



Mid-Year Progress Report

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Presented to



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Executive Summary

The Tenkile Conservation Alliance (TCA) focuses on the Scott's Tree Kangaroo (Tenkile) and Golden-mantled Tree Kangaroo (Weimang) as flagship species for achieving broad forest biodiversity conservation outcomes in the Torricelli Mountain Range; Sandaun Province PNG. A main objective is to establish this mountain range as a legislated Conservation Area. Jim and Jean Thomas have been responsible for managing this project since January 2003. TCA's major partners are Zoos Victoria (ZV) and Australian Volunteers International (AVI).

This project has made significant progress this year including:

- Continuation of the hunting moratorium for the 18 "Tenkile" Villages and 21 "Weimang" villages. There has been no significant hunting of any fauna within the Tenkile habitat and limited hunting within the Weimang habitat.
- Conservation Area boundaries mapped using GPS technology in seven areas of the Tenkile habitat and maps produced using mapping software.
- Significant capacity building implemented with TCA Project Officers and Research Officers in the use of GPS technology. Officers are now capable users of GPS and can collect co-ordinates independently.
- Establishment of Weimang research sites.
- Distance Sampling Research conducted at seven Tenkile Research site with data collected from 2004-2009.
- Capture and release of two (1.1) Tenkile. Scat counts recorded for a period of six weeks to assist distance sampling research.
- Conservation Area Management Committees established in 9 Weimang villages and 4 training workshops held.
- Successful breeding of rabbits in Project area with two Tenkile Villages breeding more than 180 rabbits, Tolgete has 120 rabbits and



Wigote village has more than 300 rabbits. Weimang villages have all maintained their rabbits successfully with some villages starting to show breeding success this year.

- Establishment of chicken farms in all Tenkile villages. Solar Incubator now in Lumi and ready for installation.
- Significant infrastructure improvements to TCA Base-Lumi including the completion of a training center and satellite internet connection.
- Official opening of training center and celebration of TCA's work in Lumi on June 5th, World Environment Day. Media of the event in The Post Courier, The Age, Radio Australia – In the Loop and Tok Pisin Service, Radio Sandaun (NBC PNG) and PNG News.

The Tenkile Conservation Alliance program is an outstanding model of how effective conservation outcomes may be achieved and assessed in developing communities when they are coupled with development of sustainable resource and economic alternatives

Background



The Tenkile Conservation Alliance (TCA) is a Non-Government Organisation (NGO); established in 2001. TCA communicates regularly with government bodies and has established relationships with the local level governments of the Aitape/Lumi, Nuku and Ambunti/Drekikir Districts, Sandaun Provincial Government and the Department of Environment and Conservation.

Populations of people in the Torricelli Mountain Range have trebled in the past 50 years. Traditionally a hunter/gatherer society this has led to a dramatic increase in the need for people to hunt. Along with changes in customs and hunting methods this has led to a decline in wildlife within the area.

The two most endangered species in the Torricelli Mountain Range are the Scott's Tree Kangaroo, locally known as the Tenkile (*Dendrolagus scottae*) and Golden-mantled Tree Kangaroo (*Dendrolagus pulcherrimus*). Their distribution has been reduced by 70-80% within the last 30-50 years.

This decline in wildlife is also compromising the health and well being of the people in the area, who traditionally depend on this wildlife for their protein. This has contributed to low levels of nutrition in their diets, which is particularly deficient in protein.

The project aims to conserve the Tenkile and Weimang through:

- Protection of Tenkile and Weimang habitat through the establishment of a Conservation Area
- Cessation of hunting of Tenkile and Weimang through hunting moratoriums
- Providing food security for local communities, through the introduction of alternate sources of protein, therefore alleviating hunting pressure on wildlife in the area
- Raising awareness of the significance of the Tenkile, Weimang and other wildlife within local community schools and villages, enabling them to make informed decisions on the use of their natural resources



- Developing the capacity of local communities to manage their natural resources sustainably, through education and training
- Population monitoring and research to assess future changes in the Tenkile and Weimang populations and other wildlife within the project area.
- Monitoring social impacts within the communities including affects of rabbit and chicken farming on hunting patterns, workloads and health status.
- Developing a program for REDD with our main partners in conjunction with the PNG Governement



Conservation Area



A main objective of the Tenkile Conservation Alliance (TCA) is to establish the Torricelli Mountain Range as a legislated Conservation Area to ensure the legal protection of its unique flora and fauna.



