

## **Bat Conservation International and Rotokas Ecotourism Consultation**

*Location: Sisivi Village, Wakunai District, ARoB*

*Date: 12/02/15*

### **Welcome:**

Chief Peter Bari welcomed BCI, Bougainville Environment Bureau, Rotokas Ecotourism and the community to this consultation workshop.

### **Opening Prayer:**

Titus Blossom thanked God for bringing us all together safely today to hear this awareness and receive educational information. Titus reminded us that humans have the responsibility to look after the environment as stewards of the earth

### **Introductions:**

Junias Repiriri opened the introductions by apologising for the change in awareness schedule. All visitors introduced themselves, including: the Bougainville Environment Bureau (Gavin Reynolds and Beatrix Oni) and BCI (Dave Walden).

### **Presentation:**

See PowerPoint presentation

### **Community Feedback:**

Francis: can you explain more about the two bats you referred to the monkey faced bat and Bougainville Monkey faced bat? Why are they so important?

*Dave: These bats help maintain a healthy forest. But it isn't just these bats but also all bats*

Titus Blossom – In the 1970's the bush and forest was good. Then there was a bigger focus on earning income and we started planting cocoa. So we had to cut down the bush to plant cocoa. In the past the flying foxes were everywhere, they were all around us, at this time the forest was good and everything was good. But many changes have taken place, we have planted cocoa and coconut which altered our environment. IN the past we would see all the bats coming in the afternoon, around 3-4pm in the afternoon. This has changed now. Titus vision is that w should rediscover bats and we should rejuvenate our forest and wildlife populations. At the moment our grandchildren don't see these particular bats that you (Dave) have talked about. It is important that our future generations have a healthy environment.

Chief John Vararisi: I have been planting trees, what I have experienced is that since I have been doing this bats have been coming back.

Chief: How and where do we look after these two endangered bats?

*Dave: this is something we would figure out together. We would share information together and work together on how to create a healthy forest for the bats and the people of Sisivi.*

Nelson Rusiva: The tree nearby isn't originally here, it is from Torokina, it is the work of the bat which brings all the seeds here. The people here eat the flying foxes here. We like the meat, we need the meat. So what do we do now if we have to protect the bats?

*Dave: All our conservation work we work to understand what the communities needs are, what the pressures are on the people. So ewould work with you to try and understand how we can work to look after the forests and the bats but also ensure peoples needs are being met.*

Peter Bari: How does the Monkey faced in one area? The bats you are looking for, have they gone to the Solomon Islands?

James Kokoperi: Before there were lots of bats, but now with a the human population increase birds and bat numbrs have all decreased. Now people are having big families and the children are just doing what they want.

Paul Seiriua: In the past there were big forests here so birds and bats used to live close to our villages. The big problem is that people carry catapults, so this is a big problem. So what are we going to do about this problem? It is up to us to mae changes because we are the stewards of the environment. Also when cocoa arrived it destroyed our environment by cutting down all the trees, so we destroyed the environment, what are we going to tell the young people?

Rose Vari: Do all species of bats have the same rate of reproducing?

In Bougainville alone we have 24 species, why do we have so many bats here?

Peter Repae: We have learnt that it is not always helpful to have many hamlets because this means we have to cut down a lot of bush and damages our environment. I have learnt this during Bougainville Healthy Communities Programme (BHCP) training. In the past people used to carry a net and climb the tree to catch possums instead of cutting it down.

Titus Blossom: In the past our ancestors used to say that girls and ladies shouldn't eat bats because it would give them a certain smell but now they eat bats because it is protein.

Pedro Uravutu: Thanked Dave and BCI for coming and giving the awareness but also for proposed project. He also thanked the BEB and VSA for their continued assistance.

Nelson Rusiva: there are some caves where the bats live, so what should we do now? How do we move forward?

Titus Blossom: We ourselves must first start appreciating the forest and environment, then we can have some assistance from outside. But it must begin with us, the people here.

Chief Peter Bari: From my perspective I'm very happy with the presentation and I would like our community to work with BCI. We are happy that RET has helped in the formation of this relationship.

Thomas Kovarvari: Over many years we have been told many different things about how we should look after our environment and what we should do in terms of cash crops and agriculture. There have been coconut plantations, cocoa and now peanuts are very popular. But because we get so

many different messages we don't know which path we should take. So what should we be doing with our bush and what should we be teaching our children about looking after the environment?

Chief John Vararisi: In my experience when we plant trees we will be able to bring back bats, birds and other wildlife. New birds that he hasn't seen for come and live near his house

### **Signing of Memorandum of Agreement**