

Update from Save MAGLAO – April 2020

As it is the case in most of the world the Nias Heritage Museum is currently also under COVID-19 lockdown. It is unusual to see the museum empty of visitors learning about the cultural and nature heritage of the Nias island. The majority of visitors are locals of all ethnises found in Nias with many Indonesian visitors and the occasional foreigner.



The museum gates are closed.

It is very unfortunate as the visitors' entrance is the primary income for the museum and without this it is impossible maintain all staff and keep functions running as usual. The animals in our care are of course given the highest priority and their care is seamlessly ongoing thanks to our dedicated keepers who are passionate about the animals in their care.





The planning of the education and pride campaign for the Nias Songbirds and the Magiao, the Nias Myna (*Gracula robusta*) continues. Currently we are developing a poster with the most threatened birds of Nias and with the Magiao in the middle. We aim to place this poster in all classrooms on Nias and hopefully also in many other public buildings. The poster will feature magnificent artwork by Danish artist Carl Cristian Tofte who kindly made the paintings of Nias species and donated the copyrights for the poster. We look forward to presenting the finished poster here on the Silent Forest website.



The MoU between the Nias Heritage Museum and EAZA was officially signed in December just before the amount transferred, but the shared conservation work has been ongoing since 2017 with many Silent Forest participants and in particularly Heidelberg zoo providing direct funding support.

The Nias Heritage Museum is dedicated to develop understanding for nature and pride of the unique natural heritage such as the Magiao is.

This work has included regular training courses for student from all over the island. A work funded for many years by the Sternsinger-Hilfswerk in Germany. With an increase in demand and expenses we are currently looking for additional funding to continue this essential work as soon as the COVID-19 lockdown is over.



Additionally, we use the opportunity to teach and create awareness with the many families and groups who are normally visiting the museum at their own accord. In the future we will work on strengthening the “take-away-message” about the environment and engage the songbird competition community.



In January and February, we had several very constructive meetings with local and regional environmental authorities Balai Besar Neda Provinsi Sumatera Utara and Forestry Department on developing joint strategies and approaches for the long-term conservation of birds in Nias and environmental education.



On the 19th of March, the Nias Heritage Museum was honoured by a visit by Tony Sumampau from the KASI Foundation and the Indonesian Zoo Association (PKBSI). Here the needed steps for an improved network of cooperation between Indonesian facilities involved in Songbird conservation and ex-situ management were discussed as well as the opportunities to work with the PKBSI to improve welfare standards in our Nature Heritage Zoo.



Occasionally we have experienced problems with parasite infections in the Nias Mynas. Likely because most are ex-pets donated to the museum by their previous owners and in some cases have lived for considerable time in unhygienic conditions near other livestock like poultry. There is no experienced avian vet on the island and normally we focus on disease prevention rather than treatment. In case symptoms do occur, we perform needed treatments in consultancy with our partners from Marlow Birdpark.



We have been fortunate to win a Zoo Animal of the Year – Grant, which we expect to receive shortly. The Zoo Animal of the Year (<https://zootierdesjahres.de/>) is a campaign in the German speaking zoos and for the year 2020 the focus species are the Hill Mynas (Gracula spp.) including the Nias Myna. With this support we will build on the ongoing Silent Forest funded activities of setting up aviaries and expand the awareness campaign Save MAGIAO.



Text and pictures:

Nata'alui Duha - Nias Heritage Museum

Simon Bruslund – Marlow Bird Park

