

Blue Auction Updates #2 – October 2008

Marine Enforcement Initiative

In July, a 21m wooden tuna purse seiner from the North Sulawesi fleet was purchased and has now been transformed into the Floating Ranger Station *FRS Monaco*. Master Australian shipwright Robert Hobman has directed the refit of the patrol boat, which should be operational by the end of October 2008. When launched, the *FRS Monaco* will carry a captain and three crew and a patrol team of 8, and will be outfitted with modern electronics, a fast intercept speedboat, and fuel and water storage that will allow her to stay at sea for up to 3 weeks at a time to patrol the stunning Kawe (Wayag-Sayang-Uranie) Marine Protected Area (MPA) in NW Raja Ampat.

While awaiting the arrival of the *FRS Monaco*, CI's Kawe MPA team has been busily preparing and has nearly finished the recruitment process for the captain, engineer, and ship crew. The Kawe patrol team has in fact been operational now since late 2007, with a total of 42 local villagers, water police and fisheries officers included in the team. They have been conducting regular patrols using an 11m speedboat, but look forward to the arrival of the *Monaco* to allow them to spend extended time in known trouble spots where outside fishermen frequently congregate to poach turtles and sharks in the uninhabited reserve.

In related progress, the Kawe MPA, which was declared in May 2007, received a boost to its protection status in mid-September when the two traditional (*adat*) communities with tenurial rights over the area declared the entire 155,000 hectare MPA closed to all forms of harvest of marine life for the coming year. The villagers intend to make this closure legally permanent for all species of finfish, while limited harvest of lobster, topshell, and sea cucumber will be allowed on a seasonal basis in specific zones within the reserve.

The integrated conservation efforts within the Kawe reserve are already showing results. The turtle nest protection program on Piai Island (implemented by CI partner the Papua Sea Turtle Foundation) has effectively eliminated all poaching of nesting turtles over the past two years, and the team has recorded a significant increase in nesting turtles during this period (over 1000 green turtle nests in the first 9 months of 2008 compared to 973 nests for all of 2007). Likewise, the team reports that the nesting beaches are now patrolled by increasing numbers of black tip reef sharks, which are showing an early comeback after decades of intensive harvesting pressure by shark finners.

Marine Conservation Education Initiative

The *Kalabia* marine conservation education program has now been run seventeen times with a total of over 1650 students and is an overwhelming success with villagers and the government of Raja Ampat. The ship was out of action during the rough weather season of mid-June through mid-August, but burst back on to the scene in Raja Ampat on 30 August when the *Kalabia* program was officially endorsed by the Governor of West Papua and the Regent (*Bupati*) of Raja Ampat in a gala celebration complete with Indonesian media personalities and representatives of many of Raja Ampat's 92 remote

villages. The program launching featured custom performances by local Papuan dance troupes and demonstrations of the innovative *Kalabia* experiential learning curriculum by a joint team of CI and Nature Conservancy (TNC) staff. Officials were so impressed by the mobile marine conservation education program that the Governor has now committed to funding an expansion of the program to other areas of the Bird's Head, while the Regent of Kaimana (in the southern Bird's Head) publicly pledged to launch a similar vessel and has asked CI to provide technical assistance.

Over the coming 6 months, the *Kalabia* has an intensive schedule that will see it traverse all 5 million hectares of Raja Ampat to share its conservation messages with children from all of Raja Ampat's villages. The *Kalabia* team now functions as a well-oiled machine, and often find it difficult to weigh anchor and leave a village after completing a 3-day curriculum, as emotional children cry for them to stay! Over the coming months, the *Kalabia* team will work with CI marine conservation education consultant Angela Beer to design an additional curriculum focused on adults in each of the villages the *Kalabia* visits.

Marine Taxonomy Capacity Building Initiative

The Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI) launched its intensive marine taxonomy training program using Blue Auction funding in late June 2008. The first round of trainings were conducted during the July-September period at four of eastern Indonesia's top universities, including Hasanuddin University in Makassar, Sam Ratulangi University in Manado, Pattimura University in Ambon, and the State University of Papua in Manokwari (at the center of the Bird's Head Seascape). The trainings were conducted by a team of five of Indonesia's most respected senior taxonomists, and included 122 trainees from the four universities. Participants consisted of both senior university students and junior faculty members.

In the second round of trainings, scheduled to begin in November, those participants that scored the highest on exams at the end of the first round of trainings will be invited to participate in a more intensive set of capacity building workshops in Jakarta. Those that show the most promise and enthusiasm in the second round will then be eligible to apply for a series of international fellowships to conduct internships with the world's top taxonomists at leading international museums.

Related upcoming events include a course in reef fish taxonomy and paleobiogeography to be conducted at the State University of Papua in November by CI consultants Dr. Gerald Allen (Western Australian Museum) and Dr. Dan Polhemus (Bishop Museum, Hawaii). Additionally, the Indonesian Institute of Sciences, CI and the Ministry of Research and Technology are co-sponsoring a rapid marine biodiversity assessment of the Nusa Penida Islands in Bali in late November that will pair a number of junior Indonesian taxonomists with renowned international taxonomists including Dr. Gerald Allen (fishes) and Dr. Lyndon Devantier and Emre Turak (hard corals).