

Bat Conservation International and Rotokas Ecotourism Consultation

Location: Ruruvu Village, Wakunai District, ARoB

Date: 10/02/15

Welcome:

Chief John Paul welcomed BCI, Bougainville Environment Bureau, Rotokas Ecotourism and the community to this consultation workshop. He emphasised that the visitors are most welcome and the community is very interested in hearing BCI's presentation.

Opening Prayer:

Job Teppy - emphasised that God made all creatures, nature and the environment; he also gave man the responsibility to look after God's creations and the environment. The Pastor stated that we humans have not always adhered to our responsibility that was given to us by God.

Introductions:

All visitors introduced themselves, including: the Bougainville Environment Bureau (Gavin Reynolds and Beatrix Oni) and BCI (Dave Walden).

Presentation:

See PowerPoint presentation

Community Feedback:

Question: What is the importance of the bats?

Dave there are 1300 species of bats in the world, with that number of bats they do a lot of different things like eating insect pests that damage crops, trees and the forest, they also pollinate many plants and trees that are important for the health of the forest health but a lot tress that human's use including the Aquila tree. Bats also spread seeds and replant seeds like fruits that humans depend upon.

Immah Raririo- before the forest and bush was very good, there were alot of trees and we also had a lot of good protein from the bush, there were owl's and bats that helped sustain the people. In the past our ancestors told us not to kill certain species of bats and birds. This has all changed how, we are careless and many young people walk around with catapults killing bats and birds for no reason. What is the vision for the future? Want to the bush the way it was in past, we are happy that BCI is here to tell us about conservation

Luke Raupeto – We don't understand the need for bats so it is very good to hear why the bats are important. We want to learn more about the need for bats. In terms of a plan or vision for the future we need to conserve the question more. A question: how do you know about the bats here in Bougainville and the value of bats in Bougainville?

Dave: We don't know much about the bats in Bougainville, what we would like to do is learn together about the bats here in Bougainville – learn with you all. What we don't know is that bats have value in other parts of the world and that's what I will share with you

Michael Vari – I agree with everything you are saying, we understand it is important to conserve the environment and bats are a part of that. My question is what will a bat project look like if we work together here in Wakunai?

Dave: we will answer this question in the presentation, thank you for the question

Michael Vari – Is there some negatives about bats do some have diseases that they could give to people?

Dave: Bats are like any other wild animals and some have diseases that humans could get, but most wild bats don't have diseases and if we can do research and learn more about bats then we can understand how we can live in harmony with them.

Chief John Paul – What killed all the bats in the late 1990's?

Dave: Referred to climate change and more frequent and more extreme heat events

Ando Purasiri -Forty years ago when I was young I saw lots of flying foxes, now we don't see them anymore. Today people shoot them with catapults and eat them. So we need to come up with a vision or plan together.

Dave: Referred to Philippines example

Ando Purasiri – We are worried that bats can spread disease like ebola in Africa. I can see in this magazine that bats may be related to causing and ebola virus

Buka Pato– Before when our ancestors were here we lived in harmony with our environment, so thank you for BCI presentation and awareness. We are now in a time of change, our culture is changing, in the past women were not allowed to leave their village but this has all changed now.

Chief John Paul – we want this project to go ahead here so let's look at the next steps. Question: will this project only be about bats or other animals and the environment?

Dave: BCI understands that bats are only one part of the ecosystem and although our activities may be more focused around bats a project will look at conservation of the environment.

Chief John Paul – I support this project and want to see more trainings and educational activities around the conservation of bats and our environment. I am happy to sign the MOA.

Martha Koveto – Coming from the people and myself, I like to eat bats. But we need to go back to our family values

Job Tebby – they more awareness and trainings especially in the schools. This project is all about protecting the environment, but it needs to go further. Today Dave has opened a small window and some light has come inside, but this light must be extended further out in to the rest of the community. So we are happy to see this awareness go further.

Michael Vari – In the past, near my house I had a big fig tree and all the bats used to come and meet here and roost. Now this does not happen anymore, we need to protect the roosting sites because as we have learnt to day bats are a very important part of protecting the ecosystem as a whole.

Signing of Memorandum of Agreement