SPOTLIGHT

Solomon Islands

Conservation Highlights

July 2026

The Nature Conservancy

The Nature Conservancy in

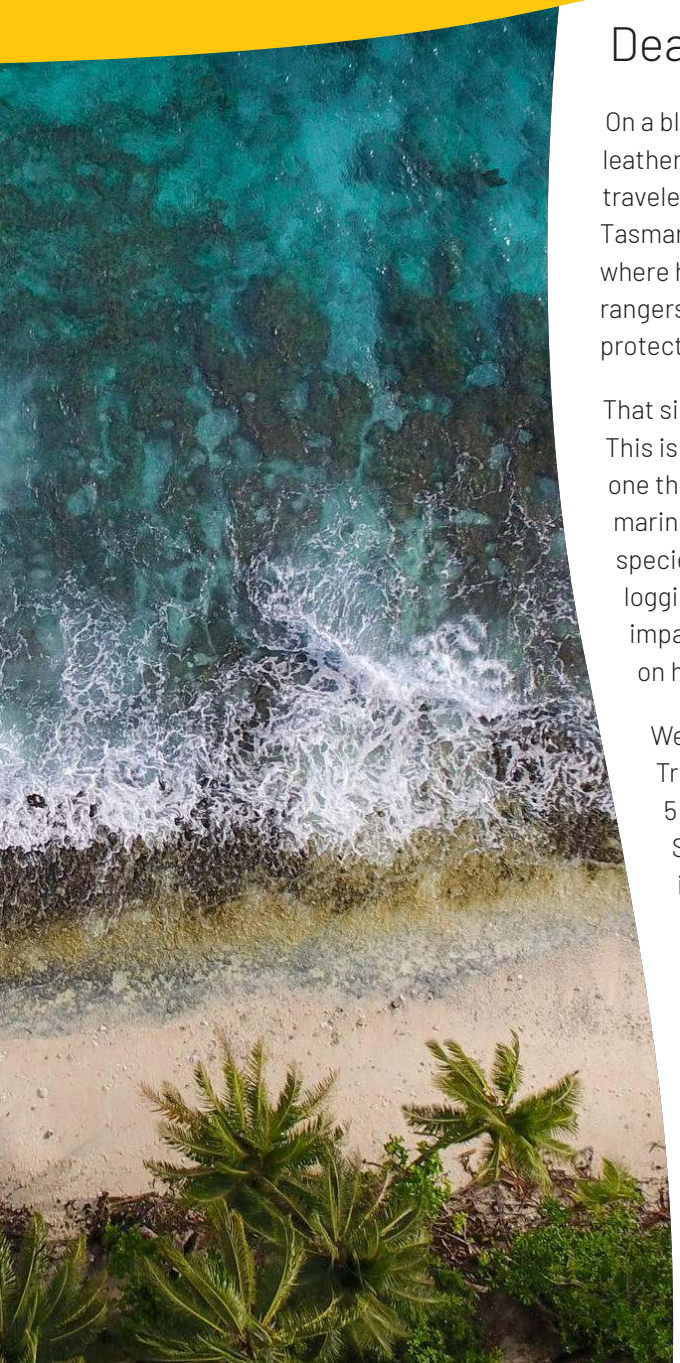
Solomon Islands

Solomon Islands is a global conservation priority. Located in the Western Pacific Ocean, the nation is home to reefs where 75 percent of the world's coral species and more than 2,000 reef fish species are found. The nation's primary forests are among the Pacific's most ecologically significant, and its customary land and sea tenure means conservation succeeds only when local communities lead.

The Nature Conservancy's (TNC) Asia Pacific program is committed to the preservation of four living systems that are vital to the region's climate and biodiversity future: **forests, rivers, oceans and grasslands.**

In the **Solomon Islands,** we bring science, long-term partnerships, and practical financing tools to communities and governments seeking a different path—one where **forests** are worth more standing, **oceans** and their abundant coral reefs continue feeding families, and globally important wildlife can survive alongside local livelihoods.

