

# Sulawesi & Halmahera

## *In the Footsteps of Wallace*

### A Greentours Itinerary

#### Day 1

Depart UK/Europe

#### Days 2-4

**Makassar: Bantimurung-Bulusarung NP, Sungai Pattunuang Asue and Ramang-Ramang**

A centrepiece of our visit will be Bantimurung-Bulusarung National Park. In 1857 Alfred Wallace was the first western naturalist to explore this beautiful area and wrote extensively about it in 'The Malay Archipelago'. A national park for hardly more than a decade, it is nevertheless one of the most important in the region. Bantimurung's waterfalls are famed for their beauty and for their butterflies – it was Wallace who first referred to Bantimurung as the 'Kingdom of Butterflies'. We may see rather less than his 256 documented species but we can hope for groups of *Graphium* swallowtails mud-puddling and of photographing impressive Birdwings such as *Troides haliphron* and the gorgeous *Troides hypolitus*. *Graphium androcles* is a fantastic thing, zebra-striped with long white tails. We'll want to spend quality time with the endemic Sulawesi Moor Macaque, which inhabits forests close to the waterfalls alongside birds such as Sulawesi Dwarf Hornbill and the Piping Crow. The Eocene and Miocene coral limestones of the hills above the waterfalls are covered in a thick and varied vegetation and it is from these that the butterflies descend to the damp lowland edge. The butterfly fauna of Sulawesi is less diverse than neighbouring islands such as Borneo, yet so many more of its species are endemic, a situation perhaps arising from the recent geological history of Sulawesi, it being formed from an accretion of several islands where presumably distinct forms had developed on each island. Sulawesi exhibits a form of gigantism amongst several butterfly species including the gorgeous green-shot *Papilio peranthus*, a swallowtail that in Sulawesi exists in a form markedly larger than elsewhere in its range. Another phenomenon that is unique to Sulawesi is known as 'Celebes Forewing'. In this a number of completely unrelated species have all developed a similar wing-shape that closely related species in other regions do not possess – we'll see it well in *Appias zarinda*, which mud-puddles in numbers at Bantimurung. The gorgeous Tree Nymph flutters about above the river, looking as if one puff of wind would blow it away. Also here is the related *Idea blanchardii*. Other striking species we'll likely encounter are Erichson's Cruiser, the Wizard, the Blue-banded Egg-fly, and both the Red Lacewing and the very fine Violet Lacewing. Sulawesi Blue Nawab and the Celebes Map may keep our attention on the butterflies but the birds will be working hard to wrest back our attention too with Hair-crested Drongos hawking from the trees as small groups of Silver-tipped Imperial Pigeons fly over. We'll see the unusual Sulawesi Babblers, Grey-sided and

Yellow-sided Flowerpeckers, Black Sunbirds and the semi-nocturnal Blue-backed Parrot, while Grey-rumped Tree Swifts arc through the skies above the forest.

Red-knobbed Hornbills fly over as we look for the Bear Cuscus, which is often visible along trails in Sungai Pattunuang Asue where we'll also encounter a rich variety of Odonata and butterflies such as *Papilio sataspes*, gorgeous iridescent green *Papilio blumei*, and intricately-scripted *Cethosia myrana*. Wallacea Bluebottles are a beautiful sight and Sulawesi Red Helen and Blue Helen will increase our list of Swallowtails and we'll hope to see both the Eastern Yellow Birdwing and Rippon's Birdwing here. A boat trip is the best way to see the amazing rugged karst limestone of Ramang-Ramang, which combined with tropical greenery and abundant water make for a fabulous landscape. This unique and beautiful landscape has been a UNESCO World Heritage site since 2001. The Black-ringed White-eye is more or less restricted to these limestone outcrops and other birds we'll also see White-shouldered Trillers here.

### **Days 5 - 7**

#### **Rantepao for Tana Toraja. Flight back to Makassar on Day 7**

The enchanting landscapes and culture of Tana Toraja is unmissable. Elegantly painted houses with arching boat shaped roofs house the friendly Torajans, a tribe who until very recently were animists and whose preoccupation with death is taken to an unusual level – we'll see the extraordinary cliff cemeteries during our visit and likely one of their funerals which are a spectacle in themselves.

### **Days 8 & 9**

#### **Bunaken Island**

Resident Dugongs cruise the waters of Bunaken Island, as do no less than five species of Turtle. The island's waters are noted for their clarity and for their tropical fish diversity and incredible nudibranch fauna. And that's if you can take your eyes off the corals –seventy genera of coral have been noted at Bunaken. Barracuda and Tuna make regular appearances from pelagic waters and White-tip and Black-tip Reef Sharks are both common. White-bellied Sea-Eagles cruise the coastal waters and we'll see Brahminy Kites too. Lesser Frigatebirds are perhaps the commonest seabird and we'll also see Black-naped and Bridled Terns, whilst along shorelines we'll see a Pacific Reef Egret or two, and will look out for both Collared and Sacred Kingfishers.

