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## THE BLUE AUCTION



In early 2006, Conservation International led two unprecedented biodiversity surveys in the remote corners of the 183,000-km<sup>2</sup> [Bird's Head Seascape in Papua, Indonesia](#).

During five exciting weeks, a multi-national team uncovered a biological treasure trove of more than 50 new species of fish, coral, and crustacean, including two new species of epaulette sharks that use their fins to "walk" across the bottom – finds that made international headlines. With 1,323 species of coral-reef fishes and more than 75 percent of the world's recorded reef-building coral species in its waters, the Bird's Head Seascape was placed firmly in the global center of marine biodiversity.

Conducted under the auspices of the Indonesian Department of Nature Conservation, the survey was used to assess the conservation status of existing marine protected areas (MPAs) in the Bird's Head region and to identify other sites with high biodiversity and conservation value that should be targeted for gazettelement within new MPAs.

Unfortunately, the survey also revealed urgent threats to this "species factory," including destructive blast and cyanide fishing, and a wide range of harmful economic activities – both ongoing and proposed – including mining and timber harvesting in coastal areas and plans for industrial fishing.

The urgent need to protect Bird's Head, combined with the overwhelmingly positive response to the publicity garnered by the new discoveries led to a plan to raise funds for the region's high-priority marine conservation programs. Under the visionary leadership of Cherie Nursalim, Francesco Bongiovanni, Enki Tan, Peter Seligmann, and Hugh Edmeades, a plan to link the description of some of the newly-discovered Bird's Head species to a fundraising "Blue Auction" were quickly developed and enthusiastically endorsed by the Indonesian Institute of Sciences and Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries.

**ON THE MAP:** [Bird's Head is home to an incredible diversity of life.](#)



*Hemiscyllium galei*. © Gerry Allen

The gala Blue Auction was held in the historic Musée Oceanographique de Monaco on September 20, 2007. Sponsored by the [Monaco-Asia Society](#) and Conservation International, and under the high patronage of HSH Prince Albert II of Monaco, the charity auction was conducted by [Christie's International](#).

While the auctioning of species naming rights was certainly **not a new idea**, it had never before been attempted on such a grand scale, nor with a marine conservation focus. The naming rights to ten new fish species discovered in the Bird's Head, along with two non-species lots (including a follow-on expedition to the Bird's Head with CI scientists and a new "floating ranger station" patrol boat) were auctioned and together raised a total of \$2,045,000, with the highest bid of \$500,000 garnered for the honor of naming one of the new species of "walking" shark.

**ON VIDEO:** [Explore the underwater diversity that is benefiting from the Blue Auction.](#)

The revenues from the ten species lots (totaling \$1,595,000) will be used exclusively for three priority conservation programs in the Bird's Head Seascape:

- A marine enforcement initiative designed to dramatically reduce destructive and illegal fishing,
- A marine conservation education initiative that will use an innovative "floating education center" as a platform for interactive conservation education courses in the remote coastal villages of the Bird's Head, and
- A capacity-building initiative to foster taxonomic expertise amongst young Indonesian marine scientists.

The remaining revenues generated from the two non-species lots are dedicated to conservation programs run by the Monaco-based NGOs Act for Nature and the Prince Albert II

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Foundation.

Check here regularly for updates on these three high-priority conservation programs, as well as exciting news from the Bird's Head Seascape!



**UPDATE: BLUE AUCTION SPECIES**

After months of hard work and rigorous peer review, CI scientists Dr. Gerald Allen and Dr. Mark Erdmann, along with several colleagues, have published the official descriptions of the ten new fish species from the Blue Auction.



**MARINE CONSERVATION EDUCATION INITIATIVE**

With the support of the Blue Auction, we have designed an interactive marine conservation education program to reach children and adults in the 89 villages of Raja Ampat in the Bird's Head Seascape.



**TAXONOMIC CAPACITY BUILDING INITIATIVE**

With funding from the Blue Auction, the taxonomic capacity-building initiative will foster taxonomic expertise amongst young, enthusiastic Indonesian marine scientists.



