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Pahala N. Mansury, President & CEO of PT Garuda Indonesia (Persero) Tbk., personally welcomes you.

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The remote Sulawesi highlands are home to one of the world's most fascinating communities.



An aerial photograph of a tropical island with lush green forest and turquoise water. A small boat is visible in the water. The title 'The Archipelago Journal' is written in a large, white, cursive font across the center. A small airplane is flying above the title, and a map of Indonesia is visible to the right of the title.

The Archipelago Journal

Covering more than 180,000km² in West Papua, Bird's Head Seascape is home to one of the planet's most biodiverse coral reefs. We'll explore deserted coastlines and seldom-visited spots in search of the world's largest fish from on board Sequoia – one of the newest luxury wooden vessels built to experience the best of this wealth of islands.

Words and photography
by Tommy Schultz



Snorkelling with whale sharks in Kaimana's Triton Bay at sunrise is absolutely unforgettable.

📷 The enormous silhouette of a whale shark glides by, blocking out the sparkling beams of the morning sun. Below, a pod of dolphins are spiralling playfully in and out of my camera's viewfinder.

Suddenly, the shape of a second whale shark appears out of the blue – swimming near enough for me to glimpse a cluster of tiny golden trevally hiding within the safety of its gigantic pectoral fins. The experience of being in the water with such beautiful creatures is pure magic – beyond any diver's wildest dreams.

We're exploring **Triton Bay in Kaimana Regency** on board *Sequoia*, a beautiful ironwood and teak yacht built by Kevin Corcoran and Yessi Maya Sari using state-of-the-art technology and in accordance with strict United States Coast Guard specifications.

Waking up every day to a new panorama of remote **Papua's** stunning natural and cultural beauty, the benefits of travelling on a 'floating hotel' like *Sequoia* are obvious. "We wanted to give our guests all the comforts and safety of home, while travelling to some of the most difficult-to-reach places on the planet," observes Yessi.

She's not exaggerating: four days into a five-day cruise, we've seen only local fishermen in search of their daily catch – not another

liveaboard boat in sight. We've kayaked to deserted beaches framed by dramatic karst limestone cliffs – reminiscent of the better known **Raja Ampat** archipelago to the northwest, but without the crowds. Below the surface, we've explored a dive site known as '**Little Komodo**', named for its resemblance to the coral reefs of the eponymous national park.

But it's the chance to see the world's largest fish that has everyone on *Sequoia* buzzing with excitement.

Whale sharks, which can reach a mind-boggling 18m in length, have been observed by fishermen in Papua for centuries, but it wasn't until the early 2000s that their tourism potential was realised.

During a series of exploratory expeditions conducted by Conservation International (CI) and World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Indonesia, interviews were conducted with lift net fishermen in Kaimana (known locally as *bagan*). The scientists discovered that the fishermen were having almost daily interactions with whale sharks as they fed on the small baitfish or anchovies that the men were targeting.

“ The experience of being in the water with such beautiful creatures is pure magic.



5 Senses – Sight AIDUMA ISLAND BEACHES



Beautiful white-sand beaches, rugged formations of karst limestone, sapphire-blue water – and not a soul in sight. The coastline of Kaimana’s Aiduma Island is every bit as beautiful as the world beneath the waves. Perfect for sea kayaking or a relaxing afternoon on a deserted beach, this is Indonesian island beauty at its finest.

Pantai Pulau Aiduma di Kaimana sama indahnya dengan dunia bawah lautnya. Pantai pasir putih yang cantik, formasi bebatuan kapur, air berwarna biru safir— dan tidak terlihat satu pun pengunjung lain. Pulau terindah di Indonesia ini adalah lokasi sempurna untuk berkayak atau bersantai sore di pantainya yang sepi.

“Some *bagan* fishers said they did this because the sharks represented ancestors and brought good luck; others more pragmatically explained that, if the whale sharks congregate around their *bagans* in the morning, they are more likely to also attract skipjack tuna, Spanish mackerel and sailfish,” observes Abraham Sianipar, Elasmobranch Conservation Management Specialist from CI.

