

# Seacology

Saving the World, One Island at a Time

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## Natural and Cultural History Museum Opens on Minicoy Island, India

**I**t was a busy day on Minicoy Island when the new Natural and Cultural Heritage Museum had its grand opening. Earlier that morning, teams from the island's villages packed into traditional *jehadoni* boats and raced each other around the atoll; next came the arrival of the Honorable Administrator of Lakshadweep, Minicoy's archipelago. Minicoy is so small and isolated that they receive these administrative visits just once a year, so they made the most of it, literally rolling out the red carpet for his arrival at the museum opening.

The museum, which we helped fund in exchange for the creation of a 2,471-acre marine reserve, intends to educate Minicoy islanders and tourists about the unique cultural history of the Minicoy people. Though part of India, Minicoy has a deep connection to the Maldives: they speak a dialect of the Maldivian language, and in fact their nearest neighboring island, 80 miles south, is a part of the Maldives.

On display, visitors can find traditional relics, many of which were donated by local families, like tools for making coir rope and decorated coconut shells meant for carrying *neera*, a drink made from palm nectar. At the opening, many Minicoy children dressed in traditional clothes and got a chance to try their hand at some old fashioned islander practices, like hammering out hooks for tuna fishing.

See more photos from Minicoy's Natural and Cultural Heritage Museum opening on page 3.



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*TOP: A traditional jehadoni boat, mid-race.*

*MIDDLE: A boy makes a hook for tuna fishing the old fashioned way—with a hammer and anvil.*

*BOTTOM: Outside Minicoy's new Natural and Cultural Heritage Museum during the grand opening.*



Paul Alan Cox, Seacology Chairman

The father of modern botany, Carl Linnaeus, in his 1751 tome *Philosophia Botanica* proposed that the Garden of Eden had been planted on a high tropical island. That way tigers could live happily in the lowland rainforest and penguins on the high alpine glaciers. While today we may smile at his charming if naive account, Linnaeus was correct in conceptualizing islands as engines of creation.

It is no accident that Charles Darwin discovered the theory of evolution through natural selection during his voyage to the Galapagos islands. On the way there, he pondered why different plants were found in the Cape Verde islands than in the mainland, and then realized that physical differences in the Galapagos finches evidenced adaptive responses to their different island habitats.

Islands are hot spots of species diversity due to a variety of evolutionary forces. They are also extraordinarily vulnerable. A majority of recorded plant and animal extinctions have occurred on islands. What once were considered vestiges of Eden are now major theaters of species destruction.

Seacology, the world's premier charity focused on islands, partners with indigenous peoples to protect islands throughout the world. We currently have conservation projects on 126 islands in 48 different countries. All of this is done in an extremely efficient manner so each dollar of your gift has maximum impact.

I am proud to be associated with Seacology and I hope that you are as well. Thank you so much for helping us save the world one island at a time.

Cordially,

Paul Alan Cox

### Seacology Project Update: Fiji

We're happy to announce the official opening of the community center in Tokou, a seaside village in Fiji. They were in need of a new center since a cyclone destroyed the previous one 20 years ago. To celebrate the grand opening, Tokou villagers welcomed a few members of Seacology (Board Member Peter Read, Development Director Aaron Rashba, and our two Fiji field representatives Harry and Jackie Powell) for an official opening ceremony full of kava, food, singing, and dancing. As for their 356-acre marine reserve, which they established two years ago in exchange for the community center, villagers reported seeing an increase in fish stock and overall biodiversity. ♦



Photo by Aaron Rashba

Gathered in their new community center, Tokouans prepare to serve kava.



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### Seacology

1623 Solano Avenue  
Berkeley, CA 94707 USA  
Tel: 510-559-3505  
Fax: 510-559-3506  
islands@seacology.org  
www.seacology.org

## Project Update: El Nido, Philippines

Here's the second of two guardhouses built to help locals in El Nido patrol their 470-acre marine protection zone. Construction on these guardhouses had been slow-going due to gravel shortages in the region.

Nonetheless, patrollers have been able to make use of their new patrol boats, buoys, signage, and other miscellaneous equipment to great effect, even apprehending a poacher.

We also provided locals with equipment for roasted cashew production, which has already grown into a profitable operation—the cashews are being sold in hand-woven boxes in the boutiques of some of El Nido's top resorts.

The protected area features a variety of marine habitats, including coral reefs, mangroves, and seagrass. It's also a nesting area for sea turtles and a feeding ground for dugongs. ♦



Photo by Fardie Marcelo

*This guardhouse on El Nido island will help locals patrol their marine protection zone, an area that includes coral reef, mangrove, and seagrass habitats.*

## More Photos from Museum Opening in Minicoy, India



*ABOVE: A girl holds the scissors for the ceremonial ribbon-cutting.*

*RIGHT: Minicoy artifacts on display.*



*BELOW: Decorative coconut shells used to collect and transport neera, a drink made from palm nectar.*



Photos by Vineeta Hoora

## Species-ology! Spotlight on the Pygmy Sloth By Susan Racanelli

The animals on our planet provide a never-ending source of wonder. Television now offers a bounty of programs that can focus on animals from all over the vast expanses of Earth or just a small land fragment in a forgotten corner of the world. Yet, even with this dazzling array of species in their varied terrains, certain creatures pique our interest more than others, and for understandable reasons.

