

DAVIS EXPEDITION FUND

REPORT ON EXPEDITION/PROJECT

Expedition/Project Title: Operation Wallacea.....

Travel Dates: 28th June- 28th July 2002.....

Location: Buton Island, Sulawesi, Indonesia.....

Group Members: Piers Fulton, Robin Akhurst.....

Aims: Work as General Volunteers with Operation Wallacea in the Buton Rainforest.....

OUTCOME (not less than 300 words):-

My trip to Indonesia was highly successful, although it differed from my original programme. I learned some skills needed to survive in a rainforest, participated in macaque, herpetology and bat research, and gained a valuable insight into the way of life of the people of Sulawesi, whose hospitality was one of the most memorable aspects of the trip.

Week one was spent on Opwall's forest acclimatisation course, designed to prepare us for jungle project work: map making, natural shelter construction, and lessons on local wildlife were combined with daily hikes in what was in many ways the most enjoyable week.

On returning to Labundo bundo (the village from which Opwall's forest projects are run), I joined the Buton Macaque project. Immediately it was clear that my contribution would be limited: most Opwall volunteers come out to collect data for zoology honours dissertations, and as a general volunteer there was not much that I could do to help this largely observation based project. I observed crop raiding, habitat use and troupe behaviour studies, and at the end of the week changed to the herpetology project.

Week three was spent assisting a series of habitat surveys around an extensive set of pitfall traps set up in the Kakenauwe grid near Labundo. Early in the week I joined the amphibian group for one night as they carried out a frog survey at Opwall's second study grid, 45 minutes walk into the forest. This was the most memorable night of project work, as it was the only time that I spent in the jungle without a large group of fellow volunteers.

On week four I joined the bat project. This offered the most hands-on experience of the projects. The bat surveys were based in or around the Kakenauwe grid: I helped with harp trapping, mist netting, radio tracking and recording of bat sounds, as well as helping to process captured bats in Opwall's field station at Labundo.

Overall my trip was a very enjoyable introduction to Indonesia's wildlife, and although I didn't really get the in depth knowledge that I had hoped for it broadened my knowledge of biology greatly. I am very grateful to the Davis Expedition Fund for their support, without which this trip would have been extremely difficult to organise.