



# WORLD WETLANDS DAY 2011

2 February

## FORESTS FOR WATER AND WETLANDS

World Wetlands Day this year celebrates terrestrial and wetland forests and their role in our lives. The theme, **Forests for Water and Wetlands** highlights the intricate links between forests and wetlands such as mangroves and freshwater swamps.

Forested wetlands play a vital role in maintaining our freshwater resources and our wetlands. Forests store carbon and thus help combat global climate change regardless of where they are located. Wetlands are full of life and rich in biodiversity – they house fish, birds, insects and a variety of plants and are often landing sites for migratory birds.

“In our region, wetlands are central to the livelihoods of our communities,” said Mr. Vainuupo Jungblut, the Ramsar Officer Oceania at the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP).

“Wetlands often mean food, water, income, medicines and employment for our people. They also form the foundation of our cultural heritage and traditions here in the Pacific. Our Forests have a key part to play in ensuring that our wetlands remain healthy so this is one really good reason why we need to take care of them.”

**Take time to appreciate the role of wetlands in our lives and celebrate World Wetlands Day on 2 February this year.**

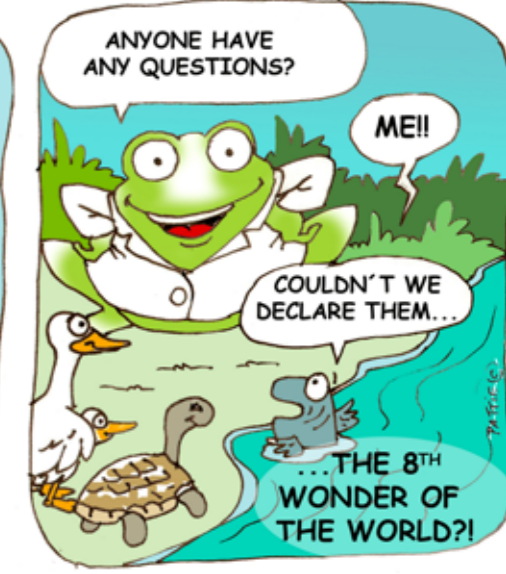


### The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

The Convention on Wetlands, signed in Ramsar, Iran, in 1971, is an international agreement signed by many different governments around the world that provides the foundation for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources.

There are presently 160 Contracting Parties to the Convention. As of January 2011, there are over 1,900 wetland sites, totaling over 180 million hectares, designated for inclusion in the Ramsar Convention's List of Wetlands of International Importance or Ramsar site as they are also known. Seven SPREP Members are Parties to the Ramsar Convention: Australia, Fiji, Marshall Islands, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea and Samoa. A number of other SPREP Members are in the process of joining, including Kiribati and Tonga.

The Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention is based in Gland, Switzerland.



### What are Wetlands?

Wetlands are areas where water is the main focus of the environment, including the relationship between plant and animal life. These freshwater, brackish or marine areas are an important breeding area for our wildlife and they also help with water filtration.

### How do they help us?

Wetlands bring tremendous economic and conservation benefits such as through fisheries production, flood control, stabilizing and building up shorelines, maintaining coastal water quality and providing a place for our recreational activities.

### World Wetlands Day

Every year, on 2 February, the world celebrates the anniversary of the signing of the Ramsar Convention as World Wetlands Day. Since 1997, people from all sectors of society have undertaken actions aimed at raising public awareness of the value of wetlands and the importance of the Ramsar Convention.

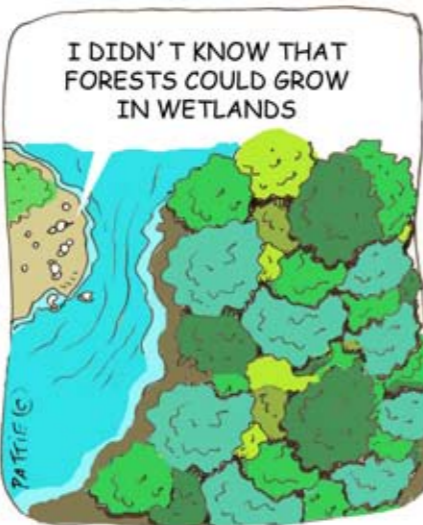
### Did you know...?

- Ramsar is a small town in Iran where the Ramsar Convention was signed in 1971.
- 2011 marks the 40th Birthday of the Ramsar Convention.
- Wetlands include our Lakes, rivers, coral reefs, mangroves, lagoons, mudflats, marshes and seagrass beds.
- In the Pacific, mangroves and coral reefs are the two most common types of wetlands.
- The Pacific contains about 3 percent of the world's mangroves and about 25 percent of the world's coral reefs.

### World Wetlands Day: Activity Suggestions

5 activities you may be able to do to celebrate World Wetlands Day 2011:

1. Organise a cleanup of wetlands near you. Write down what you found.
2. Write a letter to the Editor of your local newspaper about the importance of wetlands and encouraging people not to dump rubbish in or damage wetlands.
3. Monitor your local wetlands – check the way that people are using them. Observe if the animals and plants that live in the wetlands are healthy or if their numbers are changing.
4. Speak to your elders about traditional ways of using or looking after wetlands.
5. Take a fieldtrip! Investigate a wetland area observing plants and animals. Talk to people who use the wetland area and find out how useful it is to them and what they take.



The Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme  
W: [www.sprep.org](http://www.sprep.org)  
E: [sprep@sprep.org](mailto:sprep@sprep.org)  
T: (685) 21929  
F: (685) 20231