

## TURTLE FOUNDATION INDONESIA

### Monthly Report March 2015

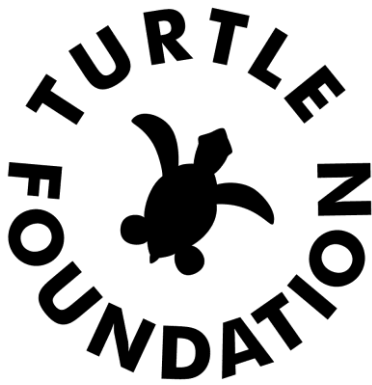
Dear TF board,

It seems unbelievable that I am already one year here in Indonesia. I came in March and it is March again. Thank you a lot for opportunity to work for our sea turtle conservation program in such important place like Berau is for green and also for hawksbill turtles. It was not easy year for all of us but I still trust it has sense.

March was same like last year – a lot of good but also some bad things happened. I am tired but keep working. In the beginning of March two volunteers from Slovakia came to Berau. Petra Richterova and Zuzana Huleniova decided to help me not only on islands but also with community development program in Maratua. Maratua is an island where not one single turtle nest makes it to hatching. People here eat the eggs from all the turtles that nest there. There is evidence that Maratua people ate meat from at least 5 green turtles during the New Year celebration. This despite the fact the turtles are protected by law in Indonesia. The Berau government is weak and policy is not working at all. I think the best way how we can help is education and community development. Maratua is also the island where a new airport is in the process of being built. It should be open in the end of this year. Plan of local government is to make here the second Bali – the touristic paradise on Borneo. The problem is that local people are completely unprepared. Most of the people are fisherman, nobody can speak English, and there is no accommodation and no single restaurant. Most of houses have no toilet and people throw rubbish to the sea. Even worse, many people have already sold their beach front land to investors from outside. I hope if we help local people to prepare themselves for tourism, they will stop destroying their nature. With this idea I, Petra and Zuzana came to Maratua (Payung-payung village) 6 of March 2015. We spent only 10 days on island but we accomplished more than I expected. We taught local people English every evening. It was only about basic phrases, how to speak with tourist – where they can sleep, eat, where shop is, how much something cost and what people can visit on Maratua island. It was not a lot and for sure they are not able to make a long conversation with foreigners now but they have started and now they can speak about most important things which tourists frequently ask for. For me it is big success. Usually I am optimist but before going to Maratua I was afraid that the first day a lot of people will come because they will be interested in white teachers and then the number of our students will decrease. But fortunately the opposite was true. The first day 8 people came, the second 11, then 14 and in the end we work with 19 people. 3 diving instructors, 2 teachers, one local government officer, several women who wish to open restaurant and few pupils from primary and secondary school joined our English lessons.



Our second goal was to teach local woman, who wish to open restaurant, how to cook for tourist. Maratua is dry island where nearly nothing grows. Usual food here is rice with fish and chilli. If there is no fish you will get rice with noodles and tea with 3 big spoons of sugar. Thomas and I really enjoyed this food during our research in September. Local people know that tourists don't like their



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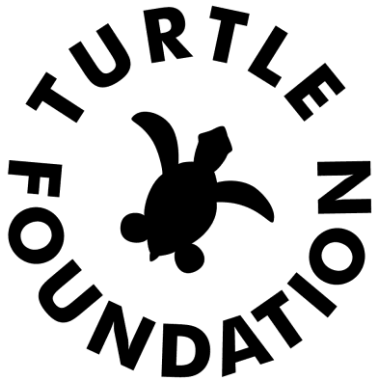
food so they already several times ask me to teach them how to cook something that foreigners will enjoy. We tried our best to cook something more western using local goods. Cooking together was a big experience – several women, tens of children. Every time I gave cuddly toy “turtles” and pictures about turtle’s life (turtles on the sea, nesting turtle, hatchlings) to children to colour it and play with until we finished our work with their mothers. During cooking and English lessons I also spoke a lot about sea turtles, their conservation, why turtles are important for Maratua and why Turtle Foundation (Konservasi Biota Laut Berau) conducted such kind of program. I hope and trust that these people, who join us, will never eat again turtle eggs or turtle meat. I think everyone enjoyed our community development program in Maratua, they said they learn a lot of useful knowledge and skills and they wish to continue with learning



There was one more good fact in Maratua. Sablon, the guy who made souvenirs from hawkbills turtle shell and Berly taught him to make souvenirs from coconut shell, starts to be successful. He has opened a small shop with his turtle friendly souvenirs, he started to teach more people in his village how to make these products and he has already started to sell his products to Derawan islands where turtle shell products are openly offered at souvenir shops. He makes an agreement with shops to where he sells his products– the shop cannot offer turtle shell products anymore. I am happy that with him we can see good results of our work.



