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News

Compiled by Antoinette Padgett

WHAT'S NEW ON RAPA NUI

Ma'u Henua to take responsibility for management of Rapa Nui National Park

(Source: Carlos González Isla; www.latercera.com)

In an unprecedented event on Easter Island, the Rapanui people will take responsibility for protecting the more than 25 thousand archaeological sites and manage the billions of pesos in revenue generated by the Rapa Nui National Park.

Beginning in September, tourists entering Rapa Nui National Park on Easter Island will no longer be required to pay an entrance fee to the Corporación Nacional Forestal (CONAF) to enter the reserve. Fee collection will be carried out by members of the Ma'u Henua indigenous community, who have taken charge of co-managing this protected area for a year after signing an agreement with CONAF in August. Rapa Nui National Park, which occupies about 40% of the island, receives approximately 65,000 tourists per year and is among the most visited national parks in the country, according to Aarón Cavieres, Director of CONAF.

Hetereki Huke, an architect who has undertaken archaeological heritage research in the national park, explained that archaeological sites are present all over the island. In his view, the factors that accelerate deterioration are the exposure to the elements, the presence of cows and horses, the action of tourists, and urban growth.

The initial action plan with the community seeks to change the number of highly-visited sites (such as Tahai and Rano Raraku that are staffed with personnel that monitor visitors) from 5 to 25, without affecting the preservation of the archaeological heritage. Cavieres noted that there is consensus among all involved that to be successful, the process must be gradual.

Camilo Rapu, President of Ma'u Henua, noted that "For us this is something new, something historic because we are going to manage our ancestral heritage on the island that contains more than 25 thousand archaeological sites that have been in a state of abandonment and continuous deterioration all these years." Rapu added that of the money that tourists pay to enter the park (currently \$US60 for foreigners and \$US10 for Chilean nationals), can be reinvested in maintenance and conservation, because CONAF used to allocate the funds for operations. Rapu warned that the entry fee could increase to US \$80 and US \$20,

respectively, following an agreement that they are inheriting from CONAF with CODEIPA, the Easter Island Development Commission. The president of CODEIPA, Anakena Manutomatoma, stated that they have been analyzing this issue with CONAF; if there is an increase in entry fees, it will improve everything within the park and provide better tourist services.

Cavieres, who signed the co-administration agreement with Ma'u Henua, explained that it will allow the community to share the public use administration of the park, taking charge of the tasks related to access, management, and visitation of the areas of public use. CONAF, meanwhile, will be responsible for maintaining biodiversity in the park, as well as the fire control, among other functions.

Rapu stated that they aspire to have full management of the park by next year, before President Michelle Bachelet leaves office; the agreement states that six months before the end of Bachelet's tenure, an evaluation and the transfer of the park to Ma'u Henua will be made.

Illegal fishing threatens Easter Island's natural resources

(Source: Pablo Hernández Mares;

<https://news.mongabay.com>)

Simón Pakarati recalled how as a child he used to fish with hooks that would constantly get stuck on the rocks off the shore of Rapa Nui, because he did not have a float that prevented the lures from sinking. This changed when plastic debris began appearing along the coast.

"'Oh good!' I said, 'I have a float now,'" Pakarati said. "I would tie plastics to the fishing line and not lose my hooks, but then I realized it was full of trash." But the plastic he was once excited about has now become his enemy. Pakarati said he and his colleagues now work to remove the debris that washes up on the beach, collecting tons of plastic every day on just one side of the island.

While plastic trash has become more abundant, the island's offshore tuna stocks have plummeted. Pakarati attributes both to industrial fishing activities. "Since the year 2000 we started to lose tuna, which is the basis of fishing on the island, so then we began to take the fish from the shore to feed our families, but in less than two years we depleted all of it," Pakarati noted.

The local fishing fleet of Rapa Nui is artisanal, and is comprised of small vessels that average about seven meters (23 feet) long, crewed by one or two people. They catch fish individually, in contrast to many of the large industrial vessels that use nets to harvest tons of fish, illuminating the sea around them with bright lights that locals can see on the horizon. Fisherman of Rapa Nui, like Pakarati, are afraid that large fishing companies working near the island will use the place just for money, without properly caring for nature. Pakarati and conservationists say that many of these boats are fishing illegally. Seth Horstmeyer, Director of Global Ocean Legacy – a program of The Pew Charitable Trusts and their partners – said “We help the Chilean government and the community of Easter Island perform an analysis of fishing vessels from around the world that come to their waters. We were able to develop technology to identify illegal vessels and do something about it.”

