



Women in fisheries profiles

Margaret Fox

Margaret Fox was born and grew up in Macuata, Fiji. Her love of the ocean started very early in her childhood.

Her fondest childhood memory is going out fishing during the school holidays with her family and extended family at the Great Sea Reef, whereby she was mesmerised with the vibrant marine life including the colourful corals, fishes and critters and, not forgetting, the bats hanging from the mangrove trees, which she enjoyed rousing during their daytime slumber.

Margaret has a Master of Conservation Biology from Victoria University of Wellington and a Bachelor of Science from the University of the South Pacific. She is currently a Fisheries Coordinator with the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), for which she has worked since 2010. She has extensive experience undertaking and leading both biological and socio-economic surveys and has published widely on cetaceans, payment for ecosystem services, fish spawning aggregations, and a range of coastal fisheries. In 2015, she assisted WCS to set up their Women in Fisheries programme focusing on the collection of sex-disaggregated socio-economic data, fisheries value chain analyses of Fiji's sea cucumber and mud crab fisheries, and the impacts of Category 5 Cyclone Winston on women fishers.

In addition to being a talented scientist, Margaret has over a decade of experience working on community-based resource management and adaptation, collating and linking information on traditional ecological knowledge to Western science, and creating awareness of natural resource management through media, forums and workshops. She has helped local communities set up fisheries management plans and apply new techniques to increase the profits of women mud crab fishers. In 2016, she co-led a Women in Fisheries Forum for the Northern Division with the Ministry of Fisheries, Women in Fisheries Network-Fiji and Fiji Locally Managed Marine Area network.

What has been one of the greatest highlights of your career so far?

Coordinating Fiji's first national baseline survey from 2017 to 2018 on the critical contribution of Fiji's women fishers to food security and livelihood. This was an extensive collaboration between WCS, the organisation I work for, and a cohort of stakeholders including government, other non-government organisations and regional institutions.

Why are you passionate about women in fisheries?

Helping provide visibility to women fishers and other women who contribute to the Pacific's fisheries sector, as women play a vital yet unrecognised role in this space. By documenting and highlighting the importance of women's contributions here in Fiji's fisheries sector, including the challenges that they face, provides a platform for these women to be visible and be acknowledged to a wider audience.

What message do you have for inspiring young women early in their career?

Be positive and be open to collaboration. Be prepared to work hard and also, at times, under challenging conditions. A career in conservation is never a straight, easy path. Enjoy the adventure this career provides and also acknowledge the responsibility associated with this work in assisting communities to be responsible stewards of their natural resources and culture.

A selection of Margaret's publications

Askew N., **Fox M.** and Jupiter S. 2011. Ecotales from Kubulau: A guide to the cultural and natural heritage of the Vatu-i-Ra Seascape. Suva: Wildlife Conservation Society. 99 p.

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Giffin A.L., Naleba M., **Fox M.** and Mangubhai S. 2019. Women fishers in Fiji launch a mud crab management plan for their fishery. SPC Women in Fisheries Information Bulletin 30:20-23.

Gurney G.G., Darling E.S., Jupiter S.D., Mangubhai S., McClanahan T.R., Lestari P., Pardede S., Campbell S.J., **Fox M.**, Naisililili W., Muthiga N.A., D'agata S., Holmes K.E. and Rossi N.A. 2019. Implementing a social-ecological systems framework for conservation monitoring: Lessons from a multi-country coral reef program. Biological Conservation 240:108–298.

Jupiter S.D., Epstein G., Ban N.C., Mangubhai S., **Fox M.** and Cox M. 2017. A social-ecological systems approach to assessing conservation and fisheries outcomes in Fijian locally managed marine areas. Society & Natural Resources 30(9):1096–1111.

Mangubhai S., **Fox M.** and Nand Y. 2017. Value chain analysis of the wild caught mud crab fishery in Fiji. Report No. 03/17. Suva: Wildlife Conservation Society. 100 p.

Mangubhai S., Nand Y., Ram R., **Fox M.**, Tabunakawai-Vakalabure M. and Vodivodi T. 2016. Value chain analysis of the wild caught sea cucumber fishery in Fiji. Report No. 02/16. Suva: Wildlife Conservation Society and the Fiji Department of Fisheries. 66 p.

Miller C., Batibasaga A., Chand P., Dulunaqio S., **Fox M.**, Jupiter S., Naisililili W., Nand Y., Sharma-Gounder S. and Smith B. 2016. Cetacean diversity, common occurrence and community importance in Fijian waters. Pacific Conservation Biology 22(3):272–280.

Thomas A.S., Mangubhai S., Vandervord C., **Fox M.** and Nand Y. 2019. Impact of Tropical Cyclone Winston on women mud crab fishers in Fiji. Climate and Development 11(8):699–709.