Cover: A Western Pacific leatherback sea turtle, outfitted with a satellite tracker on its carapace makes her way back to sea after an evening nesting on Haevo beach (see map on right) © Peter Waldie/TNC; Left to right: A community records species data during a TNC-supported biodiversity survey in Isabel province © TNC; A school of reticulated dascyllus move through hard corals in Solomon Islands' coastal waters © Dan Bailey



Left: Aerial views of Sikopo, a small island in the Arnavon Islands of Solomon Islands © Robert Taupongi; Below: Portraits of Dr. Peter Waldie and Natasha Sokeleke © TNC

Dear friends,

On a black sand beach in the Solomon Islands' Isabel Province, a leatherback turtle returns from the Pacific to lay her eggs. She may have traveled thousands of miles—perhaps from waters off New Zealand, Tasmania or even the U.S. West Coast—only to arrive at the one place where her future depends on people waiting in the dark: community rangers, some of them women, walking the beach through the night to protect her nest.

That single scene captures what conservation means in Solomon Islands. This is a country of fewer than one million people, spread across nearly one thousand islands within the Coral Triangle, the most biodiverse marine region on Earth and a place of exceptional forests, reefs and species found nowhere else. It is also a country where climate change, logging, mining, fisheries pressure and limited government capacity impact communities whose food, water, safety and livelihoods depend on healthy ecosystems.

We were reminded of such challenges in April 2026, when Severe Tropical Cyclone Maila rapidly intensified, peaking as a Category 5 system that was likely the strongest ever recorded in the Solomon Sea. Flooding, coastal inundation and damage to homes, infrastructure and essential services followed in many parts of the country. Events like this make visible what people here already know: reefs, mangroves, forests and rivers are not mere scenery. They are natural infrastructure, food systems, cultural inheritance and first lines of defense.

For more than two decades, TNC has worked with communities, customary landholders, provincial leaders, national government and local organizations to protect Solomon Islands' extraordinary lands and waters. In 2025, that work began moving from strong local projects toward a more durable model for conservation at scale: strengthening community leadership, aligning with government priorities, building sustainable finance and connecting protection from ridge to reef.

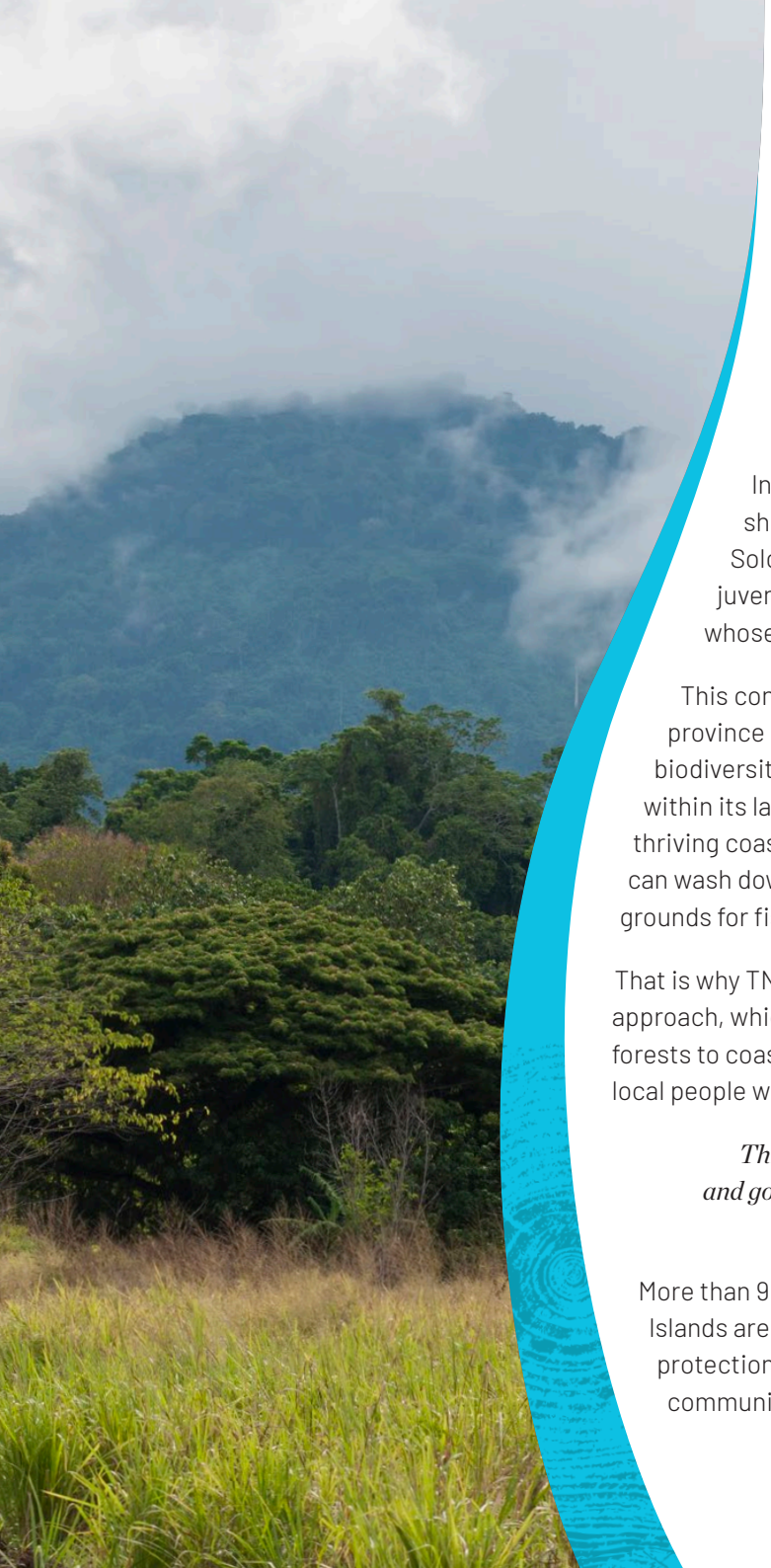
In the pages that follow, you'll find four linked stories:

- How TNC is helping communities build a province-wide conservation network in Isabel,
- How standing forests can become an economic alternative to logging,
- How community rangers are giving Western Pacific leatherbacks a fighting chance, and
- How the tiny Arnavon Islands chain can show that conservation-based enterprise can help sustain a marine protected area for the long term.

Conservation here must deliver for both people and nature. When it does, it can endure. Thank you for your support.

Dr. Peter Waldie
Outgoing Country Director, Solomon Islands
The Nature Conservancy

Natasha Sokeleke
Incoming Interim Country Lead, Solomon Islands
The Nature Conservancy



Isabel Connected

Many ecosystems, one conservation vision

In the cloud forests of Isabel, orchids emerge from mist-shrouded ridges. Far below, on reef flats and in the deeper Solomon Sea, life appears in equally vivid forms—from juvenile fish sheltering in lagoons to tiny orchid nudibranchs whose frilled bodies resemble the flowers high above.

This connection is not mere poetic license; it is ecology. Isabel province is home to some of Solomon Islands' most spectacular biodiversity, with a high number of endemic flora and fauna found within its largely intact tropical forests, resilient coral reefs and thriving coastal ecosystems. Yet when forests are logged, sediment can wash downstream, smothering reefs and damaging nursery grounds for fish.

That is why TNC's work in Isabel is built around a "ridge-to-reef" approach, which connects inland ecosystems such as mountains and forests to coastal zones, wetlands, and coral reefs—all with the input of local people who know these lands and waters best.

Through ridge to reef, TNC works with communities and government to develop approaches that prevent harm to watersheds and nearshore ecosystems.

More than 90 percent of land and coastal waters in Solomon Islands are held under Indigenous collective ownership, so lasting protection must be designed with customary landholders and communities, not simply declared from afar.

Above: The Solomon Island palm frog is found only in Solomon Islands and part of southern Papua New Guinea © Douglas Junior Pikacha/2024 Oceania Photo Contest; Left: Forested hills stretch up into the mountains of Isabel province © iStock

Founded on the principles of ridge to reef, TNC is leading development of the Isabel Conservation Network, developed as a multi-stakeholder, province-wide platform to help connect community-led protected areas, government priorities and long-term financing into one practical system. Through the network, TNC aims to support permanent protection of 320,000 hectares of marine and terrestrial ecosystems by 2030, including 8,000 hectares of montane cloud forest and 300,000 hectares of connected marine protected areas important to Western Pacific leatherbacks. That's an area about four times the size of Hong Kong.

At its heart, the Isabel Conservation Network is an investment in permanence and coordination. By bringing together communities, customary landowners, government partners and sustainable financing, TNC is helping create the conditions for conservation to endure long after individual projects end.