Tuna is the most commercially valuable species of the illegal fishery. According to Horstmeyer, illegal fishing is a global business with profits of \$23.5 billion annually. “We have software that can monitor where the boats go; if they move slowly and are zigzagging they are probably fishing, and they are not supposed to be there so you can send the Navy after them, or you can wait for them to arrive at the port and stop them there, because there is an agreement signed by thirty nations to identify illegal fisheries,” he said.

In 2010 during the administration of former Chilean President Sebastian Piñera, the Motu Motiro Hiva Marine Park was created 400 kilometers (250 miles) off the coast of the island, granting official protection to approximately 150 thousand square kilometers. The park’s creation came after surveys found high levels of biodiversity in the region. The park has attracted criticism from current governmental administrators and members of the Rapanui community. “The park does not have a management plan,” Diego Flores Arrate, head of the Department of Protected Areas of the Chilean Ministry of Environment, said during the IUCN’s (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) recent World Conservation Congress. “That impulsive administrative act [of creating the park] by the President effectively created a conflict with the Rapanui because they were not asked, the government did not consult them, they went ahead and created an area, something that is still resented by [the Rapanui] today.”

In response, more than 20 organizations consisting of fisherman, gatherers, divers, farmers, artisans, and conservationists submitted a marine conservation proposal to the Chilean Government urging the creation of a system that they say is closer to implementation reality and the worldview of the Rapanui culture. “We

believe it is necessary to create a marine protected area that follows international standards so that we can receive funds from abroad to maintain and protect our island,” noted Sebastián Yancovic Pakarati, founder of Easter Island’s Conservación Marina. Diego Flores Arrate said the proposal is currently undergoing review by indigenous communities. “[The proposal] is a text that establishes the island’s operation and in the last chapter discusses conservation areas, where [the Rapanui] will have, if this becomes law someday, power to decide how they want to practice conservation. They want to do it in their own way, with their own Rapanui designations,” Flores Arrate said.

The government would also have a say in management, according to Yancovic Pakarati. “We not only want to manage these protected areas but to expand them, with the community keeping control in a co-management with the state, each with different skills but with the possibility of sitting at the table and making decisions,” Yancovic Pakarati said.

Officials at monitoring agencies are also concerned about the role – or lack thereof – indigenous communities are allowed to play in protecting their environment. “That’s the real challenge of fisheries management in the 21st century; for example, in Hawai‘i, those marine areas are closed and exclude local fishers,” said Christopher Hawkins, from the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, which represents American Samoa, Guam, Hawai‘i and the Northern Mariana Islands. “Who will take their place keeping watch if foreign fishing boats come near? The Coast Guard does not have the necessary resources to do so, the same with the Rapanui who see boats’ lights in the distance; but, who will come and help them get those boats away from there? We hope some technology comes to our rescue with drones, satellites, and even with some remote marine boats that have cameras at the tip of the mast and are sailing all these areas detecting through video and radar the vessels which should not be fishing in those places,” Hawkins said. He added that indigenous people of the Pacific Islands had sustainable fishing systems three to four thousand years ago that could be replicated.

“The issue of plastic pollution is terrible in Rapa Nui, we are in the middle of the South Pacific, which concentrates all the plastic floating from Chile and Peru on one side and Oceania on the other,” said Yancovic Pakarati, who recounted how it is common to find plastic debris inside the stomachs of dead birds and fish.

Still, there are movements towards conservation progress. Recently, the community signed an agreement with a Chilean airline that has agreed to help remove garbage from the island by transporting it to the South American mainland on outgoing tourist flights. Organizations like The Pew Charitable Trusts pushed

a motion that was passed by the IUCN Congress to protect 30% of the ocean because currently only 3% is protected worldwide.