Since 2008, TCA has partnered with WWF to map the Conservation Area boundaries. Local landowners and their communities, TCA staff and Thomas Schmid an Australian Volunteer from WWF, have been working together to map the conservation area boundaries using GPS (Global Positioning System) technology.



This year, 4 villages (Wai'eli, Wilbeite, Yomoum and Lilal) participated in GPS field work to map the conservation area boundary on their land. While in the field Project Officers and Research Officers were able to learn to use the GPS and collect co-ordinates. In Lumi, a GPS training course was held on GPS and mapping theory for 6 TCA staff. As a result of this capacity building exercise, those 6 staff are now proficient users of GPS and are capable of completing the GPS mapping field work independently.

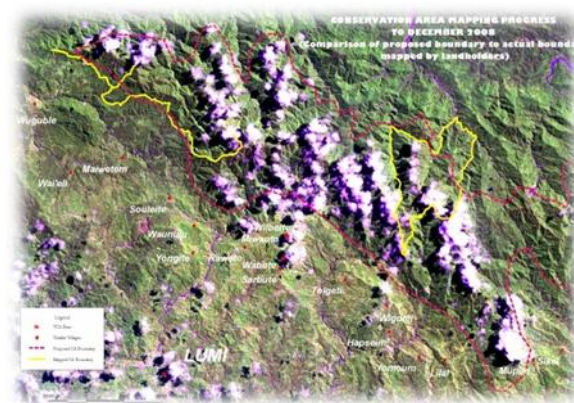


Figure 1: Draft Conservation Area Map.

Yellow line indicates actual area mapped using GPS in consultation with Landowners. Red line indicates Tenkile habitat at 900 meters above sea level.

Research



TCA has been conducting “Point Transect Distance Sampling” to determine the population density of Tenkile via scat counts since 2004. A one km base-line is established with 20 transect lines. Each transect line consists of 1-30 points with 150 points at each site. Each site is surveyed for scats by a team of 12 people which takes up to five days to complete.



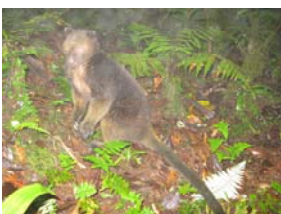
This year, TCA has begun distance sampling research at one site (Sweipini). TCA intends to continue data collection in the remaining 6 Tenkile research sites before the end of the year.



TCA has established one Distance Sampling site with the Weimang villages this year and will establish the remaining six sites before the end of 2009. TCA will also conduct distance sampling officer training with representatives from the Weimang villages. The aim of this is to build local capacity in the distance sampling technique so data collection can be conducted independently of the TCA Director.



Presently, TCA holds 6 (1.5) Finsch's (or Grizzled) Tree Kangaroos (*Dendrolagus inustus finschi*) and two (1.1) Weimang (or Golden-mantled Tree Kangaroos) (*Dendrolagus pulcherrimus*) at its base in Lumi. These animals have been given to TCA as orphans and successfully raised. Three Finsch's Tree Kangaroo have been bred at TCA Base-Lumi. These animals act as educational tools as well as assisting our research in terms of tree kangaroo defecation and scat decay rates.



In May 2009, TCA successfully captured a male Tenkile and held him at TCA Base-Lumi for six weeks. During this time we collected and counted scats, obtained hair samples and monitored his weight. Niengo (as he was named by Wilbeite village) was released back into the wild on the 9th of June 2009.

Education



During 2009, TCA's education program has focused mainly on capacity building activities for the Conservation Area Management Committee Members. This year, 9 Weimang villages participated in the 5 workshops that were held in the new training center at TCA's base in Lumi.

Conservation Area Management Committee Training



This workshop aims to provide local people with various ideas and concepts to help them make better decisions when using natural resources. It combines traditional knowledge and scientific knowledge on natural resource management. The participants of the workshop have formed a Conservation Area Management Committee and they will be responsible for ensuring their own villages' natural resources are used sustainably by enforcing the villages' management plan and conservation area rules and penalties and by providing on-going awareness to the community, similar to a ranger's role in a national park. These workshops were completed during 2008 for all the 18 Tenkile villages.



Workshop participants were given a training manual which contains various scientific concepts on how nature works, traditional knowledge and natural resource management ideas.



During 2009 TCA has conducted 4 one-week workshops with 83 participants from 9 Weimang villages. There was an average of 9 people in attendance from each village. Those people now form the management committee for their respective villages.



