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# Projects Abroad Fiji

## “Isles of Smiles”



June 2013

### Editor's Note

Bula!

It's already mid-year! How time flies when you're busy as a bee! We've had so much happening here in Fiji in terms of expanding projects and locating potential placements. We've also got the biggest and best news to date – our Shark Conservation Project has been given the green light to officially begin in January 2014 and we are very excited to meet all our new volunteers! Also, there is much excitement with our new Sports Project that has started and we have welcomed our first ever sports volunteer all the way from the United Kingdom! Totally psyched that we are able to expand in Fiji and bring our volunteers more exciting projects to work in. In the next few months, we are planning on seeking newer placements for a more diverse experience. This will be an on-going deal with the Fiji staff and we thank our wonderful volunteers for the opportunity to expand our horizons and provide them with more worthwhile areas of work. There will be more information ahead about the Shark Conservation Project whereby I will be explaining things in detail so read on. Next mission is to grab actual footage of our local shark life – this calls for some serious morphing into Aquaman or something J till the next issue, I wish you all a fond farewell xx

*“Life is either a daring adventure or nothing” - Helen Keller*

Vinaka

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## Shark Conservation Project—mytripblog

Hi guys!

You may have heard the latest buzz in Fiji. We've been given the green light to begin our Shark Conservation Project as of January 2014 and are now taking in applications from everyone interested. This is going to be an exciting new project as Fiji is renowned for its diverse marine life as well as great diving spots in the Pacific region. For those keen on giving their sea legs a run for their money, this project is for you! You will come face-to-face with predators such as Bull Sharks, the only sharks capable of surviving in saltwater and freshwater conditions. In partnership with Beqa Divers, you will dive rest assured that you are in safe and professional hands. They have a great track record when it comes to safety. The Projects Abroad Fiji Conservation Manager is also a professionally trained, experienced shark wrangler, having trained and worked in the Bahamas under the guidance of some of the most experienced shark experts in the world. With these professionals alongside you, you will be guaranteed a safe and educational experience! Learning about our marine predators and how to protect them from harm is going to be your pet project. The following is what will be expected from you.

As a volunteer on the Fiji Shark Conservation project you will assist the local scientists with a wide range of on-going research projects and activities, such as:

- Tagging of baby sharks
- Shark count surveys
- Shark identification
- Setting underwater cameras and retrieving data
- Telemetry measuring and data collection via acoustic tags
- Data entry and analysis
- Bycatch and fishing surveys
- Working on shark finning issues
- Marine park and shark protected zoning
- Implementing a local education programme
- Shark nursery habitat project
- Mangrove reforestation work

The future of our marine life lies in your hands and we are confident that your hard work will not go unrewarded. In years to come, the foundation that you lay as a volunteer will pave the way for greater conservation techniques and allow for more professionals to lend a hand and their expertise to preserving our priceless marine life. Sharks are a very important part of marine ecology and without them; sea life would not be the same. It is of the utmost importance that you understand the need for shark conservation and protection.

### **What are the aims of this Conservation & Environment project?**

The primary aim of the Shark Conservation Project in Fiji is to protect and conserve the eight species of shark that inhabit Shark Reef, as well as the many other species present in Fiji's waters and to raise awareness of the need for shark conservation around the world.

The Fijian Government is in full support of the shark protection work in Fiji and sharks are currently at the top of the political conservation agenda.

Sharks play a crucial role in our oceans. Most sharks serve as top predators at the top of the marine food pyramid, and so play a critical role in ocean ecosystems. Directly or indirectly they regulate the natural balance of these ecosystems, at all levels, and are therefore an essential part of them. Sharks usually hunt old, weak or sick prey and help to keep the prey population in good condition, enabling these more naturally fit animals to reproduce and pass on their genes. The effects of removing sharks from ocean

## Shark Conservation Project continued.

ecosystems, although complex and rather unpredictable, are very likely to be ecologically and economically damaging.

The shark research being carried out on the project in Fiji helps to ensure that scientists and marine protection lobbyists are provided with regular and consistent scientific data about the life history, reproductive information, movement and biology of the sharks found in Fijian waters. This information is vital for devising successful conservation and management strategies, helping to keep these specific shark species off the critically endangered species lists.

You can read more on Mike Neumann's (General Manager at Beqa Divers) blog on the story: <http://fijisharkdiving.blogspot.com/2013/06/shark-conservation-and-research-in-fiji.html>

We look forward to seeing all you interested folk in Fiji for this amazing experience of a lifetime! Come lend a hand and be part of the biggest shark conservation project in Fiji!



### Kathy Bloomfield: Suva Special School—mytripblog

Kathy Bloomfield is a registered nurse from Australia. She is one of the many delightful young professionals that I have come across since joining Projects Abroad Fiji. Kathy also recently completed a paediatric course at the Princess Margaret Hospital in Australia. Her experience with caring for the sick and the elderly gave her the drive to come to Fiji and volunteer at the Suva Special School. She was able to assist the teachers with their daily programmes as well as playing games and at the same time, learn more about the stigma associated with special needs children in Fiji. Kathy was an asset to the school and the staff was very happy to have her there. When I went over to see her, the school had a visit from a medical team to do check-ups on the children, such as vaccinations as well as dental. It was sad to see them cry but Kathy made sure that they were kept occupied afterwards with games and toys. It was a relatively new experience for her as she had previously worked with the elderly back home. Her exposure to this made her more aware of the need for more specialised carers in the country. Projects Abroad Fiji thanks her for her time and efforts at the Suva Special School.



## Project Updates

### Care and Teaching

Things have been going very well minus the usual hiccups about communication gaps due to language barriers. School children are always spoken to in their mother tongue at home so it becomes a challenge for them and the volunteers to try and effectively communicate with each other. With this in mind, the volunteers have been busy working on fun ways to interact with the children like songs and games. It helps the children feel at ease and at the same time, it becomes an educational experience. We've had a few new placements and are expecting more volunteers at these locations. The need for our volunteers is surely increasing and we are grateful to our partnership school for allowing us access to their facilities.

### Community project

Galoa village is where there has been a hive of activity. It has become so popular now with our volunteers as they all seem to want the village experience. Galoa is very rewarding as it has so much for the volunteers to see and do. There is a school as well as the village women organising activities for everyone to partake in, like mat weaving and craft making. It is also the best way for our volunteers to get to know the people at a grassroots level. There is always work and play available in Galoa Village. We are grateful for the people of Galoa for being so accommodating to our volunteers.

### Sports Project

We have only just opened the doors to our newest project and June has seen the first volunteer arrive. They are being placed at Dilkusha Boys Primary School to help with the sports programmes available. The volunteer has assisted in teaching rugby (Fiji's number one sport!) as well as hockey. This is the start of something very worthwhile as Fiji is famous for its sports fanatics.



Photos!