**MARINE ENFORCEMENT INITIATIVE**

CI, The Nature Conservancy, local government officials in the Raja Ampat Archipelago, and the villagers who own these reefs are putting in place a marine enforcement system that will eliminate illegal activities.

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**UPDATE: BLUE AUCTION SPECIES**



We are pleased to announce that after months of hard work and rigorous peer review, CI scientists Dr. Gerald Allen and Dr. Mark Erdmann, along with several colleagues, have published the official descriptions of the ten new fish species from the Blue Auction. The new species descriptions were published in January 2008 in a special 100-page Blue Auction edition of *Aqua: The International Journal of Ichthyology* (Volume 13). The following Blue Auction species are now officially part of the scientific literature:

- *Hemiscyllium galei*, Allen and Erdmann, 2008
- *Melanotaenia synergos*, Allen and Unmack, 2008
- *Corythoichthys benedetto*, Allen and Erdmann, 2008
- *Pterois andover*, Allen and Erdmann, 2008
- *Pseudanthias charlenae*, Allen and Erdmann, 2008
- *Pictichromis caitlinae*, Allen, Gill and Erdmann, 2008
- *Pseudochromis jace*, Allen, Gill and Erdmann, 2008
- *Pterocaesio monikae*, Allen and Erdmann, 2008
- *Chrysiptera giti*, Allen and Erdmann, 2008
- *Paracheilinus nursalim*, Allen and Erdmann, 2008 (above)

You can see the walking shark (*Hemiscyllium freycineti*) here:



[You can also get an update on the Marine Conservation Education Initiative. >>](#)

Photo: (top) *Paracheilinus nursalim*. © Gerry Allen

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## UPDATE: MARINE CONSERVATION EDUCATION INITIATIVE



There is a well-known adage: "In the end, we will conserve only what we love. We will love only what we understand. We will understand only what we are taught."

Bearing this in mind, we have designed an interactive marine conservation education program to reach children and adults in the 89 villages of Raja Ampat in the [Bird's Head Seascape](#). Because the villages are so remote, we are using an innovative "floating marine conservation classroom" that will visit each village in turn.

Of the three initiatives funded by the Blue Auction, this program is the most long-term and strikes at the heart of the biggest challenge conservationists face – changing people's behavior and their view of the natural world. We believe this innovative curriculum will dramatically increase local people's understanding of their unparalleled global heritage and encourage them to become better stewards of this biodiversity – for their own benefit as well as the planet's.

We are pleased to announce that the Regent (*Bupati*) of Raja Ampat officially launched Raja Ampat's long-awaited floating classroom, the *MV Kalabia*, on February 27, 2008. The gala celebration was crowded with delighted schoolchildren, government officials, and customary leaders.

**ON VIDEO:** [Explore the underwater diversity that is benefiting from the Blue Auction.](#)

The *Kalabia* is named for the local term for Raja Ampat's endemic [walking shark](#) (*Hemiscyllium freycineti*) and uses the tagline "learning while sailing." Originally a tuna long-lining vessel, the 32-meter ship was purchased with funding from the Walton Family Foundation in a "fisheries buyout" and retired from the Indonesian tuna fleet (thereby reducing fisheries pressure). After nearly 8 months of overhaul and refitting, the *Kalabia* has been converted to a conservation education ship and painted with bright, eye-catching Papuan motifs and marine life murals.



Both young and old conservationists are benefiting from the initiative. © Sterling Zumbunn

Jointly operated by CI and partner The Nature Conservancy (TNC), the ship will make repeated two-week routes throughout Raja Ampat, visiting up to five villages on each trip. Operation of the vessel over the next three years will be funded exclusively with \$920,000 from the Blue Auction.

Preparations for the launch have been underway for nearly a year. CI recruited a team of eight conservation educators (including mostly native Raja Ampat islanders, as well as two professionals from the Canadian volunteer agency CUSO), all of whom have now been thoroughly trained in coral reef and mangrove ecology and in experiential learning

techniques, including puppeteering.