From talking to the fishermen, scientists understood that the presence of *bagan* lift net boats had created one of the most reliable places across the archipelago to have an unforgettable encounter with whale sharks.

Sequoia captain Ms Suriani has planned for us to arrive near the *bagan* boats of Triton Bay just before sunrise. As the first light of dawn glows in the east, dive master Yohardik Lumettu briefs us on the plan for the morning: “We will ask the fishermen if they’ve seen a whale shark in the early hours – if we’re able to find one feeding at the *bagan*, we can get in the water with them.”

It sounds simple enough, but the anticipation in the great room of *Sequoia* is electric, as everyone checks and double checks their gear as they anticipate this once-in-a-lifetime chance to see these gentle giants of the sea.

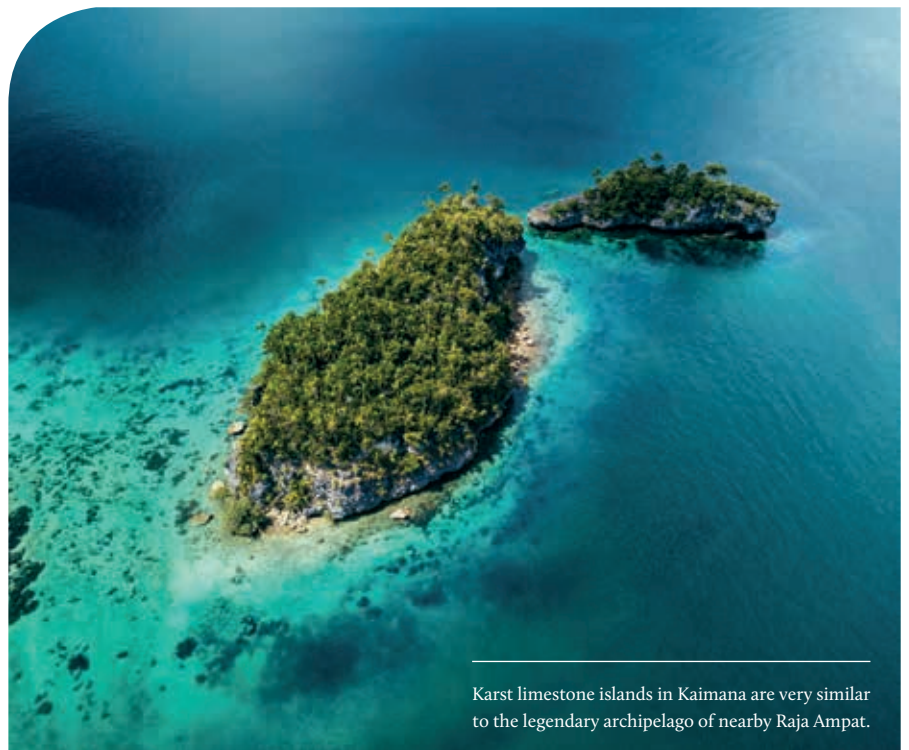
The cobalt-coloured waters of Triton Bay are glassy calm as we venture out in the tender boat, the horizon line blending with the golden light of the morning sky like a mirror.

Arriving at one of the *bagan* fishing boats, we find Akbar, a 22-year-old fisherman, tending to an enormous lift net. He and his fellow fishermen are trying to catch thousands of *ikan puri* – tiny silverside minnows that are then dried or sold as bait for larger species. *Sequoia* dive master Yohardik has arranged to buy some *ikan puri* from Akbar, which will be used to hand feed the sharks.

“This morning, we already have two whale sharks here,” says Akbar, perching on the wood and bamboo frame of the net. Behind him, we hear a sound like an enormous bathtub draining – the whale sharks are at the surface and feeding.

Pinneng, my dive buddy and fellow underwater photographer, has a glint of excitement in his eye as he does a final prep on his scuba tank. One by one, six of us take the plunge, jumping in the water for an encounter with one of the most amazing animals on the planet.

