

JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

REPORT ON EXPEDITION/PROJECT/CONFERENCE

**Expedition/Project/
Conference Title:**

Operation Wallacea 2012, Indonesia

Travel Dates:

19th June-19th July

Location:

Hoga Island, Wakatobi National Park, Indonesia

Group member(s):

Craig McDonald

Aims:

Research to aid in increasing biodiversity and conservation for the reef and entire ecosystem.

OUTCOME (not less than 300 words):-

This summer I travelled to Indonesia with an organisation called Operation Wallacea. This company is committed to implementing conservation schemes in areas of biological and social interest and aiding in biodiversity. I decided on a 4 week expedition with them, working as a research assistant on the marine site which was based on Hoga Island in the Wakatobi National Park, South West of Sulawesi, Indonesia.

After a long journey including 4 flights and a 14hr ferry trip I finally arrived at Hoga in the afternoon of the 20th of June. After brief introductory lectures and a tour we were told our itineraries for the coming week. I was to undertake the PADI open water diving course during my first week to enable me to dive on the reef. This was extremely fun and something I have wanted to do for a long time.

My second week consisted of taking a course called Indo-Pacific Coral Reef Ecology. This course was a pre-requisite before and work could be undertaken on the reef and was taught through both lectures and in water practicals. It was extremely interesting and taught us important features of the reef and important taxa we may see on the reef including all the corals, invertebrates and fish. The course was supplemented by exams in which you had to identify pictures of what you might see on the reef. The pass mark was set high at 80% to ensure we both worked and were competent before we undertook work on the reef. It was a fun and rewarding course.

In the 3rd week I decided to be a research assistant to those people carrying out both dissertations and other research projects. Whilst doing this I was involved laying many transects on the reef and assisted in checking coral health, algae growth levels, cleaner wrasse and anemone fish behaviour. During this week I also decided to undertake my PADI advanced level diving course. This including doing special dives including a deep dive to 30m a navigation dive using compasses.

For my 4th week I was lucky enough to go onto the expeditions live aboard vessel to carry out research further afield in the national park. We sailed for a week around the national park carrying out reef check dives, the results of which were recorded and sent to Reef check, an international project with an aim to save reefs and corals. We also carried out mammal surveys when pods of whales or dolphins were spotted.

Overall I had a fantastic trip in which I learnt a huge amount, met some great people and had some brilliant experiences. I would like to thank the James Rennie Bequest for helping me to undertake this fantastic opportunity. It gave me an insight into the research I am interested in and gave me much experience in the field and I hope to be involved in something such as this again.