### **Day 10**

#### **Manado to Ternate and on to Halmahera**

Today we'll fly to the volcanic island of Ternate. Then we'll transfer swiftly by speed boat to the main island, Halmahera. Depending on flight times we'll explore two areas close to the town. The first is an area of mangroves where we'll look for Beach Kingfisher. Also in the mangroves are Grey-headed Fruit Dove, endemic Sombre Kingfisher, as well as Pink-necked Green Pigeon and Moustached Treeswift. If there's time we'll visit some nearby remnant forest which is home to a

wide range of great species such as Blue-capped Fruit Dove, White Cockatoo, Moluccan Hanging Parrot, Rufous-bellied Triller and Moluccan Monarch. It is possible to see Northern Golden Bulbul here and we'll likely come across Cream-throated White-eye, Rainbow Bee-eater, Blyth's Hornbill, and both Eclectus and Red-cheeked Parrots.

## **Day 11 - 13**

### **Halmahera: Subaim, Foli & Tolire Lake**

Halmahera, the largest of the Molucca Islands, looks on a map rather as an ideal template for Game of Thrones or perhaps Lord of the Rings! Reaching it we cross Weber's Line (the better-known Wallace's Line is west of Sulawesi, Weber's Line is between Sulawesi and Halmahera), marking the effective boundary between Australian and Oriental faunal regions. There are over forty species of bird found only on Halmahera and many of these are truly beautiful. The standout species has to be the Wallace's Standardwing a bird whose voice is as ugly as his plumage is sensational! Almost equally gorgeous are Ivory-breasted and Moluccan Pittas, whilst Kingfishers include Sombre, Blue & White, and Beach. There are several endemic *Papilionidae* on the Moluccas with the prize being the spectacular birdwing *Ornithoptera croesus lydius*, the male a truly stunning orange and black butterfly the female a giant dressed in silver and black. We'll also see the more mundane-looking birdwing, *Troides criton*, dark *Papilio deiphobus* and the unusual-looking round-winged *Papilio tydeus*.

The Halmahera Yellow Birdwing flies along the trails at Subaim where we'll find an array of bizarre and wonderful birds such as the strange Paradise-crow, Moluccan King Parrot, Scarlet-breasted Fruit Dove and both Spectacled and Cinnamon-bellied Imperial Pigeon. We'll also find the dainty Halmahera Flowerpecker, the impressively large Goliath Coucal, White-streaked Friarbird, Chattering Lories, and Moluccan Cuckooshrike. The birding at Foli is superb and though Wallace's Standardwing may take centre-stage we'll also find some exceptional birds such as Great-billed Parrot, Red-flanked Lorikeet, Violet-necked Lory, White-naped Monarch and Australian Golden Whistler.

Butterflies are everywhere around Tolire Lake on the island of Ternate. This glorious blue circle of water is surrounded by cliffs cloaked in greenery on the side of Gamalama, the highest volcano in the northern Moluccas. The recently split Tricoloured Grebe is found on the lake and we'll have fantastic views of the many Lesser Frigatebirds coming in to drink and bathe.

## **Days 14 & 15**

### **Tangkoko-Duasudara Nature Reserve**

The Spectral Tarsier is the embodiment of cuteness, these tiny little bouncing balls are the World's smallest primate and the amazing Tangkoko-Duasudara Nature Reserve is the place to see them. Local guides know their resting sites and so morning and evening you can see and photograph them at close quarters as they start or finish their daily activities. Another World-famous mammal is endemic

to this area, Celebes Crested Macaque an entirely black primate that likes to pose on Tangkoko's black sand beaches, a combination that ensures this monkey's striking reddish eyes are admired fully! We'll see Common Birdwings, the pure white *Phalaenopsis amabilis* orchid, Sulawesi Lined Flying Lizard, the attractive Lantern Bug *Scamandra tethis*, and the gorgeous Sulawesi (Blue-breasted) Pitta. Indeed Tangkoko has some amazing birding with Ochre-bellied Boobooks, Racket-tailed and Blue-backed Parrots, and Purple-winged Roller, however it is the kingfishers that really take the biscuit including the fantastic Great-billed, the diminutive Sulawesi Dwarf, Collared, Blue-eared and three absolute stunners – Green-backed, Ruddy, and Lilac-cheeked Kingfishers.

We'll visit montane forest where cute Whitish Dwarf Squirrels run along epiphyte-laden tree branches as we admire both Large Hanging Parrots and Pygmy Hanging Parrots. On the forest floor we'll find two really fine species in Red-backed Thrush and lovely Red-bellied Pitta. We'll seek the Tabon Scrubfowl as well as the Isabelline Bush-hen, and also enjoy Sulawesi Babbler, Yellow-breasted Racquet-tail, Pied Cuckoo-shrike, Sulawesi Triller, White-bellied Imperial Pigeon, Silver-tipped Imperial Pigeon, Sulawesi Cicadabird and hopefully both Sulawesi Hawk-eagle and Sulawesi Serpent Eagle. This is one of the best areas to spend time with the charismatic Knobbed Hornbill. Coastal forests in this wonderful park support many spectacular Wallacean species such as Black-naped Fruit-Dove, the unusual Azure-rumped Parrot, Yellow-billed Malkoha, and Ashy Woodpecker. The gorgeous little Pale Blue Monarch will be a species we'll enjoy and we'll hope to see the strange Grosbeak Starling, a weird looking bird that has waxy red feathers on its rump, and which nests in large colonies in dead trees in tower-block fashion.

## **Day 16 to Manado and Singapore**

We'll catch a flight to Manado from where we'll start our journey home via Singapore.

## **Day 17 Arrive Europe**

If you would like to ask about any other aspect of this holiday, please call 01298 83563 or email us at [enquiries@greentours.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@greentours.co.uk).

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