With funding support from the Beneficia Foundation, a Pew Fellowship in Marine Conservation to CI Senior Advisor Dr. Mark Erdmann, and the Blue Auction, CI, TNC, and local NGOs created a three-day experiential conservation education curriculum designed to greatly increase villagers' knowledge of their marine environment and their support for conservation initiatives such as MPA development. The curriculum has now been tested on more than 400 students from 20 different villages in Raja Ampat and refined according to feedback from the instructors, students, and participating local teachers.

Custom-designed with local cultural values in mind, the *Kalabia* curriculum includes fun educational activities like snorkeling and mangrove walks, the "ecosystem detective" game, puppet shows, original songs and skits written by the students, and various participatory games that elucidate themes like the impacts of destructive fishing practices on coral reefs and the benefits of marine protected areas (MPAs) to fish catches.

With all of this careful preparation, it is no surprise that the first courses run from the *Kalabia* in mid-April were an overwhelming success and met with tremendous villager enthusiasm!

Stay tuned for more updates – including coverage of the planned grand launching of the *Kalabia* education program by the Minister of Marine Affairs and Fisheries and a host of

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Indonesian celebrities in June 2008 in Raja Ampat!

[You can also read an update on the Taxonomic Capacity Building Initiative >>](#)

Photo: (top) © Sterling Zumbrunn

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## UPDATE: TAXONOMIC CAPACITY BUILDING INITIATIVE



The Bird's Head Seascape is a treasure trove of still-undescribed species. To effectively manage this biodiversity, we must fully understand it. Much of the research that has already been done in the area has relied upon international expertise, but we strongly believe that developing local expertise in the fields of biodiversity science and taxonomy is a top priority.

With \$565,000 from the Blue Auction, the taxonomic capacity-building initiative will foster taxonomic expertise amongst young, enthusiastic Indonesian marine scientists, giving them the tools to study and describe the mind-blowing [marine biodiversity](#) that thrives in [Indonesia's](#) rich tropical waters. This initiative is being developed in close collaboration with the Indonesian Institute of Sciences' Research Centre for Oceanography (RCO-LIPI), and will focus especially on young marine scientists from universities in eastern Indonesia (including within the Bird's Head).

RCO-LIPI has developed an intensive program of taxonomic training courses, to be conducted from mid-2008 through early 2009 at four universities: the State University of Papua in Manokwari, Pattimura University in Ambon, Sam Ratulangi University in Manado, and Hasanuddin University in Makassar. Additional participants will be invited from select universities in Bali, Java, and Sumatra. The most promising students from each of these training courses will in turn be invited to more intensive courses held at RCO-LIPI's museum facilities in Jakarta and Bogor in early-mid 2009. Those young taxonomists that show the best performance and initiative in these national-level courses will receive fellowships to study at globally outstanding museums and research institutes.

RCO-LIPI has also planned to dramatically expand its own reference collections of key taxonomic groups (including fish, corals, crustaceans, etc.) in its Indonesian museum facilities to further promote development of taxonomic expertise in-country.

The first activity of this initiative has in fact already been completed: in February 2008, the Museum of Tropical Queensland (MTQ) in Australia hosted a focused taxonomic study of a large collection of potentially new and unusual corals collected during CI's two 2006 surveys of the Bird's Head Seascape. CI Indonesia's own junior staff scientist, Erdi Lazuardi, participated in the study, which was led by three world-renowned coral scientists: Dr. Carden Wallace, Dr. Lyndon Devantier, and Mr. Emre Turak. Dr. Devantier and Mr. Turak participated in the Bird's Head surveys in 2006; Dr. Wallace is the world's foremost expert on acroporid corals, the coral group with the most species.

