



After the successful expedition to Honduras in 2011 with Operation Wallacea, we decided to venture further afield to the iconic biodiversity hotspot of Madagascar for our 2014 expedition.



# Operation Madagascar

This entailed working in the Mahamavo forests (at Mariarano and Matsedroy camps) collecting data on carbon, biodiversity and community economics of the dry forests to aid conservation efforts.

Then we travelled to the island of Nosy Be to complete a dive-training course and learn about marine surveying techniques, and to learn about Indian Ocean reef ecology, such as opportunistic counts and stereo video to measure the health of the reef.

Expedition Leader and Science teacher Alan Hartigan



“Tiny mouse lemurs seemed to be everywhere with pairs of bright eyes looking at us from the dark trees ”

“Tani-Keli translates to “Turtle Island” and got its name from looking like a turtle at the surface of the water but is also a well-known turtle hot-spot”

## Mariarano (days 1-6) Salame (hello in Malagasy)

Arriving in Madagascar the change in culture was instant. Exploring Tana was like no other city we had ever seen before. There were sights of extreme poverty, yet the locals always seemed to be smiling. In camp, one group did a Lemur walk while the others went on a Herpetology (chameleons, geckos, snakes and frogs) walk, getting the chance to hold a large Tree Boa.

The next morning our conservation work began with recognising the distinctive calls of the birds of prey, the Malagasy Paradise Flycatchers and the vibrant colours of the Sounimaga Sunbird.

## Matsedroy (days 7-9)

Here we spotted the legendary Baobab trees, huge Swallowtail butterflies and, of course, lemurs, chameleons and snakes slithered across our path several times. The resident lemurs here are the brown lemurs but those sharp KEVICC eyes did spot a Forked Lemur on one transect survey and the lemur scientist got very excited indeed by this rare spot!! We also completed more bird surveys including the Cuckoo Roller (its bones are used in Malagasy witch doctor ceremonies).

## Nose Be - diving (days 10-17)

After qualifying as underwater scuba divers, we began surveying the damaged reef. Quadrats were placed along a transect to measure the distribution and abundance of species within the area.

Each day we had ‘eco lectures’ and we went to Tani-Keli, a protected island that cannot be fished or exploited by locals, and tourists are only allowed between 9am and 3pm.

Our work was to help conservation efforts to restore the reef to the pristine conditions found at Tan-Keli and we were glad we had contributed.

Year 13 students Larissa Connabeer, Matthew Hartridge, Joe Small and Francesca White

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