

JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

REPORT ON EXPEDITION/PROJECT/CONFERENCE

Expedition/Project/ Conference Title:	Jungle training, biodiversity surveys, dive training and marine research on mainland Sulawesi and surrounding offshore islands
Travel Dates:	27.06.2016 – 18.08.2016
Location:	Indonesia
Group member(s):	n/a
Aims:	To develop my knowledge of species endemic to Sulawesi and survey techniques used to study them.
	To become a PADI qualified diver, for use in future marine research
	To network consider field marine biology for postgraduate study, by networking with potential supervisors

OUTCOME (not less than 300 words):-

This summer I spent 6 weeks training and working as a research assistant for the conservation organisation Operation Wallacea. Indonesia has one of the highest levels of endemism in the world. Not only was there huge opportunity for biological research, but also a fascinating culture to immerse myself in.

The first two weeks of my project were spent in the village of Labundo, amid the jungles of Buton. I worked on surveys studying bats, herpetofauna, birds, megafauna and butterflies. A specific project I assisted in was the 2016 REDD+ application. This involved surveying the jungle to assess its carbon content, to feed back to the government to obtain funding for local communities to preserve the jungle. I spent the following four weeks on Hoga Island in the Wakatobi Marine Reserve. Here I obtained my PADI Advanced Open Water Diver qualification, which enabled me to join research teams on the island. I worked on the long-term monitoring project, carrying out invertebrate transects on the reef and analysing stereovideo footage of fish. I also helped dissertation students collect their data.

I learnt a wide variety of field zoology survey techniques. These include setting up mist nets, animal handling, types of bird calls and species identification. During my time at the marine site I developed skills in underwater research, including buoyancy and the identification of fish, invertebrates, coral and seagrass species.

I had the opportunity to work alongside some of the top scientists in the world. I attended lectures daily and had the chance to discuss my interests, specifically coral bleaching, with experts in the field. Working with a team of marine biology students of a similar age developed communication, enquiry and efficiency skills. This project has confirmed to me that tropical field work is of interest for my career. I am now considering post-graduate study in marine biology.

This project has opened many doors for my career. I have made many professional links in the field, and confirmed my passion for this area of research. I am now working as the Operation Wallacea Team Leader at the University of Edinburgh and intend to revisit Indonesia again next summer to develop my research further.

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I cannot thank the James Rennie Bequest Fund enough for enabling me to go on this trip. The award enabled my to fund my travel to Indonesia and specifically to the remote islands of Buton and Hoga. Given how far away this project was, I would otherwise have been unable to attend. I will be representing the University of Edinburgh at the Operation Wallacea Trust meeting in November in London. I am very grateful for the financial support.