



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **MAGNT Expert Helps to Identify South Pacific Fish Species**

MAGNT world expert will help to identify an unknown tropical fish species from the South Pacific in Darwin this month as part of a conservation survey of the Solomon Islands by Wetlands International and University of the South Pacific in Suva.

Museum and Art Gallery of the NT (MAGNT) curator of fishes and gobioid fish expert Dr Helen Larson has been training David Boseto, a graduate assistant in science at the University of the South Pacific (USP) for the past three weeks to identify fish species.

“David has brought specimens from Fiji and the Solomon Islands and some recently collected during a survey of rivers on an uninhabited island in the western Solomons, Tetepare,” Dr Larson said.

“Tetepare Island is the largest uninhabited tropical island in the world at around 120 sq kilometres.

“While training David to identify the fish found in the survey we came across a small gobioid fish that so far defies accurate identification.

“Dubbed by the scientists as the “Noodle Fish” it is different from any other gobioid fish I have ever seen, and we are struggling to put it in a family.

“Because it is a single specimen, we cannot use destructive techniques like “clearing and staining”, which makes the fish much harder to study and we will have to collect another specimen before it can be described.

Dr Larson says being a gobioid fish expert, the study of the fish gathered in the survey is one of the most exciting things about David’s visit, but that David’s training in taxonomy would create further links between the western Pacific and the NT.

“There are very few Pacific Islanders who have become zoological research scientists, and none are taxonomists, so to have David here for training in taxonomy is fantastic.”

Dr Larson said that David would remain working with her for a further three weeks, during which they would study several new species of Pacific gobiids, with an eye to preparing one or more publications in the future.

In September 2006, a Wetlands International and University of the South Pacific team spent 10 days on the island of Tetepare in the Western Solomon

Islands surveying fresh and estuarine environments and training rangers for the Tetepare Descendents Association.

This successful survey not only found several new taxa to science but provided a measured glimpse of a virtually pristine tropical aquatic ecosystem and the abundance of life that it can support.

David is very grateful to MAGNT for financial support and training, as well as USP and Wetlands International for additional support.

**Ends**

**Media Note – For more information contact Helen Larson on 8999 8253.**

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