**ON VIDEO:** [Explore the underwater diversity that is benefiting from the Blue Auction.](#)

During the month-long project, Erdi received intensive training in coral identification as he helped verify and document 30 to 40 new species of coral from Cendrawasih Bay and the FakFak-Kaimana coastline in the Bird's Head. This unusually large number of new species, which increases the global total of described coral species by nearly 5 percent, surprised even Dr. Wallace. The team has already begun the important work of describing these new species, several of which have combinations of characteristics never before seen.



A LIPI scientist takes advantage of his training.

We congratulate Erdi, who completed the three-week "on-the-job" training course in coral taxonomy at the end of February. The MTQ team plans to use this same approach to train more promising young Indonesian taxonomists in the first half of 2009, and they have invited Erdi to participate as a teaching assistant and translator.

And in early May 2008 three young Indonesian taxonomists (CI's Erdi Lazuardi, and RCO-LIPI's Indra Vamono and Ucu Yanuarbi) participated in a rapid ecological survey of [Halmahera Island](#), co-sponsored by CI and partner The Nature Conservancy (TNC). This

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© Sterling Zumbrunn survey gave the scientists an unparalleled opportunity to collect corals, echinoderms, and crustaceans from 24 sites across Halmahera heretofore unexplored by scientists. They have just returned to their respective institutions and are examining the specimens.

[You can also read an update on the Marine Enforcement Initiative. >>](#)

Photo: (top) © Sterling Zumbrunn

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UPDATE: MARINE ENFORCEMENT INITIATIVE



In Bird's Head, illegal activities that threaten the reefs, such as blast and cyanide fishing and turtle poaching, continue unabated. Law enforcement is weak, and the government cannot afford to patrol the area.

However, with help from CI and The Nature Conservancy (TNC), local government officials in the Raja Ampat Archipelago and the villagers who own these reefs are putting in place a marine enforcement system that will eliminate these activities, particularly within the critical marine reserves in Raja Ampat.

With \$110,000 from the Blue Auction, we will contribute a new floating ranger station, which will be named the *FRS Monaco* to honor Blue Auction high patron HSH Prince Albert II of Monaco. Based on a model developed in other remote parts of Indonesia, the fully outfitted surveillance vessel will carry a patrol team of water police, fisheries officers, and deputized community members and is equipped with a speedboat for intercepting illegal fishers. This vessel can be stationed for up to two weeks at a time in the remote and uninhabited areas of Raja Ampat that are most threatened.



Water police with confiscated turtles. © Mark Erdmann

To date, we have inspected nine vessels, three of which are being considering for purchase. We hope to purchase and refit the chosen vessel by the end of 2008 so that patrolling can begin in early 2009.

**ON VIDEO:** [Explore the underwater diversity that is benefiting from the Blue Auction.](#)

Meanwhile, in late 2007, Raja Ampat Regency passed a new law (PerBup Raja Ampat No. 67/2007) that provides the legal basis for the joint patrol system. Since then, our field teams have been working hard to launch the Raja Ampat joint patrol system.

In mid-December 2007, the *FRS Inbekwan* (Raja Ampat's first floating ranger station, jointly constructed by CI and TNC) conducted its first joint patrol operation off the western coast of Waigeo, Raja Ampat.



A Hammerhead shark iscarved up on a beach. © Mark Erdmann

During the five-day maiden patrol, the team apprehended 20 illegally operating vessels, including a trawler, a shark-finning boat, and a compressor boat collecting live reef fish for export to Hong Kong. Nearly all of these vessels originated from other areas of Indonesia (including Halmahera and Sulawesi Islands) and were being operated by "outsider" fishers.

The *FRS Inbekwan* now has a regular schedule of patrols throughout Raja Ampat, and we'll provide occasional updates here on its progress.

We are also pleased to report that with additional funding from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation we were able to purchase a custom-designed, ultralight float plane that will assist in surveillance of the 4.5 million hectare Raja Ampat region and allow the patrol teams to effectively target their efforts. This floatplane, which can carry a pilot and a ranger, should be operational in Raja Ampat by late 2008.

[You can also read an update on the Species of the Blue Auction. >>](#)

Photo: (top) The *FRS Inbekwan*.

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