Forests **Worth More** Standing

Helping communities choose long-term value over short-term extraction

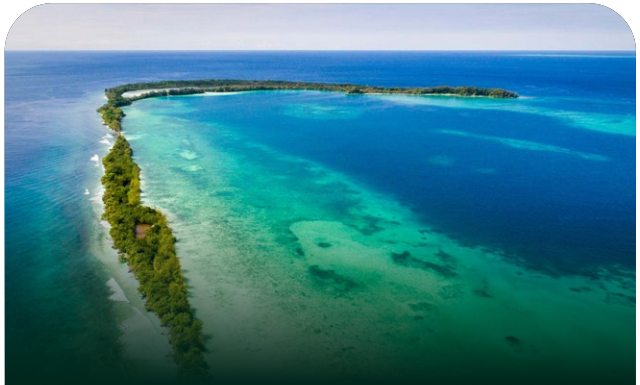
Solomon Islands' forests store carbon, shelter endemic species, sustain freshwater and protect reefs downstream. But today they face heavy pressure from logging—the forestry sector accounts for an estimated 60 percent of national exports—and other land-use decisions that can offer communities short-term gain that creates often irreversible environmental damage.

TNC and partners are working with customary landowners to explore a high-integrity forest carbon project that could protect 10,000 hectares of intact primary lowland forest as an alternative to large-scale logging. If advanced through final design and implementation, internal analysis suggests the project could avoid nearly one million metric tons of CO_2e over 40 years, while creating a potential long-term revenue pathway for local communities. This would represent one of the largest terrestrial carbon project opportunities in Solomon Islands, created for and by the community.

This is where philanthropic support is truly catalytic. Supporting TNC means investment in communities as they assess biodiversity values, map cultural heritage, design fair benefit-sharing, and put safeguards in place that can drive future market investment and create real opportunity for remote villages.

> "I have seen how deeply passionate customary owners are about protecting their biodiversity and forests. These projects support their vision to conserve these resources while strengthening livelihoods and ensuring future generations continue to benefit.

Natasha Sokeleke
Incoming Interim Country Lead
Solomon Islands, The Nature Conservancy



TNC Science

Marine nursery grounds in lagoonal reefs downstream of logged forests are among the ecosystems badly impacted by sedimentation caused from commercial logging. A study by TNC found that unhealthy reefs had far fewer numbers of juvenile fish compared to lagoonal reefs near unlogged forests—conditions that negatively impact local fisheries and livelihoods.

Left: During a biodiversity survey, one community measures the circumference of a tree to help track growth, health and species composition over time © TNC; Top: Aerial view of an intact lowland forest landscape in Isabel Province © TNC; Sidebar: Lagoonal beaches like this one on Kerehikapa exist all over the Solomon Islands © Robert Taupongi

A leatherback hatchling makes its way to the sea for the first time © Riza Azhari

Making a Difference

100% of the nests laid by satellite-tagged leatherbacks are physically cataloged, monitored and protected from poachers and predators by TNC-supported rangers.

On monitored beaches, the presence of rangers has **reduced poaching to 0%**.

A **Fighting** Chance

Community-led conservation for endangered ocean giants

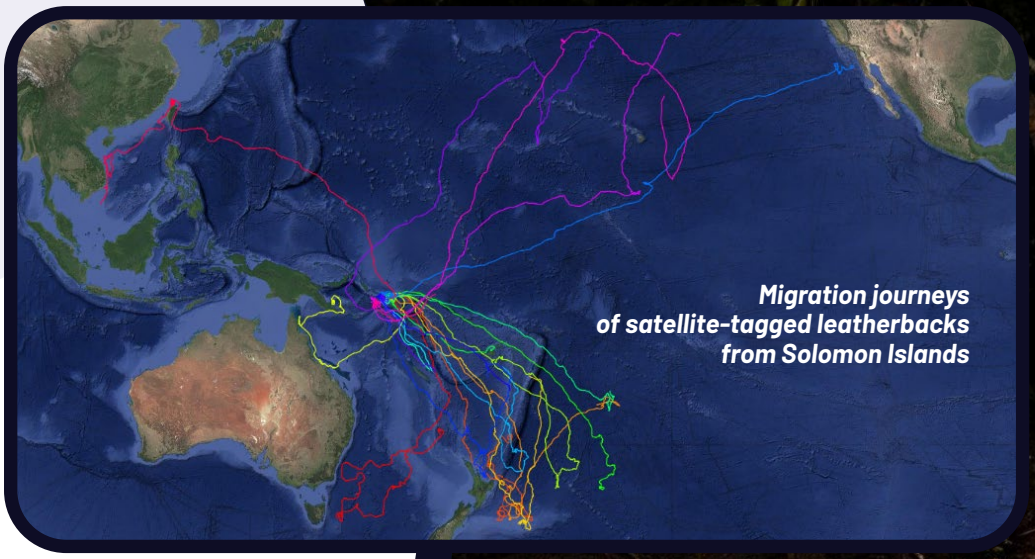
Western Pacific leatherbacks are among the most imperiled large marine animals on Earth. By some estimates, this leatherback subpopulation has declined by more than 80 percent over the last three generations, and without intervention fewer than 100 nesting pairs may remain by 2040. Today, they face high rates of bycatch by Pacific commercial fishing fleets and continued illegal harvesting for their eggs, meat and shells.