After coming back from Maratua Island, Anna Polednakova, who was helping Turtle Foundation in Cabo Verde last year, joined our volunteer team and we left to islands of Bilang-bilangan and Mataha. Girls said that they have never seen so nice place before. They enjoyed turtles, sea and



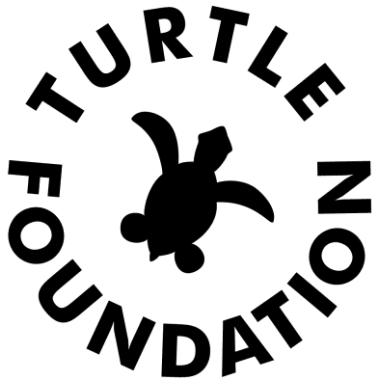
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beaches but they also helped me a lot with rubbish. We collected all rubbish from half of Bilang-bilangan Island and all glass and tin can from Mataha. This glass and cans are now waiting for transport to Berau in plastic bags close to ranger station.



Almost everything was excellent during March and my statement from the beginning of this report would be untrue if there is not one big problem which bothered us already several weeks. In last report I informed you that egg poachers were stealing turtle eggs from Bilang-bilangan and Mataha during last months when YPB “protect” islands. That time egg poachers started to frequently enter the islands and now they don’t want to stop their “business”. Egg poachers came for first time 27 of February to Bilang-bilangan. Since that time rangers were patrolling one more time during the night around 3am. But 12 of March our rangers met egg poachers on Bilang – bilangan again. They had dark mask and only eyes were visible. They brandish machete and our guys with headlamps could not do anything. Since this unwanted encounter, rangers started to relocate all eggs to the hatchery. They thought that egg poachers will come again once or two times but if they don’t get anything they will not come back again. Rangers have been working like crazy, they have relocated 7 to 10 nest every night. They have patrolled starting in 21pm to 4 am every night and they again get up at 6am for morning patrol. I told them all week how much they are working and how tired they are to prove that BLB can protect eggs and islands in good way. But egg poachers don’t want to surrender. 26 of March during a morning patrol, rangers found the hatchery with open and destroyed doors. Steel wire with key was cut. In two hours the egg poachers took 15 nests from hatchery. It is nearly 1500 eggs. They took them from hatchery like from a shop, nicely prepared one next to the second one. Unbelievable. When we saw it our hearts bled. I saw rangers sitting with hang heads. They did everything they could to protect eggs. Too much work, no sleep.. with this as result.



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Every time I trust that if someone does his best, the success will come and everything will be all right. I sit two days nearly without voice and tried to start think normally again. Nothing made sense. We were trying to come back to the islands for six months and now when we are on islands and we wish to work, protect turtles and have a bit of rest, this happened. But negative thinking will not protect turtle eggs; rangers lift up their heads and discussed a new strategy against egg poachers. Since that day (26.3.2015) rangers are relocating all nests, but not to hatchery. They decided to relocate eggs to beach forest around the island of Bilang-bilangan randomly but every time far away from all turtle tracks. Guys camouflage all nests also. It is more work again and I really hope that it will work. We reported the situation immediately to mayor of Balikpapan, the closest inhabited island, to mayor of province, to police and to DKP (the government office which is responsible for islands).



Mrs. Yunda from DKP is still on our side, she knows we are doing all what we can. DKP is observing our work and our abilities; we have to report every single job, every single person who wants to enter the islands. DKP and mayor of province are asking a lot also about if TF is serious and reliable. The main question is why we have no speedboat. They know it is dangerous to stay on islands without transport and with the information about egg poachers they add that if we have speedboat we can immediately do patrolling around islands and at least take photos of suspicious boats. Hilli informed us that we can rent speedboat. We are already more than one week trying to find some but it is not so easy. Berly spoke with eight speedboat owners but no results. Even if price is very high (nearly 70 euro per day how we paid with Thomas in September), owners don't want to rent us their speedboats to area of Bilang-bilangan and Mataha. The problem is that they don't know the area and they just know that there are usually big waves. Despite telling them that we know the area and we have experienced motorist and also that we will repair the boat if something happen until now there is no one who wants to rent us his speedboat. We will try again and again but we should order our own speedboat as soon as possible I think. Please think about it – it is really dangerous on islands without possibility of transportation and DKP considers our having a speedboat a sign of Turtle Foundation earnestness. .

We here do our best, please keep your fingers cross

Hana Svobodová