



# TEENAGE BIOLOGISTS TO WORK ON INDONESIAN CONSERVATION PROJECT



St. Ambrose College biologists are to embark on a once in a lifetime research expedition to work in Indonesia's rainforests and coral reefs as part of an international conservation project.

This July when many teenagers will be flying off to Mediterranean beaches, 16 young scientists led by St. Ambrose Biology teachers Amy Drogan and Paul Allen will fly the 8,000 plus miles to Sulawesi for a two week working expedition.

They will be the hands and eyes of Operation Wallacea, gathering ecological data to be used by some of the world's leading conservationists to monitor the potential deterioration of this isolated region's unique flora and fauna.

Amy Drogan said: "Separated from other landmasses by deep ocean channels, this area has a high percentage of endemic species. There are 127 mammal species of which 62% are endemic, 700 bird species of which 32% are endemic and

Pointing to the other side of the globe is St. Ambrose Biologist Amy Drogan is pictured with Matthew Booth and Alex Dobson.

74 species of herpetofauna of which 38% are endemic, yet despite such rich and diverse conditions this area remains one of the least biologically studied areas in the world and one of the most likely places to discover vertebrate species."

In Week One the party will be based in the tropical rainforest in Buton carrying out their data collection as well as learning jungle survival skills. In the second week they will focus on marine research working among the coral reefs recently seen on David Attenborough's Blue Planet 2 and gaining their PADI open water level qualification to work underwater.

Alex Dobson, 17, pictured right, who wants to study Medicine said: "Having watched The Blue Planet, I can't wait to be working among the same coral reefs. Like many of my generation I am appalled by the level of damage being done to the natural world such as from deforestation and plastic pollution of the oceans, and I feel privileged to be part of an important conservation mission."

Matthew Booth, 17, added: "This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to see the type of flora and fauna we never see in the United Kingdom and I'd take this chance in favour of any Mediterranean beach."

He added: "I want to study civil engineering and I feel this will give me a much deeper understanding of the measures the construction industry must take to preserve the environment during important capital projects."

Each pupil will need to raise £2,700 to fund their own trip and led by one of Ambrose's leading young fundraisers Hannan Sarwar, the team are already making inroads into a total cost nearing £50,000 to fund their work.

Hannan, 17, said: "We have written to a range of major local business detailing our work and asking for sponsorship, while in school and the wider community we are setting up stalls and services to raise extra money."

Hannan, who also wants to be a doctor concluded, poignantly: "I have always had a deep gut instinct to help people and improve society. For me this is a vital part of my education helping me to see exactly what we need to do to conserve vital ecological domains and in helping me to become a much more rounded person, I feel I will learn much more than I could ever possibly give."