Solomon Islands holds the second-largest remaining nesting population of Western Pacific leatherbacks, making its beaches globally important to the species' survival. At Haevo, a two-mile stretch of black volcanic sand on Santa Isabel Island, nesting females were commonly killed before TNC and local landowners began a community ranger program in 2013.

Since then, the change has been dramatic: Haevo nest numbers increased from fewer than 20 per year in 2013 to more than 130 in 2025. Poaching of nesting females has effectively stopped at the site as rangers patrol nightly, relocate vulnerable nests above the high-tide line, and tag, microchip and collect DNA from nesting females. By contrast, a nearby beach where conservation coverage has been sporadic has seen nest numbers decline by 4.6% per year over three decades, underscoring the importance of sustained investment.

The science now reaches far beyond the beach. Since 2022, TNC and partners have satellite-tagged 22 nesting leatherbacks from Haevo and other Solomon Islands beaches, revealing migrations to New Zealand, Tasmania and, for some mid-year nesters, across the Pacific toward U.S.-managed waters. A turtle protected on a black-sand beach in Isabel may ultimately travel more than 10,000 miles across the Pacific Ocean—making local conservation efforts part of a truly global conservation story. This research helps inform fisheries management, because nesting-beach protection and bycatch reduction are two sides of the same ocean-scale conservation challenge.

And increasingly, climate impacts inform protection efforts: in 2025, more than half of all recorded nests were relocated by trained rangers to prevent loss from tidal erosion and saltwater inundation. As climate pressures intensify, active nest management is becoming an increasingly important adaptation measure for sustaining leatherback populations.



Migration journeys of satellite-tagged leatherbacks from Solomon Islands

Women are also reshaping conservation leadership. In 2021, three women became the first female conservation rangers in Solomon Islands' history. And by 2023, TNC had trained and employed 23 women rangers across the province's protected nesting beaches.

But the work is not secure. A public grant supporting Haevo and two other Isabel Province beaches ends in late 2026, and funding for critical sea turtle monitoring work elsewhere is no longer available. Donor support can sustain ranger patrols, strengthen hatcheries, expand women's leadership, standardize monitoring across beaches and keep the data pipeline intact while the recovery window is still open.

Ranger Anita Rosta Posala scans the nesting leatherback Ghase Taigo ("woman who protects and provides care," locally) for her microchip as part of the monitoring process for tagged turtles on Haevo beach © Justine. E. Hausheer/TNC

“Our Place”

Linking livelihoods to long-term marine protection through a new ecolodge

In the Arnavon Islands—a small, remote chain home to the South Pacific’s largest rookery of another imperiled marine animal, the hawksbill sea turtle—communities have led conservation for decades. The Arnavon Community Marine Park is Solomon Islands’ first established marine protected area, one of the great conservation success stories in the Pacific. It covers a relatively small marine area—16,900 hectares surrounding the communities of Katupika, Kia and Wagina—but contains significant reef, lagoon and mangrove ecosystems, and pristine beaches that shelter 2,000 nesting hawksbills.

