

men of Palau (Johannes 1981) is incorporated in the REPRODUCTION table.

—information on fishing practices and the practical, religious and symbolic uses of various species, preferably disaggregated by gender (Chapman 1987) and age. TK related to fishing practices and fish uses is not straightforwardly incorporated into the present version of FISHBASE; appropriate adjustment cannot be done without the collaboration of experts in this particular field.

We thus call on all those interested to contact us at The FISHBASE Project, ICLARM, MC PO Box 2631, Makati, Metro Manila 0718, Philippines. Collaborators will be cited in FISHBASE as the supplier of the specific TK and will be sent, free of charge, a copy of the appropriate FISHBASE products (or of the package as a whole in case of major inputs).

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Importance of community participation and customary knowledge for coral reef conservation highlighted at the 7th Coral Reef Symposium in Guam

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From June 23 to 26, 1992, more than 500 coral reef scientists, managers and policy-makers came together in Guam for the 7th International Coral Reef Symposium. In addition to a range of sessions on coral reef biology, monitoring and education, one session, 'Community-Based Coral Reef Management', focused on the effectiveness and appropriateness of empowering local communities with the authority and responsibility for managing the use of coral reef and coastal resources.

The session, organised by Greenpeace, brought together practitioners from eight countries to present and discuss their experiences of involving

communities in and developing collaborative government – community programs for the sustainable use and conservation of coral reef ecosystems. Presenters used their experience to demonstrate various methods for getting communities to participate in reef management, the effectiveness and appropriateness of community-based and collaborative coral reef management, the importance of marine tenure, practices and knowledge for sustaining reef ecosystems, the role of international NGOs and institutional requirements for community-based and collaborative management, the range of management challenges which could benefit from increased community responsibility and

authority, and the importance of monitoring and awareness for successful community-based management.

The session was chaired by Alan White of the University of Rhode Island's Coastal Resource Center. Bob Johannes of CSIRO emphasised the growing trend in the Pacific and elsewhere toward decentralisation of coral reef and coastal fisheries management functions. He reminded the audience that indigenous coral reef management systems and knowledge have been functioning for millennia with varying success in maintaining the ecological integrity of coral reefs, and that these systems provide the context within which management problems need to be understood and participatory solutions developed.

The information provided and lessons learned were new to many participants, as the session was the

first of its kind to be included in an International Coral Reef Symposium. These lessons, and several of the cases through which they were illustrated, will be published in a book 'Community-Based Coral Reef Management: Lessons from Experience', now being developed in collaboration by Greenpeace, University of Rhode Island Coastal Resource Center, and the Caribbean Natural Resource Institute. It is hoped to publish the volume in late 1993.

In addition, the session spurred the formation of an international network to facilitate information exchange, assist capacity development and generate support for community-based and collaborative coral reef management worldwide.

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Conference on the science of the Pacific Island peoples

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The value of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) has been a well kept secret in modern societies and, until recently, has been all but ignored even by many professional natural resource managers. Happily, this is now changing. Even *Time Magazine* has got the message; its cover story (Sept. 23, 1991), entitled 'Lost Tribes, Lost Knowledge', brought the subject to international attention.

A somewhat more philosophical treatment of the subject is provided by the prominent environmentalists David Suzuki and Kenneth Knudtson in their book *Wisdom of the Elders*, published in 1992. They discuss the virtue of the widespread tribal view that the environment is a sacred system whose proper functioning requires that each species – including *Homo sapiens* – play its proper, humble role. (Christianity, in contrast, preaches environmental arrogance – humans are instructed to 'subdue' the earth and to 'have dominion over the fish of the sea,' a philosophy that has helped justify the environmental destruction that proceeds apace around the globe.)

Meanwhile, the growing profile of TEK in the Pacific Islands was reflected in the holding of the first-ever conference on the subject in the region in 1992. The conference on the Science of the Pacific Island Peoples, sponsored in part by the Government of France and the Sasakawa Peace Foundation (of Japan), was held at the University of the South Pacific in Suva, in early July.

Participants included not only biologists and social scientists, but also traditional healers and other Islander TEK experts, as well as philosophers, chemists, educationists, health specialist, linguists, Maori environmental activists, a regional planner, a politician, and a mathematician. Nine of the 65 papers presented concerned marine TEK, and quite a few others included some marine material.

Lamour Gina-Whewell described the traditional harvest and use of marine resources in the Solomon Island village in which she was raised, emphasising the importance of women, and Temawa Taniera described the information she obtained while studying traditional fisheries in some of the islands of Kiribati.

I described the strengths and weaknesses of both TEK and Western scientific knowledge for marine management, stating that a blending of the two would be more useful than either system in isolation. However, Marjorie Falanruw and Andrew Smith described cultural and environmental issues that make the combining of marine TEK and associated resource management with Western approaches a complex and difficult task in Yap.

Few studies of marine TEK are being carried out in the Pacific Islands, despite ever-increasing lip service being paid to their importance. In the meantime, priceless knowledge about the marine environment, knowledge found nowhere else, is vanishing as the old people who possess it die.