Diving below the surface, I’m greeted by the enormous sickle tail of a seven-metre whale shark sweeping past, its refrigerator-sized mouth taking in gulps of sparkling silver *ikan puri* dropped from above by Akbar and his friends. Even after more than 10 years of swimming with these huge fish, my heart rate never fails to go into overdrive when I’m in the water with them.



Karst limestone islands in Kaimana are very similar to the legendary archipelago of nearby Raja Ampat.

“ We’ll spend nearly two hours diving and snorkelling around the *bagan* – eventually, the dolphins are replaced by a marauding school of giant trevally.

Underneath the *bagan*, Triton Bay is absolutely alive with activity. Divers and snorkellers are viewing the action from the surface, while a pod of dolphins has appeared below to pick up the morsels of fish missed by the sharks.

Joining Pinneng and shipmate Tania at seven metres, I can hear the eerie dolphin song as these beloved marine mammals dance and glide playfully past. With my camera memory card filling up fast, it’s almost impossible to take in everything that’s happening here.

We’ll spend nearly two hours diving and snorkelling around the *bagan* – eventually, the dolphins are replaced by a marauding school of giant trevally. It’s incredible to think that we’ve seen more before breakfast than many scuba divers can hope to see in a lifetime.

And although Triton Bay may not be as recognised as nearby **Cenderawasih Bay** for whale shark encounters, scientists believe there is a year-round population of gentle giants present throughout the Bird’s Head Seascape. “We’ve identified 28 sharks in Triton Bay and around 120 animals in Cenderawasih, all but five of them sub-adult males,” says CI’s Abraham Sianipar. “Just a few weeks ago, we satellite-tagged our first female whale shark from Kaimana, which we named in honour of the Minister of Marine Affairs and Fisheries, Susi Pudjiastuti. Citizen scientists can now track ‘Susi’ along with other sharks using the CI Whale Shark Tracker App,” adds Sianipar.

Data from another tagged whale shark from Cenderawasih tracked the animal making quite a journey. “One of our whale sharks, Kodo, a four-metre male, travelled all the way to the east coast of the Philippines before

coming back to Raja Ampat, then Kaimana, making a quick visit to the Gulf of Carpentaria in Australia, and finally ending up in Merauke [in Papua], where the tag ran out of battery,” Sianipar explains.

Since tracking began in 2015, CI scientists have gained new insights. “We’ve found that, while some animals have migrated for long distances, most of them actually stay put in their respective territories for most or all of the year,” says Sianipar. This valuable information is being used by the Kaimana Regency Government to design a responsible whale shark-based ecotourism programme.

With other whale shark hotspots around the world becoming popular for ecotourism – *Time* magazine once named Donsol in the Philippines as ‘The Best Animal Encounter in Asia’ – conservationists and local communities across the Bird’s Head Seascape are hoping that the protection of these iconic animals will lead to the development of new sustainable tourism destinations in Indonesia.

Judging by our amazing cruise across Kaimana and Triton Bay, it won’t be long before this incredible ecosystem is as well-known as its neighbours to the north.

Exploring the emerald coastline of Kaimana and West Papua on *Sequoia*.



Photographer/writer Tommy Schultz freediving with a 'gentle giant' of the sea in Kaimana.



“ Suddenly, the shape of a second whale shark appears out of the blue...”



1 Sea kayaking in the clear waters of West Papua beside the Kiti Kiti waterfall.



5 Senses – Scent THE AIR OF KITI KITI WATERFALL

1 Mencakup area seluas lebih dari 180.000 km² di Papua Barat, Bird's Head Seascape adalah rumah bagi terumbu karang paling beragam di dunia. Kami menjelajahi pantai-pantainya yang sepi dan *spot* yang jarang dikunjungi untuk mencari ikan terbesar di dunia dengan kapal Sequoia—salah satu kapal pesiar mewah terbaru yang diciptakan untuk mengeksplorasi keindahan pulau nan kaya ini.

Siluet hiu paus besar menghalangi sinar matahari pagi yang berkilauan. Di bawahnya, sekelompok lumba-lumba berputar-putar, menari keluar masuk dari jendela bidik kamera saya.

