



Newsletter of Yayasan Pulau Banyak

Suara Pulau

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Yayasan Pulau Banyak welcomes new partners!

Although it doesn't sound romantic: conservation work doesn't always take place in the field, on the beach or in the forest. Securing funding for the protection of the biodiversity of Pulau Banyak is a full-time job and therefore can't be taken lightly. Many office hours have been spent in writing grant proposals and requests to potential sponsors. Yayasan Pulau Banyak is proud to present the new partners who replied to our appeals and agreed to join in the conservation efforts in Pulau Banyak. The Spanish Development agency (AECID) has committed to assist, Wildlife Direct has presented our organisation on their website in order to look for donors and Idea Wild will sponsor 1000 flipper tags for 2009. This blog will be regularly updated with photos, videos and stories about the programme:

<http://sumatranseaturtles.wildlifedirect.org> Online donation is also possible.

Already existing partnerships will continue into next year and we are very pleased to see a growing interest from other international organisations.

Some insight in size of turtle nesting population

Nearly a full year has past that the beach has been patrolled every single night by our field staff in Pulau Bangkaru. Sea turtles have been measured, tagged and checked for injuries. From December 2007 to August 2008 more than 1100 green turtle nests have been counted. This would mean that the green turtle population in Pulau Bangkaru is a medium to large rookery (nesting population) and therefore very important to protect. Leatherbacks started to nest earlier than last year as the first ones laid their eggs in October instead of November, with one of them measuring 187 cm! A great experience for our field staff as this was the first time they were able to measure and tag a leatherback; the largest sea turtle alive. But most importantly, no egg poaching has been reported from the archipelago since Yayasan Pulau Banyak is actively protecting the main nesting beach. And after agreements with local authorities we have been able to secure a no fishing zone in front of Amandangan beach up to 12 nautical miles!. This will safeguard mating and foraging turtles from falling victim to unsustainable fishing methods. We will keep you posted on our progress.

Foreword

Six months ago we published our first *Suara Pulau*. As you can see in this new edition we have been busy enough; not only in Pulau Banyak, but also in Singkil, Medan, Banda Aceh, Jakarta and Bali. The turtle protection and data collection has continued uninterrupted. We haven't been busy finding sponsors, setting up our new volunteer program, implement plans, new ideas and getting prepared for 2009. The new base camp is also under construction. The bathrooms, storage and well are now ready and the first stage of the main building has commenced. It is not as easy as it sounds; bringing cement to the beach in a small boat through the waves. The cost of transporting material is not cheap either. A big boat needs 5 hours to reach Bangkaru from the main village! It's a continuous challenge!

Next year will be a busy one for us. We are all excited about the new programs in the pipeline. The Spanish Development agency has accepted our proposal, which means very much for both the environment and the local communities. All the support of private contributors, members and volunteers also mean a lot to us. Thank you all on behalf of the turtles!

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Mahmud Bangkaru
Founder





The islands of Pulau Banyak boast of wildlife

“With pleasure I would like to make my contribution to the environment protection as a volunteer and get to know the different Indonesian cultures, the life in Indonesia, the people and the unusual and very varied nature”

Anke and Maurice on Pulau Bangkaru



New records on species list for Pulau Bangkaru

We cannot forget that Pulau Banyak doesn't only consist of beautiful beaches and marine life, but many of the islands have lush forests with a range of biodiversity. Pulau Tuangku, the largest of the islands of Pulau Banyak, has large, unpatched, tropical forests which are inhabited by an undoubtedly interesting range of animal species. Although there is a lack of knowledge about the species in the archipelago, animals have been observed in Pulau Bangkaru which have not been recorded before. A yellow throated marten was spotted by Gabriella Frederikkson at sunset eating out of a palm and other field staff have confirmed sightings of mouse deer, python and Saltwater crocodiles. Yayasan Pulau Banyak hopes to be able to study more about the biodiversity present on the islands in the very near future. We might be able to record endemic or rare species for Indonesia.

International volunteers helping out

Becoming actively involved in conservation isn't always easy and one of the ways to get a foot in the door is by volunteering in a conservation programme. After a call for volunteers for the sea turtle conservation programme on several websites and at

talks a University, we received many requests of aspiring conservationists wanting to get involved in helping out with beach patrols, teaching English at local schools and learn about Pulau Banyak. Although we are currently building better facilities to accommodate volunteers, Maurice Neuwirth from Germany took up the challenge to already start in November. Maurice will assist our patrol team with the research activities on the nesting population in Pulau Bangkaru

and will stay until February 2009. Other volunteers will follow soon, and spots for July and August next year have already been reserved for some participants. Anke Tangkenate has recently joined Yayasan Pulau Banyak and been appointed as volunteer coordinator and will ensure the well-being for these volunteers. If you are interested in a volunteer position on any of our programmes, please contact us through our website and read the volunteer requirements. We hope to meet you soon!

Underwater film festival in The Hague, The Netherlands



On the 8th and 9th of November 2008, an underwater festival was organised in The Hague, The Netherlands with award winning underwater cameramen showing their films to an international public. A range of films was showed, and sea turtles were starring in many of them. We were invited by the organisers of the event, Ed and Gabriella Snijders, to promote Yayasan Pulau Banyak at their 'information market'. We had the opportunity to distribute newsletters, brochures and leaflets about the sea turtle

conservation activities amongst the many divers who were present at the event. We will meet Ed en Gabriella in Pulau Banyak in February again, as they have offered to film a promotional DVD about Yayasan Pulau Banyak. Underwater filming will of course be part of their itinerary and they are hoping to encounter many turtles during their dives. Following on the festival several people have requested to volunteer or visit the area to dive.



