

### **Project Update: May 2003**

I am still out here in Sulawesi and all is well here with lots of exciting progress with the babirusa work. The reserve is now being proposed as a national park (52,000 ha) by the local government of the area and there has been a great turnaround in terms of local support for the protection of the area - we now have full support from the Regent of the district - since his visit to the site and the majority of locals.

There has been quite a bit of international publicity with Martyn Colbeck from the BBC visiting twice to film babirusa for the "Life of Mammals" David Attenborough series. That was great and meant the babirusa featured in programme six, shown in January, called "The Opportunists". Martyn also wrote a children's story called "The Special Place in the Forest" about the salt-lick where the babirusa congregate and we have printed 5,000 of this book in the Indonesian language with very nice illustrations by an Indonesian artist.

We have been involved in quite a lot of efforts to encourage locals to get on side, including growing and planting of 8,000 teak trees, now planted in the buffer-zone around the reserve, while at the same time keeping up the essential active protection and patrolling of the reserve, with help from military personnel. The trade in babirusa meat has declined substantially now: we finally got a babirusa trader convicted in court, the first ever completed prosecution of this kind in Sulawesi. We have also set up a local NGO called YANI (Yayasan Adudu-Nantu International) based in Gorontalo, the town nearest the babirusa reserve, comprising a group of committed Gorontaloese and other Indonesian colleagues.