One major benefit of our project is income generation through payment of guides, landowners and trainee rangers, and buying local produce. Although villagers in each of the priority areas live traditionally by subsistence farming, hunting, and using forest and marine resources, people need income for medical and school expenses, as well as manufactured materials such as clothes, fuel, soap and batteries. Sources of income in villages are very limited.

Another important benefit will be education, capacity building and training, especially for young adults and school-aged children. There is a very high participation rate in primary school in the Solomon Islands, aided by Australian government education support, and so there is a demand for secondary schooling.

Information collected in our surveys will promote the protection of forests from industrial logging and mining. This outcome can benefit entire communities through provision of clean water, building materials for the whole village, and healthy populations of terrestrial game animals and marine life for harvesting. Cultural heritage is also conserved (kastom sites /sacred sites).

Our proposal to manage species that are utilized as food sources will have benefits for Solomon Island communities as it will promote the long-term sustainability of these resources.

### **Negative**

Adverse impacts are likely to be very minor, if they occur. This is because our project would be less than two years in total, and less than a month of fieldwork in each site, our methods are driven by demand from communities, and are not prescriptive.

Because our work at each site is relatively brief and employment opportunities limited, one possible negative impact might be conflict between households or villages over who is hired. If payment and employment of local guides is not handled very carefully, disagreements could be a problem because communities are organised into hereditary groups (wantoks) and village governance is hierarchical. Outsiders have no opportunity to decide which members of the community will be hired and trained, this is decided by the chief or a council of elders.

A minor negative impact of hiring local guides may be an increase in tobacco use. We may discourage hunting of some threatened rats. In the longer term, prevention or regulation of hunting these species could negatively affect the poorest households by reducing protein availability. However, the target species are so incredibly rare that they are very unlikely to form an important part of the diet of any indigenous community.

### **11. Participatory preparation:**

We have consulted extensively with partner communities during the project. This includes visits to Guadalcanal and Bougainville (Vangunu leaders contacted by phone and email). All of our discussions have taken place in Solomons pidgin or Tok Pisin. In meetings participants were free to express their views, and were therefore not dominated by project proponents or certain sections of community. In the Solomon Islands, there is a process of hierarchical discussions led by customary landowners and the local community that must be adhered to before anyone who is not an owner can work in forests (or to visit them for any purpose), even in cases of a simple observational visit to a site. Talks begin with the council of village chiefs and often also church leaders, who then take the proposal to a meeting of the whole community where permission and terms (payments etc) are freely discussed. Relatives of community members who live outside the area but consider that they may also have a claim to the land on which the work is planned also have rights to comment. These discussions can therefore take some time.

Several of the participants in the proposed project are indigenous to the Solomon Islands and the specific sites where we propose to conduct the project (Jeffrey Noro, Kevin Sese, Corzzie Posala). Participants in this project have developed associations with the affected communities over many years. Communities in this project are happy to collaborate and generate information on protecting threatened mammals.

### **12. Mitigation strategies:**

Our work involves communities in determining what is sustainable use of wildlife, through surveys and ecological research. This information is culturally appropriate: sustainable hunting appears to have been practiced traditionally by different communities in the project areas (e.g. Zaira), and local people have a strong interest in it. Our approach to this project is building on and strengthening an existing foundation of community projects rather than attempting to impose new measures.

Our project pivots on collaboration with local members of communities: Jeffrey Noro (Bougainville) Kevin Sese (Guadalcanal), Corzzie Posala (Marovo). This will ensure appropriate cultural links are in place between communities and the project manager.

### **13. Monitoring and evaluation:**

We are using village level discussions to monitor local opinion, positive and negative outcomes of the project. We prefer to adopt culturally appropriate methods of monitoring the progress of our project. In Solomon Islands this is an ongoing process of meeting with people in their homes, formal meetings with village leaders and arranging village forums if that is what leaders deem is appropriate. Community consultation will continue throughout the life of the project.

#### **14. Grievance mechanism:**

Information about the project purpose, activities, timeline and key contacts (including for grievances) will be shared with the Kainake, Zaira and Guadalcanal communities through project consultations led by Oceania Ecology Group. These will be in the form of face to face meetings and the existence of a grievance mechanism will be communicated in the form of an information document to be made available amongst community members.

- Email and telephone contact information for the grantee organization:  
Tyrone Lavery [tyrone.lavery@uqconnect.edu.au](mailto:tyrone.lavery@uqconnect.edu.au); (+61 459 785 666);
- Email and telephone contact information for the CEPF Regional Implementation Team  
Helen Pippard, [helen.pippard@iucn.org](mailto:helen.pippard@iucn.org); +679 331 9084; +679 9467511
- Email and telephone contact information for the local World Bank office:  
World Bank Office Mud Alley, Honiara, Solomon Islands, Tel : +677 21444
- The email of the CEPF Executive Director: [cepfexecutive@conservation.org](mailto:cepfexecutive@conservation.org)

As a first line of communication, community members will be encouraged to register any grievances: 1) Through village and community leaders and contacts, and 2) directly at community forums. Dispute resolution between local groups will include the local village chief or council of chiefs (the usual accepted channel). The project lead will be the initial recipient of any grievance raised, and we will share all grievances – and a proposed response – with the Regional Implementation Team and the CEPF Grant Director within 15 days. If the claimant is not satisfied following the response, they may submit the grievance directly to the CEPF Executive Director at [cepfexecutive@conservation.org](mailto:cepfexecutive@conservation.org) or by surface mail. If the claimant is not satisfied with the response from the CEPF Executive Director, they may submit the grievance to the World Bank at the local World Bank office.

#### **15. Budget:**

This section will summarize dedicated costs related to compliance with the safeguard policy on Indigenous Peoples. These costs should be incorporated into the budget of the CEPF grant and/or covered by co-financing.

Village level discussions will be used to monitor local opinion, positive and negative outcomes of the project. We have included a budget of \$200 for telecommunications to speak with community representatives and a total of \$3,776.94 travel for field work that will include consultation with communities.