

INDONESIA  
HERPETOFAUNA  
FOUNDATION

# NEWSLETTER #1

Year 2019 - February 2020



# IHF Newsletter #1

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## Introduction

Starting off from the establishment of the Ciliwung Herpetarium in 2015, the Indonesia Herpetofauna Foundation was founded in September 2018, due to an urgent need for the conservation of amphibians and reptiles in Indonesia. This is our first newsletter, and therefore we will provide a brief introduction to our current projects, as well as recent updates. Since 2019, we have rescued over 100 snakes from conflict with humans, educated more than 1000 people through our outreach projects, and raised awareness by reaching out to over 2000 people through social media. We have also produced four publications, conducted capacity building workshops, and helped develop local communities.

## Ciliwung Herpetarium

### Renovation

We are very grateful to everyone who has supported us for the renovation in mid 2019, in order to create a better educational facility for the public, and better living conditions for the animals. Thanks to all our supporters and volunteers, the herpetarium is now fully functional as an educational display, as well as a temporary holding space for animals removed from conflict.



The display is made with minimal text and many pictures, making it as easy to understand as possible. We also have an interactive circle (above) which shows the cause and effect of human activities, relating it to humans (e.g. littering causes floods). The other educational concepts displayed at the herpetarium, using infographics, live animals, and preserved specimens are biodiversity of the Ciliwung river, importance of herpetofauna, snake conflict (and snakebite) mitigation, snakebite first aid, and invasive species.

## Upkeep and Maintenance

Thanks to all the support, we are now able to hire two part time staff members, who are responsible for the daily maintenance of the herpetarium and welfare of the animals, conducting rescues and releases, as well as outreach to the public. The two staff members are Operations Manager, Angga Risdiana and Animal Technician, Muhammad Azib Abidin. Angga and Azib are also assisted by volunteers, including veterinarians Purbo and Yumni, who are in charge of undertaking medical procedures when necessary.



Clockwise from bottom left: Operations Manager Angga Risdiana, Veterinarian Nur Purba Priambada, and Animal Technician Muhammad Azib Abidin examining a monitor lizard that had been rescued from conflict.

## Rescue and Release

Since 2019, we have been able to successfully relocate over 100 snakes and other reptiles (monitor lizards) from conflict with humans. In January 2020, we received 44 snakes, most of them being reticulated pythons. Most of the animals have been released to suitable habitat, however there are some cases that require more intensive care. This is part of our conflict mitigation project supported by Save the Snakes.



(above and below) The process of moving the snakes from North Jakarta Fire Station to the Ciliwung Herpetarium.



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(left) The wound on a spitting cobra rescued from conflict in Jakarta.

(below) Our team conducting a medical examination on the spitting cobra.