Tiba-tiba hiu paus kedua muncul entah dari mana—berenang cukup dekat sehingga saya bisa melihat sekelompok ikan emas kecil sedang berlingung di bawah sirip pektoral raksasa sang hiu. Pengalaman berada di air bersama makhluk indah seperti itu benar-benar menakjubkan—impian terindah setiap penyelam.

Kami menjelajahi **Teluk Triton** di **Kabupaten Kaimana** dengan kapal Sequoia, kapal pesiar kayu jati yang cantik yang dibuat oleh Kevin Corcoran dan Yessi Maya Sari menggunakan teknologi canggih dan mengikuti standar Penjaga Pantai Amerika Serikat yang ketat.

Bepergian dengan “hotel terapung” seperti Sequoia jelas lebih mengasyikkan. Setiap pagi

saya bangun melihat pemandangan baru keindahan alam dan budaya Papua yang memesona, “Kami ingin para tamu merasakan kenyamanan dan keamanan seperti di rumah sendiri, walau bepergian ke salah satu tempat paling terpencil di planet ini,” terang Yessi.

Apa yang dikatakannya memang benar. Hingga hari keempat dari lima hari berlayar, kami hanya bertemu nelayan-nelayan lokal yang mencari tangkapan harian—tak ada perahu wisata lain yang terlihat. Kami berkayak ke pantai-pantai terpencil dikelilingi tebing batu kapur yang dramatis. Mengingat saya pada kepulauan **Raja Ampat** yang lebih populer, bedanya tempat ini tidak ramai. Di bawah laut, kami menjelajahi situs menyelam yang dijuluki “**Komodo Kecil**”, karena kemiripannya dengan terumbu karang di Taman Nasional Komodo.

Tetapi, yang paling ditunggu-tunggu oleh semua orang di Sequoia adalah kesempatan untuk melihat ikan terbesar di dunia.

2 Plunging from within an emerald expanse of Papuan rainforest, the crystal-clear waters of the Kiti Kiti waterfall thunder into the sea. This rare combination of churning salt and spring water creates a bracing blast of chilly mist – and a refreshingly fragrant breeze for swimmers and snorkellers exploring the hidden cave behind the waterfall or the lagoon surrounding it.

1 Dari tengah kehijauan hutan hujan Papua, air jernih dari air terjun Kiti Kiti menyembur ke laut. Perpaduan unik air asin dan air pegunungan ini menghasilkan semburan air dingin menggigit—dan semilir angin menyegarkan bagi para perenang serta penyelam *snorkel* yang menjelajahi gua tersembunyi di belakang air terjun atau laguna yang mengelilinginya.





1 The fish market in Kaimana is busiest at sunrise.

2 Fresh fish for sale in Kaimana's market.

3 A family of fisherfolk sell their catch in the early morning near Aiduma Island.



“Hiu paus, yang panjangnya dapat mencapai 18 m, telah dikenal oleh nelayan di Papua selama berabad-abad, tetapi baru awal tahun 2000-an satwa ini menjadi daya tarik wisata.

Hiu paus, yang panjangnya dapat mencapai 18 m, telah dikenal oleh nelayan di Papua selama berabad-abad, tetapi baru awal tahun 2000-an satwa ini menjadi daya tarik wisata.

Dalam serangkaian ekspedisi eksplorasi yang dilakukan oleh Conservation International (CI) dan World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Indonesia, wawancara dilakukan dengan nelayan jaring angkat atau bagan di Kaimana. Para ilmuwan menemukan bahwa nelayan-nelayan ini hampir setiap hari berinteraksi dengan hiu paus ketika memberi makan ikan besar itu dengan ikan kecil atau ikan teri tangkapan mereka.

“Sebagian nelayan bagan melakukannya karena hiu merepresentasikan leluhur dan membawa keberuntungan; sedangkan yang lain mengatakan, jika hiu paus berkumpul di sekitar bagan mereka di pagi hari, mereka juga bisa mendapatkan ikan cakalang, *mackerel* dan ikan layar,” jelas Abraham Sianipar, Elasmobranch Conservation Management Specialist dari CI.

