

# World Wetlands Day

## Fiji Report

World Wetlands Day on February 2<sup>nd</sup> provided an opportunity to raise awareness and educate students in Primary and Secondary schools in Fiji on the importance of wetlands in supporting our fisheries.

Live & Learn Environmental Education through its school-based projects promoted the theme "Fish for tomorrow" through a newsletter to Primary Schools, and Secondary students and teachers training programmes.

The January issue of the newsletter sent to Primary Schools in our HOPE (Helping Our Planet Earth) for Peace programme provided a brief on World Wetlands Day 2007, What are Wetlands? and The Importance of Wetlands. **(Annex 1 – HOPE Note January 2007 Issue)**.

In the RiverCare Student Training Programmes held in March 2007, in Sigatoka, Nadi and Lautoka, 61 students and 30 teachers, representing 30 Secondary schools from these three education districts engaged in participative activities that included an activity called "Wetland Metaphors". The objectives of the activity were to allow participants to

- Describe characteristics of wetlands
- Appreciate the importance of wetlands to wildlife and humans
- Identify ecological functions of wetlands.

The activity involved participants choosing an item from "A Wetlands Mystery Bag". Items included soap, a strainer, rice, a cushion/pillow, a picture of a zoo, a picture of a resort, a cradle, an egg whisk and a sponge. Once participants had chosen their items, they were to decide what particular function of a wetland their item represented or a definition of a wetland. Some responses from participants are as follows:

Mystery Item	Function	Wetland Function/Definition
Soap	Cleaning agent	Cleans waterways; Washes away & removes soil debris and sediments.
Strainer	Filters	Filters soils and allows water to drain through; Reduces sediments into waterways; trap & neutralize sewage waste, allow silt to settle, promote the decomposition of many toxic substances.
Rice	Source of food	Source of food for marine organisms and humans; Forms food chains in marine ecosystem; source of income for people along coastal areas.
Cushion	Resting place	Resting place for a variety of organisms; wintering habitats for migratory birds.
Picture of Zoo	Has a variety of animals	Wetlands cater for a wide variety of animal and plant life – biodiversity in both flora and fauna.

Picture of Resort	Temporary place of rest	Wintering habitats for migratory organisms (forests for birds; mangroves and coral reefs for fish and marine life)
Cradle	Young are put to sleep here	Breeding place and nursery for young organisms eg: mangroves are nurseries for young marine organisms; Trees in forested areas are nurseries for young animals and birds.
Egg Whisk	Mixes ingredients	All the different kinds of materials (minerals, water and energy) gets mixed up through the different ecological and biological cycles likes eg: mineral, water cycles.
Sponge	Absorbs water	Absorbs excess water; Makes water available during dry seasons; Recycles water; Adds moisture into the atmosphere.

*A comment from a participant:*

"This activity has changed the way that I look at mangroves from now on. They are not just mangroves anymore, but really a place of so much importance to us humans, birds and other organisms." **Form 5 participant, Sigatoka Student's Workshop.**



***Sigatoka(Fiji) students and teachers participating in "Wetland Metaphors" Activity.***

Thirty five Secondary teachers from the Suva, Navua, Nausori and Labasa education districts also participated in the Wetlands Metaphors activity during their Teacher Training workshops held in February, 2007.

**Annex 1**

**HOPE Note January 2007 Issue**