(above) Examining a rescued python before putting it in a quarantine enclosure

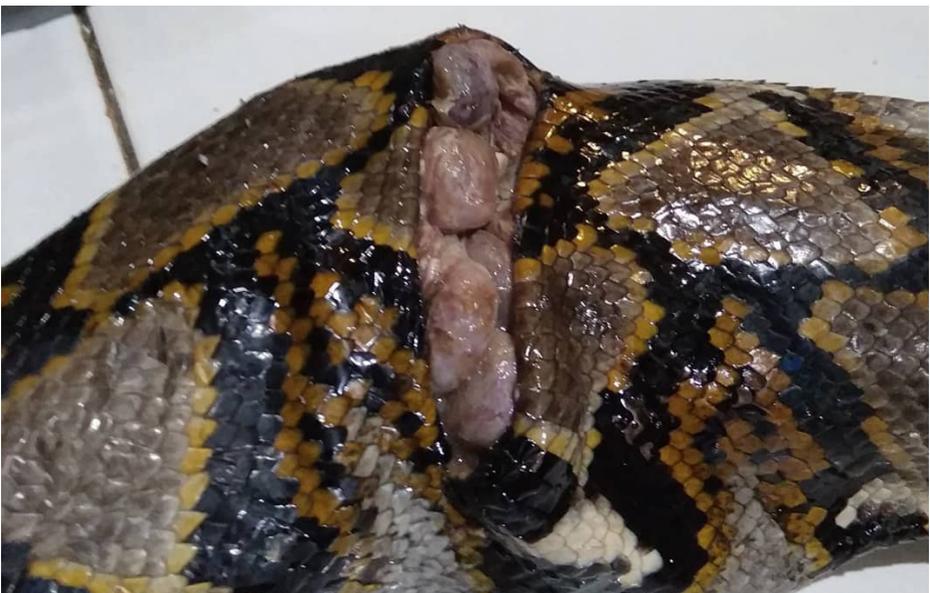
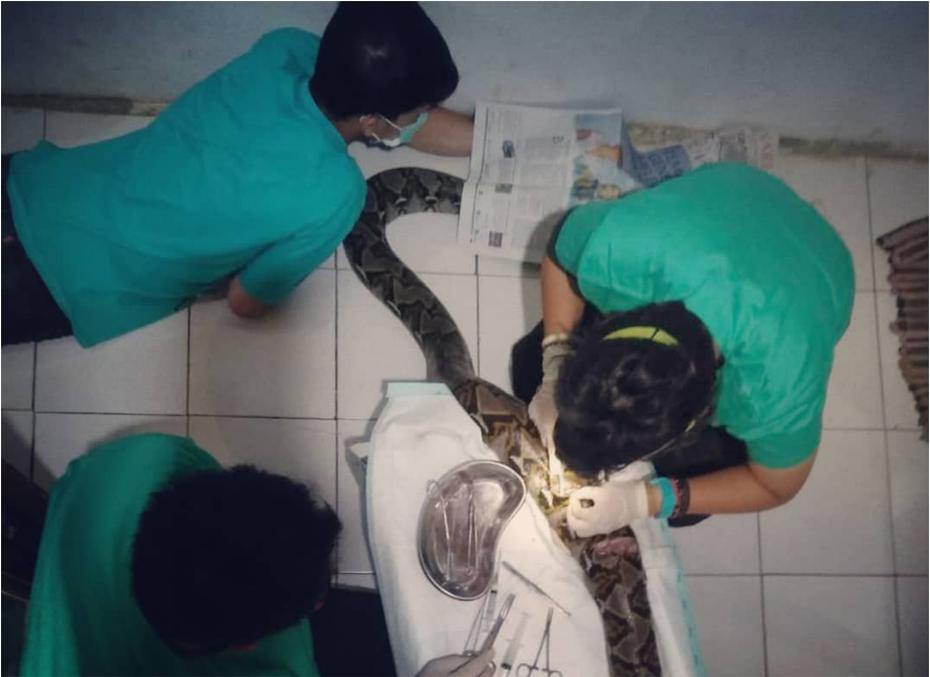
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A python rescued by the Fire Service in North Jakarta in January sustained eight wounds on the body, with two very deep cuts on the neck. It was attacked by people using a machete before firefighters arrived at the scene. The snake, nicknamed 'Frankenstein' by our team, was treated by our volunteer vets, doctors Purbo and Yumni. However, after about a week, making it through two surgeries, Frankenstein sadly passed away.



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Another python arrived in early February, with similar wounds to Frankenstein, however it had a broken bone as well on the body. Nicknamed 'Corona' by our team, and under close observation, the snake seems to be making a stable recovery.



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A king cobra which was in conflict with people was brought to our partner organisation, the Cikananga Wildlife Centre in West Java. As it was a venomous snake, our team was called to assist with the medical procedures (above) as well as the release of this snake (below). It measured over 3 metres in length.



## Cocoon Club

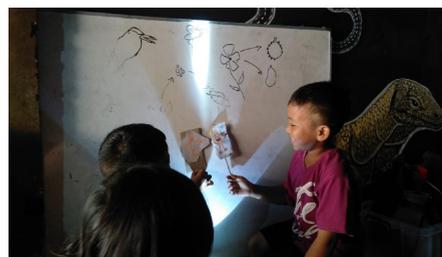
At the start of 2020, we established the 'Laskar Kepompong' (Cocoon Club), a group of children in our village (Gelongsong Village, Bojong Gede, Bogor), who gather at the herpetarium every Thursday and Sunday.

The philosophy behind this name is that to anyone who is not a butterfly expert, we have no idea what will come out of it. Like the cocoon, we don't know what these children will grow up to become in the future.

On the first meeting we learned about the life cycle and importance of butterflies, did a bit of drawing, and made some puppets, where they performed puppet shows in teams, with a nature-themed story that they got to create themselves.

