

## **The following are excerpts from The Nature Conservancy Press Release**

### **SOLOMON ISLANDS RICH WITH MARINE LIFE**

The Solomon Islands has one of the highest diversities of coral and fish species anywhere in the world with several species that are new to science. These discoveries have been made during a five-week scientific expedition to survey the marine resources of the Solomon Islands, led by The Nature Conservancy.

"The survey has shown that the region of the world's richest marine life which was thought to extend from the waters of Indonesia into Papua New Guinea, extends even further into waters of the Solomon Islands," said Dr Alison Green, Marine Science Coordinator (Asia Pacific) for The Nature Conservancy, who led the survey.

"The survey team recorded 485 species of corals in the Solomon Islands with several species which are possibly new to science and more than 100 species of corals thousands of kilometres beyond their known range," said Dr Green. "This is one of the highest diversities of coral species on the planet." "In just one place that we surveyed, the team found every known species from some groups of corals plus new ones that we didn't know existed. The discovery of these species will change our maps of where corals live in the world. It is very exciting."

"The survey has also revealed that the Solomon Islands is one of the 'big five' for coral reef fish species and ranks with Indonesia, Philippines, Australia and Papua New Guinea," said Dr Green. "The survey team found 931 species of fish in the Solomon Islands with 35 species that have only been recorded previously from other regions such as Indonesia or New Guinea."

"At some sites in the Solomon Islands, we found exceptionally high numbers of reef fish species by world standards," said Dr Green.

"The survey found that, overall, the coral reefs of the Solomon Islands are in very good condition compared with other areas in the Indo-Pacific region," said Dr Green.

"Although human populations are rising, there is much less pressure on reefs of the Solomon Islands than on other areas."

The survey team spent 35 days from 14 May until 18 June surveying the main archipelago of the Solomon Islands. The survey was led by The Nature Conservancy and was a cooperative project by the Solomon Islands Government, local and international non-government conservation agencies (including the World Wide Fund for Nature, Conservation International, Wildlife Conservation Society) and Australian scientific institutions including the Australian Institute of Marine Science, CRC Reef Research Centre, Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries and APEX Environmental. It is supported by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, Homeland Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and The Nature Conservancy.