Now, the Arnavon Ples Blong Iumi Ecolodge—“Our Place”—is being developed as a locally governed lodge and education center intended to generate revenue for the park’s long-term stewardship, thanks to the support of TNC donors and the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Scheduled to open in 2027, the ecolodge aims to generate sustainable revenue that will contribute directly to stewardship of Arnavon Community Marine Park. Guests will have access to this globally significant marine landscape, gaining insight about the customary, locally-led systems that protect it, the role of community rangers, and the importance of marine protected areas for biodiversity, food security and climate resilience.

Women’s participation has been prioritized for roles in hospitality and community leadership, and local women trained by TNC through our partnership with the KAWAKI network are poised to lead lodge operations.

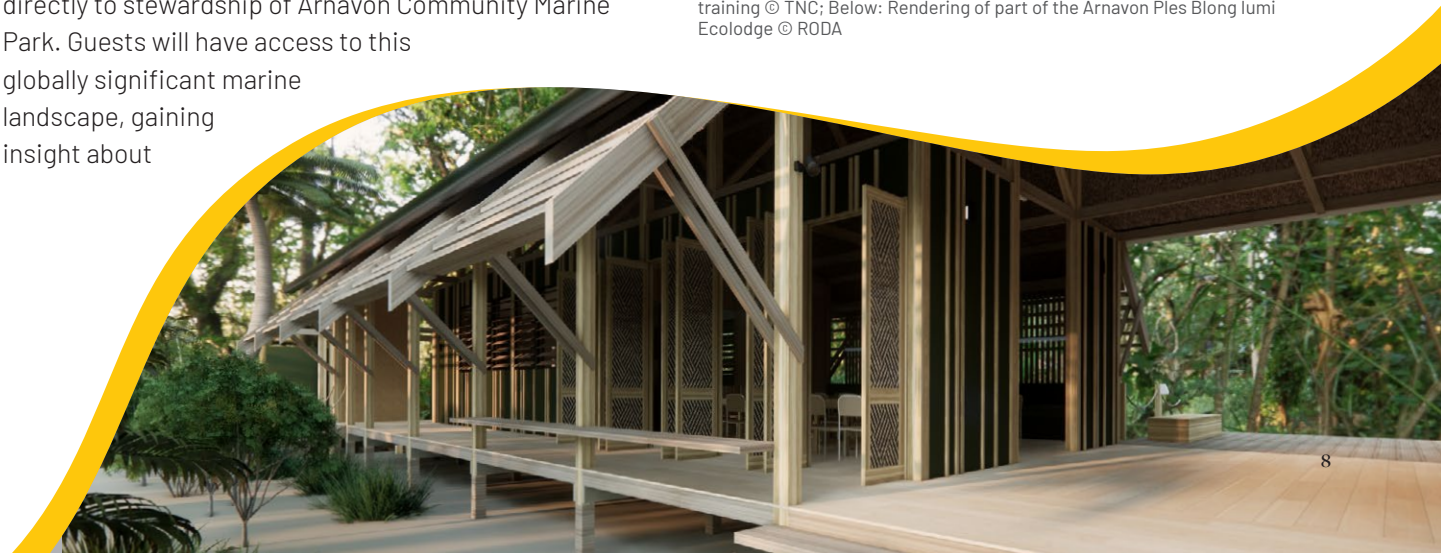
For the people of the Arnavons, and for the turtles nesting in its remote stretches of white coral sand, the future is bright.

As a Small Island Developing State, tourism is bringing money to Solomon Islands. In 2024:

Tourists generated an estimated **US$85m** for the nation’s economy

52% of tourism spending benefited local people

Left: Training on hawksbill turtle monitoring as part of tour guide training © TNC; Below: Rendering of part of the Arnavon Ples Blong Iumi Ecolodge © RODA



Join Us

Solomon Islands shows why conservation must be both urgent and hopeful. The threats are real: climate shocks, logging, fisheries pressure, mining risk, limited public capacity and a rapidly changing regional economy. But the solutions are equally real: rangers on black-sand beaches, customary owners protecting forests, women leading conservation decisions, communities building tourism enterprises, and science connecting a nest in Isabel to fisheries management across the Pacific.

Your support can help TNC and our partners sustain what is working now and scale it before the window narrows: keeping rangers on beaches, protecting forests before they are logged, strengthening community governance, and building sustainable finance so conservation can endure.

For more information, please contact:

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The Nature Conservancy

Two yellowtail clownfish near the Nggela Islands in the Solomon Islands