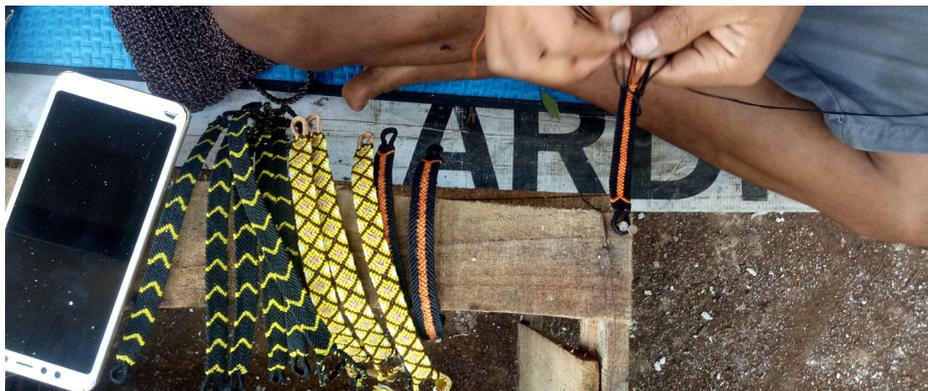
This is not a school. Here they are not taught to be competitive or get good grades. Here they are taught to care, to love, to share, and to respect each other and nature. They are given the opportunity to express themselves, to be who they are, without being judged. We use animals, art, and storytelling as a medium. Hopefully they will one day grow up to become the stewards of our planet and achieve great things in their lifetime.





## Snake Bracelets

We are working together with Nurhadi, a local artist from our village, to create bracelets inspired by native snake species. These bracelets will be sold to raise funds for our projects, as well as support Nurhadi and his team. To find out more about the bracelets, please visit our instagram page [@ciliwungherpetarium.merch](https://www.instagram.com/ciliwungherpetarium.merch)



## Capacity Building

### RAM 2019

Last year, we organised the Reptile and Amphibian Management Workshop (RAM) 2019 - a collaborative capacity building event organized by Indonesia Herpetofauna Foundation, Cikananga Wildlife Center, Chester Zoo, and BKSDA (Indonesian Forestry Department).

The workshop, held in Cikananga on 30th July - 2nd August 2019, aims to provide training and resources on reptile and amphibian management for both government officers and NGOs, who are involved with rescuing wildlife from conflict as well as illegal trade.

Topics such as identification of protected species, short-term husbandry, handling, restraint, transport, up to long-term husbandry, enrichment, training and medical management were covered.





## Fire Service Snake Conflict Management Training

As part of our conflict mitigation project supported by Save the Snakes, we have conducted a training session with Bogor Fire Service on how to safely remove snakes, along with other skills relating to snake conflict management such as educating the public, captive management, release protocols, and snakebite first aid. We are now working together with the Fire Service to reduce snake conflict in Bogor, and will continue to collaborate more in the future.



## Conflict Mitigation

### Outreach

In West Java, we conduct outreach to the general public, visiting schools, villages, and other local communities in order to educate them about snakes and mitigate conflict. The topics covered are the importance of snakes, common snakes in the area, what to do if you see a snake, and first aid for snakebite.

As part of a project supported by Save the Snakes, we hope to identify the success of our current methods, and further develop it by using pre and post questionnaires. This will allow us to evaluate whether or not the session has been effective.



### Roti Island

In 2019 we visited the island of Roti in East Indonesia to conduct herpetofauna surveys, working together with the Indonesian Manta Project. We also held a snake awareness workshop which allowed locals to learn about snakes, species encountered on Roti, what to do in a snake encounter, and the correct first aid for snakebite.



## Meet the Team

Over the past year, we have increased our followers on social media up to threefold, established several partnerships, and reached more people than we ever have previously. This is all thanks to one of our hardworking team members, Novita Sari, who is in charge of all the social media, merchandising, and communicating with the public. Despite not getting paid for this, and being a full-time teacher for a living, she has achieved a great deal and made a big impact. This is her story...

### Novita Sari, Public Relations Officer

In 2013, I got accepted in UNJ (Jakarta State University) as a student in Special Needs Teaching. However, this was not intentional. I had applied to study Chemistry, but wrongly clicked on the registration form! It's fine, I thought. It can't be that difficult, can it?

By the second year of university, many of my peers had dropped out. I was on the verge of doing so as well, but I thought to myself - I've gone through two years of this. It would be such a waste to stop now. I can go all the way. Whatever I did, I wanted to do it properly. I had no experience with teaching, so I decided to start tutoring, volunteering, and doing other things to get experience. I wanted to become a good teacher when I graduated. In 2018, I landed a job as an assistant lecturer at the London School Beyond Academy (LSBA) in Jakarta, focusing on students with special needs.