Head of forestry department Aceh, visits Pulau Banyak

The turtle island had an important visitor in August: Mr. Andy Basrul, head of BKSDA NAD (Balai Konservasi Sumber Daya Alam Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam) together with staff from Banda Aceh and Singkil (standing in photo). BKSDA is the Department for Conservation of Natural Resources at the Indonesian Forestry Ministry.

Pulau Banyak is a Nature Tourism Park. As such, it falls under the jurisdiction of BKSDA. Our organisation has a Memorandum of Understanding with BKSDA which enables us to work efficiently and makes us their sole partner in Pulau Banyak. Working together like this is an efficient way for the Forestry Ministry to manage all their parks in Indonesia. We, as an NGO, find our own

funding; however, BKSDA tries to help out as much as possible. One example is the rubber boat with an engine they brought with them when visiting Pulau Banyak for us to use in our conservation work. BKSDA also gave official status to our beach patrol team, making it easier to approach poachers on the beach and illegal trawlers in front of the nesting area.

Despite storm and heavy rain we trekked through the jungle to the turtle beach where we all witnessed the entire process of a green turtle laying her eggs and returning back to the sea, as well as hundreds of hatchlings making their way from their nest towards the sea. Mr. Andy Basrul, used to handle tigers, elephants, orang-utans and



other large mammals, was touched to his heart and returned with fond memories. A few weeks later we, YPB and BKSDA NAD, presented the Turtle Conservation project at the Forestry Ministry in Jakarta. Mr. Andy Basrul vivid 's description of his experiences on Bangkaru helped them to understand the uniqueness of Pulau Banyak and the need of our efforts.

Nomination for international conservation award

The Future for Nature award is a prestigious international award, which celebrates tangible achievements in protecting wild animal and plant species. Out of 148 applications from 56 countries, Maggie Muurmans was chosen as one of the 12 nominees. In the end 3 people out of these nominees will be selected as winners of the award. Even if Maggie doesn't make it to the last three, we're very proud of her achievement to be nominated. We wish her good luck with the final selection round!





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For general information about the islands and how to get there: www.sumatraecotourism.com

Get Involved!

Become a member of Yayasan Pulau Banyak or donate (<http://sumatranseaturtles.wildlifedirect.org>) and support our cause in protecting the fragile environment of Aceh's Pulau Banyak in conjunction with the local community.

Volunteer with beach patrolling on Pulau Bangkaru and help collecting valuable information on endangered sea turtles. Visit Pulau Bangkaru and enjoy a guided tour by Yayasan Pulau Banyak.

Sponsors

Many thanks to the following groups and individuals that are providing support:

Paneco, Switzerland; Casa tortuga, U.S.A.; Padi Foundation, U.S.A; Natura Ecotours, Australia; Yayasan Ecosistem Lestari, Indonesia; Klimaschutz, Germany; Department for Conservation of Natural Resources at the Indonesian Forestry Ministry, Indonesia; NOAA, U.S.A; ZCV Valkenburg, The Netherlands; Wildlife direct, Kenya, Spanish Development Agency (AECID), Spain, Idea Wild, U.S.A, Ed and Gabrielle Snijders and all members of Yayasan Pulau Banyak. Special thanks to Geoff Gearheart and Ian Singleton for their technical advice.

YPB profile: Syamsuddin Mahmud

Every newsletter we will highlight people who are active to achieve the mission of Yayasan Pulau Banyak and let them tell their story how they got to be involved.

How did your interest for the environment and the turtles develop?

As a governor of Aceh I was of course aware of the Leuser National Park and learnt about the importance of the forest. However, when I met Mahmud Bangkaru, in 1994, and saw his photos, I finally understood how unique Pulau Banyak is, especially Pulau Bangkaru and its turtles. It made me proud as an Acehnese and I felt a calling to do something for the envi-

ronment and the community of Pulau Banyak. As soon as we could we gave the islands a legal protection. It is easy to protect the environment on paper, but unfortunately it's a different thing in the field.

What have you been doing since retirement?

I have two organizations that are important for me. Besides Yayasan Pulau Banyak, I am also a founder of a foundation for human resource development. Education is very important for the future. We have started a boarding school for gifted

children. Every year we choose about 100 promising children in the age of 15-16 from all over Aceh. The three languages English, Arabic and Mandarin are compulsory in our school.

How do you see Aceh today with the new peace treaty?

I have always tried to be a positive person and I always try to be optimistic. The peace we now have is a gift from God. The conflict we had in Aceh was very complicated and deep. It could never have been solved without hard work of everyone

and a positive attitude from the government. What we now have in Aceh is peace based on humanism and democracy, not something forced upon from above. That is why I believe it will last.

Prof. Dr. Syamsuddin Mahmud was born in Aceh Pidie 1935. He studied Economy in Jakarta and Belgium, became a Professor at Syiah Kuala University in Banda Aceh and held several important positions. He was Governor of Aceh from 1993 to 2000. He loves his Aceh, which his own biography reflects; it is more about Aceh than himself.



Syamsuddin Mahmud.
Co-Founder
Yayasan Pulau Banyak