

## TURTLE FOUNDATION INDONESIA

### Monthly Report February 2015

I wish you nice day from our Indonesian project ☺

The most important information of the report is:

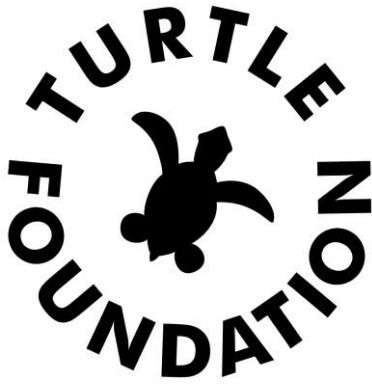
**WE ARE BACK ON ISLAND OF BILANG-BILANGAN AND MATAHA!**

The government office (DKP) gave Konservasi Biota Laut Berau a letter on Jan. 30th which gave us permission to return to work on Bilang-Bilangan and Mataha. On the morning of February 2nd, our rangers returned to the islands. While there are still challenges, including getting 3 different agencies to work together in cooperation, we are hopeful that the eggs will be protected now from poaching. Rangers are patrolling 3 times a day as before.



In the night they protect eggs against egg poachers, which in our absence had begun coming to the islands regularly. The egg poachers were likely happy that nobody was protecting islands for a while, so we must let them know that anti-poaching is again being enforced. Our rangers have been relocating eggs which are in danger of inundation, and they help hatchlings reach the water safely after hatching. Beside this usual work, the BLB guys have been cleaning up the houses, and repairing the roof of the house on Bilang –bilangan. It was clearly visible that nobody had cared for the houses over the last 6 months and that the houses had started to decay. We also started to clean up rubbish from the beach. I have never seen the beach as dirty as it was this month. And we also have started to readicate the introduced rats on the islands. Probably the rats were introduced by boat and they multiply quickly. I could not sleep on Mataha, tens of rats were running around me . . it was so strange. Rats are also a danger for hatchlings and will eat them if given the chance. We have already bought poison and guys use same process like they used with Thomas before.

Clean up the house and repairing the roof on the island of Bilang-bilangan



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Cleaning up the beach

There were several interesting events on the islands during February – 20.2.2015 there was a green turtle nesting on Mataha. This female turtle has a TAG. Tags can provide us a lot of information, so I will try to contact the institution which tagged this turtle. For sure they will be interested about where this turtle is nesting and we maybe will get information about where this turtle travels and lives when the turtle is not in Berau. On January 21st, a critically endangered hawksbill turtle nested on the beach of Bilang-bilangan. We relocated her incredible 199 eggs to a the safe place close to house where not even natural predators will disturb eggs.



Female green turtle with her TAG on Mataha and eggs of hawksbill turtle during relocation process.

The next interesting event was a nesting green turtle without back flippers on Billang-bilangan. This injury is probably from an illegal fishing method which still being used in Indonesia – dynamite fishing. For me personally it was really fascinating that this female is able to mate, to reach the beach, dig hole for eggs, lay eggs and cover her nest without back flippers. Pak Benny said that he knows this turtle; it is nesting nearly every year. Probably the turtle cannot swim far. Her nests are also not deep and relocation of eggs is necessary nearly every time because some eggs are on the surface of sand. But still I admire the willpower of this turtle to live and reproduce.



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The bad news is that only one day after the encounter with this turtle, we saw a boat using dynamite close to Bilang-bilangan. We heard bombs and saw the water spray up close to the fishing boat. This method of fishing has been prohibited for many years in Indonesia, but it can still be seen and heard here. The method kills not only fish, but also turtles, dolphins, mantas, and of course destroys the coral reefs. At least we have a photo of the boat so we will report it to local police.

During February we spent a lot of time on the islands and in the government office but on Feb 13th I was also teaching in one local school. Pupils were young but they formed a relationship with turtles and they started to understand the problem of sea turtle exploitation in Berau. Pupils made a nice poster which will inform their classmate about turtles. A wonderful addition was that eight of the children from this class came to BLB office only 3 days after my visit at school. They wished to learn more about turtles. Pak Rudi also trained them to make bracelets from plastic. One girl was from Derawan Island where bracelets from turtle shells are openly sold in the market. I hope this young girl will take the lesson of making the plastic bracelet and encourage family and friends on Derawan to use plastic rather than turtle shell from now on.





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So that is all from me 😊 I am happy that we are back on islands and despite the difficulties we have to focus on the future and do the best for the turtles. I think now the most important thing is to buy a speedboat and radio. Because it is both difficult and dangerous to stay on the islands without any communication and contact with people outside and without any possibility to leave the islands in an emergency.

Take care and enjoy the meeting.

It is really a pity that I cannot join it and meet you all again

Hana Svobodová