Aside from my job, I loved to travel. Every long holiday, I would do a trip to different locations around Indonesia. One day, I was snorkeling at Bali Barat National Park, and I saw many people stepping on the coral, despite warnings from National Park officers not to do so as it will destroy the reef. It made me wonder - is my passion for travelling destroying the environment?



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This question in my head bugged me for days, causing an urge to get involved with conservation. I remember visiting the Cikananga Wildlife Centre back when I was in university, with a friend that was studying veterinary medicine. I had enjoyed the experience, and the thought of interacting with animals seemed fun. It would be a change of scene from the classroom and urban environment that I live and breathe in every day.



My knowledge of conservation groups was pretty much limited to Cikananga, and it so happened that they had shared an open recruitment for volunteers at one of their partner organisations - the Ciliwung Herpetarium. Ciliwung in Bogor, I thought. This is not too far from Jakarta, it seems manageable. I'll give it a shot.

I applied and got accepted to become a volunteer at Ciliwung. I arrived at the herpetarium for the initial training program, which lasted three days. On the first day, I was confused as to why there were many snakes around, and was shocked when the vet discussed live animal management! This was when I found out that snakes were the main focus of this group. I wasn't going to be chopping up fruit and feeding cute little monkeys or deer - there was none of that here! This is not Cikananga. I was terrified of snakes, and thought of leaving right after the training program was over.

However, the second day of the volunteer training program was held in Mt. Halimun-Salak National Park. We were taken out to the field at night, to look for amphibians and reptiles in their natural environment. This was the first time I'd ever done anything like this, and it completely changed my mindset about these creatures. I gained a deeper appreciation for them. Up close, they were beautiful, interesting, and (sometimes) cute.

On the last day, they brought in a doctor, Tri Maharani, to give a lecture on snakebite management. She discussed in detail the snakebite issues in Indonesia, as well as the correct first aid for venomous snake bite. This blew my mind. I was unaware of these issues all my life, despite it being a massive problem. There were only a handful of people working on snake conservation in Indonesia, and Tri was the only doctor in the country who dedicated her life to solve Indonesia's snakebite crisis.

I realized that Indonesian herpetofauna were faced with many threats - and there are very few people doing anything to save them. In fact, many people don't even know these problems existed! The idea of leaving didn't sit right with me - I had to do something.

Being a teacher, I was passionate about education. However, needing my day job, I didn't have the time to go out and conduct outreach. So I decided to help with social media. Social media is an incredibly useful tool to reach people and spread awareness.

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Everyone knows about the elephants and tigers, but not many people are aware of the plight of frogs and snakes. I wanted to spread the message far and wide, starting with the people close to me.

At the time, the organization was 100% volunteer-based, and experiencing all the problems solely volunteer-based organisations face. About a month in, it became clear there were issues with the animal management rotas, usually from lack of commitment. The team was not communicating very well, and this was followed by an ultimatum, from our founder who was studying overseas. He said; "If we can't take care of the animals properly, we might as well release all the native species and euthanise those that cannot be released." He asked if there were any volunteers who wanted to commit to the task of animal care, and for real this time. Out of the fear that nobody would sign up, I did. In the end, quite a few signed up, and as a group we received lectures and education on the importance of conservation.

If the aim was to educate people about reptiles and amphibians, I figured I have to know something about them, and began volunteering at the herpetarium once a week, taking care of the animals at the facility. Despite my fear of snakes, I slowly braved myself and learned from the more experienced team members. It was extremely difficult, as I had absolutely no clue about anything in regards to animal management. But I was determined to keep trying.



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Running the social media outreach also had its own challenges. I was confused about writing captions, didn't know where to get photographs, or who to contact for graphic designs. But with a bit of asking around, I managed. I had lots of ideas; wanting to make it more interactive by using instagram stories and ensuring everything was updated regularly, so that we can reach more people and spread awareness.

Then one day I had a thought, I said "Why don't we start selling merchandise to help with fundraising?", and was encouraged to kick-start the process, supported by Nathan.

But again, I had no idea where to print t-shirts, how to promote these things, how to do orders, or do anything in regards to merchandise! Once more I considered quitting...but thinking about Nathan, Azib, Angga and what they sacrificed and how they struggled, I stepped up to take responsibility, and learned.

By now, people were buying merchandise, posting pictures of it online, and expressing great enthusiasm, all while raising much-needed funds for Ciliwung, made me feel like it was all worth it.