Here we come to the sloth. Not menacing or riotously colored, sloths captivate on a more thoughtful level. They are the world's slowest mammal and live strictly in trees hanging upside-down, spending their whole lives within an area of about an acre. They're so slow that algae, beetles and moths make permanent homes in their fur. Did I mention they are proficient swimmers? Oh yes, they are curious indeed.

Six species of sloth exist today, four of which are "three-toed" (Brown-throated sloth, Maned sloth, Pale-throated sloth and the Pygmy three-toed sloth) and two species are "two-toed" (Hoffman's two-toed sloth and Linnaeus' two-toed sloth). Three-toed sloths are slightly smaller, slower-moving, and less active. Two-toed sloths have a more prominent snout, longer fur and no tail.

They're all picky eaters, surviving mostly on leaves of the Cecropia tree in the rain-

forest canopy, though the pygmy sloth has adapted to eat the leaves of red mangrove trees. Because very little energy is provided by their diet, the sloth's metabolism adjusts accordingly. Economizing on movement is crucial, which is why they're so slow.

Female sloths have a 6-8 month gestation period to produce one young. They are fabulous mothers, carrying their babies around for nearly three years. Eventually, mothers will move to a new territory, leaving the offspring in its familiar habitat.

Sloths have a handful of natural enemies, including jaguars, harpy eagles, ocelots and anacondas, but *homo sapiens* pose the greatest threat, destroying the sloth's natural habitat and hunting them for meat. The pygmy sloth is particularly threatened—found only in the tangle of mangroves on a miniscule island 12 miles off the coast of Panama, merely 200 individuals remain.

Seacology helps protect the critically endangered pygmy three-toed sloth with our project on their home island, Escudo de Veraguas. Just 15 years ago the island was unpopulated; now 120 fisher people make it their home. Seacology provides the community with environmentally-sound cooking alternatives to abate the cutting of mangroves for charcoal, which leads to destruction of the pygmy sloth's only home. These cook-

ing stoves are a much healthier option for them as well, cutting down on exposure to carbon monoxide when cooking indoors. Seacology's strength remains its sensitivity to indigenous cultures as well as the species and habitats in their charge. With your help, we are finding solutions to some of the most difficult challenges our planet faces. Hopefully, the pygmy three-toed sloth will be a success story for all going forward. ♦



Photo by Bryson Vorhies

Sloths are slow in trees but are decent swimmers, like this pygmy sloth.

## Project Update: Bathway Beach, Grenada



Photo by Gerry McPhail

Seacology field representative Tyrone Buckmire gives a tour of the new Sea Turtle Education Center to members of the media and Tillman Thomas, Grenada's Prime Minister.

The Sea Turtle Education Center near Bathway Beach opened its doors in early October of 2011 in a ceremony that attracted local media and even some political VIPs, including Grenada's Prime Minister Tillman Thomas.

Bathway Beach is a popular destination not just for tourists but for the endangered leatherback turtle, many of which come here to lay eggs. A local nonprofit called Ocean Spirits has been leading the way making Bathway Beach a safe environment for the turtles to nest, and in recent years has seen the number of visiting turtles increase.

But with more sea turtles come more tourists, which has created an unexpected problem: the crowds can disrupt the turtles during the nesting process by being too noisy or just getting too close.

The Sea Turtle Education Center will give visitors a designated spot where they can learn about the turtles and join official supervised tours. Seacology provided funds for basic building items (shelves, counters, and display cases) as well as for educational materials, like displays, posters, and multimedia equipment. ♦

## Seacology Board of Directors Approves New Island Projects

The following projects were approved by Seacology's Board of Directors at their January 27, 2012 meeting:

**BAHAMAS** - Signage and two small cabanas for educational information and for use as a rest spot in national parks—Pelican Cay and Fowl Cay, Abaco Islands.

**BELIZE** - Reinforcement and stabilization of the Seacology-funded Port Honduras Marine Reserve Ranger Station—Abalone Caye.

**FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA** - Community house for the residents of Pakin Atoll in exchange for the protection of a new 124-acre marine no-take area in perpetuity—Pohnpei.

**FIJI** - Construction of a kindergarten in exchange for the planting and protection of a 4,000-acre forest area for a minimum duration of 20 years—Qumusea, Vanua Levu Island.

**INDIA** - Wildlife rescue and natural history resource center in exchange for the planting and protection of 741 acres of mangrove forest for a duration of 10 years—Bali Island, Sundarbans.

**MADAGASCAR** - Construction of a footbridge and three primary school classrooms with furnishings and a restroom block in exchange for a new 4,819-acre rainforest reserve for a duration of 30 years—Antsahaberaoka Village, Marojejy National Park. (Pictured below)

**PANAMA** - Alternative cooking technology for Ngobe Bugle fisher families, and signage and mooring buoys for the protection of species including pygmy sloths and their habitats—Escudo de Veraguas Island.