In partnership with Perth Zoo, TCA has distributed a series of 11 awareness posters in the local area. The posters contain graphics, local language and unique PNG fauna to illustrate the plight of species extinction and overharvesting of natural resources. In April and May 2009, TCA distributed 80 sets of posters to schools and villages in the project area.

Protein Farming



Rabbit Farming

The rabbit farming project was the first Alternative Protein Project to be implemented in the project area. All 39 villages have been given rabbits to establish rabbit farming in villages.



Milestones for this year are that Wigote village continues its success in breeding rabbits with well over 300 rabbits being bred and 277 rabbits remaining in the village while Tolgete village has 120 rabbits in their village. A total of 26 rabbits remain in 9 of the 18 Tenkile villages while all 21 Weimang villages still have rabbits. More than 98 rabbits remain in 16 of the 21 Weimang villages (data is unknown for 5 villages). Of these, 5 villages have successfully bred rabbits. This is an excellent result and shows great promise in establishing a sustainable source of alternative protein for these villages and therefore successful conservation of the Golden-mantled Tree Kangaroo.



Chicken Farming

Due to local demand, TCA commenced its chicken farming project in 2006. The aim is to deliver 22 Australaps chickens, which are both an egg-laying and a meat bird, to each village. Materials have been delivered to all 39 villages and chicken coups have been constructed.



This year, TCA received a solar powered incubator which will hopefully increase the production of chickens in Lumi. By the end of 2009 TCA hopes to deliver at least 200 chickens to the villages. Any sales generated from the project will serve as a sustainable source of income for TCA.



World Environment Day



On June 5th, World Environment Day, TCA conducted a celebration of its work with the official opening of its new training center and telecommunication system in Lumi. Thousands of people attended the activities held at Lumi station while 200 people attended the official opening at the TCA base in Lumi.



During the event representatives from Local, Provincial and National Government attended. As well as representatives from Australian Volunteers International (AVI), Zoos Victoria, World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), and the Sustainable Development Program (SDP).



During the day, VIP visitors that arrived by air and were welcomed at Lumi station with traditional sing sings. At the grandstand, official speeches were made to the general public with the Governor of Sandaun Province giving an address. Traditional sing sings and dramas were held for public viewing before VIP's were escorted to the TCA Base-Lumi.



The official launching of the telecommunication system was done by David Peter (WWF) with the release of live butterflies. While the official opening of the training center was conducted by Trish Caswell (SDP).



Inside the training center a brief power point presentation of TCA's work was delivered followed by a speech from Dimity Fifer (AVI) via U-tube. The highlight of the day to showcase the technology, was a call from Professor Tim Flannery and the Australian High Commissioner Chris Moraitis using Skype.

The day was a huge success with media in The Post Courier, The Age, Radio Australia – In the Loop and Tok Pisin Service, Radio Sandaun (NBC PNG) and PNG News.



2009



For the remainder of 2009, once funding becomes available, TCA aims to:

- Continue to map the Conservation Area boundaries using GPS
- Conduct “Conservation Area Management Training” workshops for the remaining 14 Weimang villages.
- Continue Point Transect Distance Sampling at 6 Tenkile research sites.
- Establish 6 more Weimang research sites
- Identify and train Distance Sampling Officers from the Weimang villages (42 people in total)
- If successful, implement the second phase of the RWSSP Project to Weimang and Tenkile villages.
- Continue to distribute rabbits to Weimang villages and provide ongoing training and support to interested rabbit farmers.
- Establish the solar powered incubator and distribute livestock to villages.
- Continue capacity building with local staff particularly project officers.



On September 1st 2010, Jim and Jean Thomas will be at the end of their present contract. Jim and Jean are committed to manage TCA until 2013.





Acknowledgements



Zoos Victoria

Zoos Victoria, is the major supporter to the Tenkile Conservation Alliance (TCA). Zoos Victoria have provided both technical and financial assistance to TCA in achieving its goals since 2001. Zoos Victoria's financial assistance has made a significance difference in developing all aspects of the organization, particularly in supporting Jim and Jean Thomas.

All TCA staff and the Tenkile and Weimang communities would like to extend their gratitude to Zoos Victoria for their on-going support and assistance. We look forward to continuing our partnership with Zoos Victoria well into the future.

TCA Sponsors during 2009

Various Individual donations and goods in kind - Sarah Silcox, John and Doreen Kirkby, Garamut Enterprises, Davpat Designs, Price Waterhouse Coopers and PNG Governor of Sandaun Province.