One day, I was on a motorbike with Azib, about to release some reticulated pythons. While on a busy road, traffic suddenly stopped, and I realized that my rucksack had become significantly lighter. There was a five-metre long python across the road, and it had caused quite a scene! I then found the hole in my rucksack, that the snake had made in order to escape. We called Angga, managed to get things under control, and I swore never to participate in a release again. The next day, I was with them again releasing a monitor lizard.

Little experiences like these are one of the things that inspire me to stay. Social media and merchandising has been going very well this year, and I'm very proud of it. I managed to face some of my biggest challenges, and learn many life lessons along the way. Many changes have been made in the organization; the team is much smaller and more effective at communicating, and I now have a functional team of people helping with the social media. I have acquired new skills and experiences through different tasks, created impactful partnerships, and met some incredible people. Most importantly, I enjoy the process and the impact it has for conservation.

# Publications

Captive & Field Herpetology Volume 3 Issue 1 2019  
**An Annotated Checklist of the Herpetofauna of Ciknangra Wildlife Centre, Sukabumi, West Java, Indonesia**  
 Nathan Ruall & Yuhik Naitani  
 Indonesia Herpetofauna Foundation, J. L. Hidayat, 49 43 103 431 011 Desa Kuningan, Kecamatan Pongkor, Kabupaten Sukabumi, Jawa Barat, Indonesia  
 Ciknangra Wildlife Centre, Jl. Ciknangra, Desa Ciknangra, Kec. Tawakal, Kabupaten Sukabumi, Jawa Barat, Indonesia  
 \*Corresponding author: naitani@herpetofauna.org

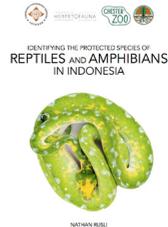
**ABSTRACT**  
 The herpetofaunal diversity of Ciknangra Wildlife Centre, West Java, Indonesia, was studied using a 100% assessment survey conducted in 2018. One hundred and sixteen species of amphibians and 100 species of reptiles were recorded. The total number of species recorded in the area was 216. The most abundant species were 11 species of amphibians from 5 families and 10 species of reptiles from 10 families. The most abundant species of amphibians were 11 species of amphibians from 5 families and 10 species of reptiles from 10 families. The most abundant species of amphibians were 11 species of amphibians from 5 families and 10 species of reptiles from 10 families.

## An Annotated Checklist of the Herpetofauna of Ciknangra Wildlife Centre, Sukabumi, West Java, Indonesia

This is a collaborative paper between IHF and Ciknangra Wildlife Centre. It provides a checklist of amphibians and reptiles in a region that is relatively understudied, as well as field notes on natural history of the species described. It was published in the Captive and Field Herpetology Journal: <http://captiveandfield-herpetology.com/volume-3-issue-1-2019/>

## Identification Guide to the Protected Species of Reptiles and Amphibians in Indonesia

This small book was made as a capacity building tool to help government officials and NGO conservationists to identify protected species of herpetofauna. The book is available for free at: [herpetofaunaindonesia.org/identification-of-protected-species](http://herpetofaunaindonesia.org/identification-of-protected-species)



## Pesona Tersembunyi Gunung Salak Taman Nasional Gunung Halimun Salak

This is a coffee table book we published in collaboration with Gunung Halimun Salak National Park and Indonesia Power. It is aimed at the general public as an introduction to Mt. Salak's rich diversity of herpetofauna. This book is being distributed by Mt. Halimun Salak National Park. For more information please visit [www.halimunsalak.org](http://www.halimunsalak.org)

## Ular Disekitar Kita - Pulau Jawa

This is a tool to educate the public on the importance of snakes, types of snakes, conflict mitigation, and snakebite first aid. As it is aimed at the general public, it was written in a style that is easy to understand, including many photographs and illustrations. It was supported by Wildstuff, Jungle Diaries, and Save the Snakes. Some books were sold for fundraising, and the soft copy is distributed for free online to make it more accessible and have a bigger impact: [herpetofaunaindonesia.org/ular-disekitar-kita-jawa](http://herpetofaunaindonesia.org/ular-disekitar-kita-jawa)



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We would like to thank all partners and supporters who have helped us in efforts to conserve the amphibians and reptiles of Indonesia:



Save The Snakes  
savethesnakes.org



**WILDSTUFF.**



INDONESIAN  
**MANTA**  
PROJECT

### Individual Donors:

Alexander Kienast, Catharine Dixon, Devon Massyn, Erick Briggs, Lil Lopez, Liss Bruton, Lucy Thomas, Monty Najjar, Myke Clarkson, Politarius, Probo Guritno & Peppy Megawati, Tom Wells, and those who wish to remain anonymous.