**SAMOA** - Refurbishment of an existing resource center for Safata District and construction of a new resource center for the Aleipata District in exchange for support of an existing 1,280-acre no-take marine area in perpetuity—Upolu Island.

**TONGA** - Refurbishment of an existing community hall and its facilities, including a new bathroom, water tank, gutters and furnishings in exchange for support of 531 acres of Fish Habitat Reserves for a minimum of 10 years—Ovaka Village, Vava'u Group.

Photo by Erik Patel



This dilapidated schoolhouse in Madagascar's Antsahaberaoka village will be replaced with three new primary school classrooms equipped with furnishings and a restroom block.

## Upcoming Travel:

### Uganda

July 22–30, 2012



Uganda's natural parks are famous for their diversity, home to exotic birds, large cats, and powerful primates. Over our nine day journey we'll explore the rainforest in search of the endangered mountain gorilla, navigate

through the Kazinga Channel among hippos and crocodiles, and traverse the Ugandan savanna to look for elephants and rare tree-climbing lions.

Along the way we'll also visit the chimpanzee sanctuary on Ngamba Island, in Lake Victoria, where Seacology funds were used to install a much-needed solar-powered medical refrigerator to better care for the sanctuary's 42 resident chimps.

*This trip is currently full, but contact us if you'd like to be placed on the waiting list. For more info, see the brochure at [www.Seacology.org/Travel](http://www.Seacology.org/Travel).*

### Seacology Travel in 2013

*We're in the early stages of planning Seacology expeditions for next year. Stay tuned for more travel announcements as details and dates are set.*

- Mexico - Spotting Blue Whales off Baja California, Mexico (February 2013)
- Philippines - One week on a liveboard dive boat visiting famous dive sites around Tubbataha Reef, followed by a stay at the Amanpulo Resort and a visit to a Seacology project. (April 2013)
- Mexico - Cage diving with great white sharks plus a visit to a Seacology project on Guadalupe Island. (August 2013)

Seacology Bids Adieu to our Development Associate

### Carynne McIver



In early June, Carynne McIver, our intrepid Development Associate, will be leaving Seacology to return to her home state of North Carolina. Since joining Seacology in 2009, Carynne has been doing stellar work for us managing our grants and foundation relationships as well as assisting with donor communications. We thank her for all she has done for Seacology and wish her the best of luck.

## Kimo Campbell (1947-2012)

In February, we said goodbye to Seacology board member Kimo Campbell, who died of complications from ALS. He had been a member of Seacology's board since 2004.

A life-long environmental activist and philanthropist, Campbell was known for his work promoting environmental protection and civil rights in Hawaii, the state in which he was raised.

"For an organization focused on conservation of island cultures and habitats, Kimo Campbell was a perfect leader and board member," says Dr. Paul Cox, Seacology's Chairman. "With a deep reverence for his own Hawaiian heritage, Kimo continued to extend the reach of his philanthropy to other island nations. He will be deeply missed by his friends on the Seacology board and staff."



*Kimo Campbell (left) with Oscar Temaru, the President of French Polynesia, at a Seacology project opening in 2009.*

## SEACOLOGY FELLOWS PROGRAM

The Seacology Fellows program honors individuals who make an annual donation of \$2,000 or more. Admission to the Fellows Program includes the following benefits:

- Advance notice of all Seacology trips. Seacology plans several expeditions per year to visit project sites worldwide in locations such as Indonesia, Samoa, the Bahamas, and Tanzania. These adventure trips offer ample opportunities for cultural discovery, sightseeing, scuba diving, snorkeling, and hiking, as well as an insider's view of Seacology's successful projects.
- Invitation to the annual Seacology Prize ceremony. Each year, Seacology honors an outstanding indigenous island conservationist. Past recipients have hailed from Indonesia, Madagascar, Japan, and many other islands. The next Seacology Prize Ceremony will take place on the evening of October 11, 2012 at the David Brower Center in Berkeley.
- Acknowledgement (with your permission) on Seacology's website, newsletter and annual report.
- Complimentary copy of Seacology's signature DVD.
- Complimentary Seacology tote bag and lapel pin.
- Special reports and articles throughout the year covering Seacology's island projects.

For more information on the Seacology Fellows program, please email Seacology ([islands@seacology.org](mailto:islands@seacology.org)) or call our office at 510-559-3505.

**We are most grateful for the support of the following Seacology Fellows:**

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<b>844,125</b> acres of coral reef and other marine habitat	<b>126</b> islands in
	<b>48</b> countries across
	<b>1</b> planet

Seacology is the world's premier nonprofit environmental organization with the sole and unique purpose of preserving the environments and cultures of islands throughout the globe. From Fiji in the South Pacific to Madagascar off the coast of Africa, from islands in the North Atlantic to tropical islands of Southeast Asia, from Bali to Micronesia and from Polynesia to Iceland, Seacology launches projects to help preserve island environments and cultures.