Next year, Chile will host the 4th International Marine Protected Areas Congress (IMPAC4), held September 4-8 in La Serena, Chile. "It's a great opportunity to share experiences, learn from each other and advance the political agenda of creating marine protected areas in Latin America," Flores Arrate said.

Despite the waves of plastic washing up on Easter Island's beaches and illegal fishing along its coast, Pakarati, Horstmeyer, and others concerned with the island's preservation have not lost hope that the situation can be reversed – and in a way that may benefit ecological and indigenous communities alike.

"Every day container ships arrive at Easter Island carrying necessary resources because there are not enough on the islands; with conservation we can have a more sustainable community on the island, if we protect certain areas and allow the reproduction of species and their growth there will be more opportunity for Easter Island and others to become more self-sufficient," said Horstmeyer.

Free from pathogens, Rapanui bees are a unique species

(Source: Cecilia Yañez; www.latercera.com)

As in all of America, bees were introduced to Easter Island. They arrived with priests around the year 1850 and since then they have remained, pollinating mangoes, pineapples, bananas, guavas, and flowers of the island.

A study by the Centro de Emprendimiento Apícola (Apiculture Center) de la U. Mayor (CeapiMayor) and the Corporación Apícola (Beekeeping Corporation) Chile (CACH), with the support of the Fundación para la Innovación Agraria (Foundation for Agricultural Innovation) (FIA) found that these Rapanui bees are the only bees in the world free of any pathogen (bacteria, viruses, mites, fungi). According to experts, this is excellent news for the island and the world.

On the planet, there are about 20 thousand species of bees and they are the main pollinators, but their population is shrinking because of pesticides and diseases. It is estimated that 75% of the world's major food crops depend on zoopollination.

Bees are most affected by four diseases: the Varroa destructor mite, the parasite *Acarapis woodi* (a microscopic tick), and the bacteria *Paenibacillus larvae* and *Melissococcus pluton*. Until now there were only two known places in the world with bees without Varroasis: Australia and one island in New Zealand. These bees are considered to be the healthiest on the planet so their honey and byproducts are highly valued.

"The absence of pathogens allows us to say that the health status of the hives does not exist anywhere else in the world," said Patricia Aldea, medical veterinarian and director of CeapiMayor, who led the research commissioned by beekeepers of the island and by FIA. Not only are they healthy, but they also produce far more than any bee in the country. "Since the island has no cold season, the hive is active all year round, just like the flowering of Rapa Nui plants. The queen is putting out almost eleven months a year, while in the central zone of the country this only occurs between late July and early April," says Aldea. This means that if a hive in the central zone produces 20 kilos of honey a year, one on Rapa Nui could produce between 90 and 120 kilos.

Patricio Castillo Manutomatoma lives on the island and has been dedicated to beekeeping as a hobby for the past eight years. "I offer free pollination. I take my bees, I leave them in the place and I will look for them. We share the honey. We consume it, we give it away, but we do not take full advantage of it or care too much for the bees, because not everyone knows their role," he says. He wants action to be taken to protect them.

Fernando Arancibia, an FIA executive, stated that the health condition of the bees allows Rapa Nui to become a biological reserve and even export queens and healthy genetic material. "The honey of the island has flavor and aroma of guava, bananas, which is an interesting plus for the market. It is necessary to professionalize the beekeepers of the island."

According to Aldea, it is likely that these bees are a new species. At first glance they resemble the common bee (*Apis mellifera*) but until genetic studies can be undertaken, they cannot be sure, "It could be a unique species because of the ecological conditions found on Rapa Nui."

The next step is to take care of this heritage. Aldea believes that they should restrict and prevent the entry of other bees, honey, and other by-products to the island. "If a bee on the island lands on honey brought from the mainland or any other part of the world, it can be infected with any pathogen and make the rest sick," he noted.

Patricio Madariaga, president of CACH also emphasized the protection of island bees. "90% of pollination on the island is done by bees, we do not see other pollinators, so it is essential to maintain them. The bees make their hives in cliffs, we saw them also in caves. They should be protected and studied and that requires the help of the authorities," he said.

