



# Piku in Trouble:

Indigenous communities in PNG work with Oil Search to conserve the pig-nosed turtle.

## Kikori Delta Communities, researchers, WWF and Oil Search Ltd work together to save the unique Pig-nosed turtle in Papua New Guinea.

By Carla C. Eisemberg

The pig-nosed turtle is of considerable cultural value to indigenous communities in northern Australia, featuring in rock art and are a valued source of protein to this day. This unique turtle is restricted to the southern rivers of the island of New Guinea and the major rivers of the Northern Territory in Australia. Indigenous communities in the PNG southern lowlands also value the species and its eggs as an important source of protein to supplement their subsistence diets. Piku is the name given to the pig-nosed turtle in Rumu, one of the many local languages. Unfortunately, there is evidence that the populations in PNG have declined sharply. Increasing human populations, more villages on the river banks now tribal warfare has ceased, and the introduction of modern fishing methods and outboard motors are taking their toll. Our more recent surveys indicate that the level of harvest of nesting females and eggs remains very high. Decisions on whether to take action and what action to take is largely a matter for Kikori communities. They need to decide how important the pig-nosed turtle is to them, whether they are concerned to ensure that the turtle populations are there for future generations, whether they wish to respond to concerns from the global community, and what opportunities might be created by virtue of the spectacular and interesting species in their backyard. These decisions need to be made on an informed basis. The Institute for Applied

Ecology in association with Oil Search Ltd and WWF (PNG) are working together with the local communities on the Piku Project, studying the nesting ecology, harvest dynamics and promoting conservation and environmental education across the communities of the Kikori River delta. In the last nesting season, from September 2007 to March 2008, we delivered conservation and awareness talks to 27 villages from five tribes. Primary and secondary students from Kikori, Ogomabu and Kopi villages learned, in their schools, the importance of Piku conservation during special classes where they could observe hatchlings coming out of their eggs. They then delighted in setting the little hatchlings free. This exercise we hope will help to instil appreciation of the importance of preserving the natural resources not only for the current generation but forever, for their children and grandchildren.

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[http://aerg.canberra.edu.au/staff/georges/pj\\_kikori.htm](http://aerg.canberra.edu.au/staff/georges/pj_kikori.htm)

# KANTRI LAIF

News for North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Managers

Kimberley... Northern Territory... Gulf of Carpentaria... Cape York... Torres Strait

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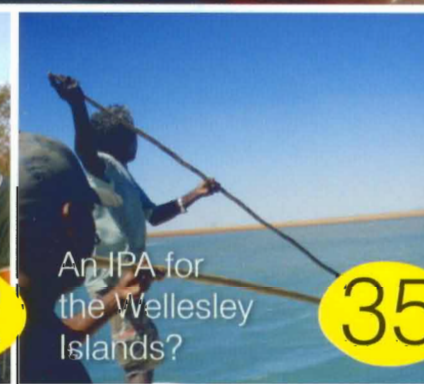
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