Rapa Nui Reef Pro surf competition

(Source: www.cooperativa.cl; www.fechsurf.cl)

Rapa Nui Reef Pro, a four-day competition of professional Chilean surfers on the National Surf Circuit, took place from 19-22 October 2016. Many of

the best Chilean surfers participated in the competition. The event was significant for Rapanui islanders to see two of their most promising athletes, Roberto Araki and Poukura Varas, compete for the championship. Tavake Pakomio, president of the Club Hakanini of Rapa Nui, noted that “for the community, it is very rewarding to see these two young people who have great influence. Araki is the current junior champion and Varas is a little younger, but has great talent.” Araki noted that it was very rewarding to be competing at home, and even more so to have the opportunity to compete against Danilo Cerda for the open title. The competition, which has been held on the island each spring for the past few years, was also significant because it was the first time in the history of the island that this competition could be viewed by people all over the world via webcast.

Rapa Nui participates in breast cancer awareness program

(Source: www.caras.cl)

A world campaign is underway to raise awareness of the importance of early detection of breast cancer; on Rapa Nui, there is a joint project between Estee Lauder, the Municipalidad de Isla de Pascua, and LATAM Airlines; these organizations are promoting an alliance between the Hangaroa Hospital and INCANCER (Instituto Nacional de Cáncer) with various activities to highlight prevention of the disease on Rapa Nui. Hundreds of women on Easter Island need mammograms and this project will provide support by holding workshops, consultations, and follow-ups as required. The promotion also featured a special ceremony with pink lighting of Ahu Riata at Hanga Piko.

WHAT’S NEW ELSEWHERE

Cantores Ancestrales features Rapanui singer

(Source: <http://www.elmostrador.cl>)

Cantoras Ancestrales is a gathering of music and dialogue for outstanding indigenous singers at Casa de la Ciudadanía Montecarmelo, organized by the Department of Neighborhoods and Heritage of the City of Providencia. Sofia Painiqueo (Mapuche), Rosa Quispe (Aymara), and Alicia Makohe Ika (Rapanui) performed at the gathering on 27 October, which was part of a week of activities paying tribute to Violeta Parra during the month of her birthday and the beginning of centenary celebrations to be held in 2017.

Each singer performed interpretations of traditional and contemporary repertoire in their native language

and explained the origin, content, and meaning of the pieces. The performances of these women share their world view, ancestral wisdom, and expression of forms of everyday, festive, and ceremonial life and their social and cultural manifestos. Their performances contribute to the growing phenomenon of recognizing the self-worth of indigenous peoples, local identities, and the social role of women that help to conserve and transmit identity and culture in the family, and play an increasingly important role within community organizations.

Alicia Makohe Ika is an outstanding athlete and teaches surfing on Rapa Nui. A lover of nature and the sea, Alicia is also a singer and interprets traditional themes rooted in the landscape and culture of Rapa Nui. Alicia was featured in the popular ecological documentary “180° South”, which premiered in the US in 2010. She is the co-owner of Easter Island Travel, along with her husband Marcus Edensky.

Ecologist Jut Wynne awarded a Fulbright to study cave insects on Rapa Nui

(Source: news.nau.edu)

Jut Wynne, Ecologist and Assistant Research Professor in the Department of Biological Sciences at Northern Arizona University, has been studying cave insects found on Rapa Nui since 2008. Ten species of cave insects endemic to Rapa Nui were discovered by Wynne and his team of researchers. Wynne was recently awarded a Fulbright fellowship that enabled him to continue his research this past summer. He conducted an island-wide expedition to search for additional endemic species in caves, cliffs, along coastal areas and beaches, and in the island’s crater lakes. Wynne notes that there has been a dramatic environmental shift on the island, which is now inhabited primarily by non-native invertebrate species that compete with native species for survival. A combination of factors that include extreme isolation, which restricts the ability for plants and animals to colonize the island, and a fragile, fire-intolerant ecosystem, along with extended drought contributed to the catastrophic ecological shift. Some of the earliest documented endemic species may now be extinct due to substantial environmental change and from competition with and predation by nonnative invasive insects. Preliminary results indicate the discovery of at least nine potential new species; once the specimens collected are examined, it is estimated that the number of known native insect species will double. The multidisciplinary project involved CONAF and other Chilean and US institutions.