Dari wawancara dengan para nelayan, peneliti menemukan bahwa keberadaan perahu-perahu bagan menjadikan kawasan ini salah satu tempat terbaik di Nusantara untuk melihat hiu paus.

Kapten Sequoia, Suriani merencanakan agar kami tiba di dekat perahu bagan di **Teluk Triton** sesaat sebelum matahari terbit. Saat cahaya fajar pertama bersinar di timur, *dive master* Yohardik Lumettu menjelaskan kepada kami tentang rencana pagi itu: “Kami akan menanyakan kepada nelayan apakah mereka pernah melihat hiu paus di pagi hari—kalau ada orang yang sedang memberi makan di bagan, kita bisa menyelam bersama mereka.”

Kedengarannya sederhana, tetapiantisipasi terlihat di ruang utama Sequoia. Semua orang memeriksa ulang peralatan mereka sambil menantikan kesempatan sekali seumur hidup untuk melihat raksasa laut yang jinak ini.

Perairan Teluk Triton yang berwarna biru kobalt terlihat tenang saat kami melintas

dengan perahu penjemput, sementara cakrawala menyatu dengan cahaya keemasan langit pagi bagaikan cermin.

Sesampainya di salah satu perahu nelayan bagan, kami bertemu Akbar, nelayan berusia 22 tahun, yang sedang menyandar pada jaring angkat yang sangat besar. Ia dan rekannya mencoba menangkap ribuan ikan puri—ikan perak kecil—untuk dikeringkan atau dijual sebagai umpan untuk ikan yang lebih besar. *Dive master* Yohardik membeli beberapa ikan puri dari Akbar, yang akan digunakan untuk memberi makan hiu paus.

“Pagi ini, kami sudah didatangi dua hiu paus di sini,” kata Akbar, sambil menyandar pada bingkai jaring. Di belakangnya, kami mendengar suara seperti bak mandi besar yang sedang dikuras. Hiu paus berada di permukaan untuk makan.

Pinneng, teman menyelam saya dan sesama fotografer bawah laut, terlihat gembira saat mengecek ulang tangki *scuba*-nya. Satu per satu, kami berenang terjun ke air untuk



Where to stay: Sequoia Yacht

At 26m long and 6.5m wide, *Sequoia* features two spacious guest cabins with all the comforts of home (hot water, aircon, satellite TV) while exploring the furthest corners of Indonesia. Custom-built by owners Kevin Corcoran and Yessi Maya Sari, *Sequoia* follows strict United States Coast Guard standards for electrical safety and engineering. Featuring a low-emission John Deere diesel engine and a state-of-the-art gen-set with battery storage for powering the electricity while cruising, *Sequoia* is designed to minimise impact on Indonesia's fragile coral reef environments. Constructed from beautiful teak wood built around a rugged ironwood keel, ribs and frame, the yacht is as tough as it is elegant. Perfect for families of four to six, it boasts an on-board dive instructor (including complimentary PADI dive certification), a professional chef, butler, masseuse, marine engineer and one of the only female captains in the entire Indonesian fleet. For more information, visit www.coraltrianglesafaris.com

Dengan panjang 26 m dan lebar 6,5 m, *Sequoia* menawarkan dua kabin tamu yang luas senyaman rumah (air panas, AC, TV satelit) untuk menjelajahi sudut terjauh di Indonesia. Dibuat khusus oleh pemiliknya, Kevin Corcoran dan Yessi Maya Sari, *Sequoia* mengikuti standar ketat Penjaga Pantai Amerika Serikat untuk keamanan listrik dan mesinnya. Mengusung mesin diesel John Deere yang rendah emisi dan *gen-set* canggih dengan cadangan baterai untuk menghasilkan listrik saat berlayar, *Sequoia* dirancang untuk meminimalkan dampak pada terumbu karang Indonesia yang rapuh. Dibuat dari kayu jati indah yang mbingkai bagian lunas, rusuk dan rangkanya, kapal pesiar ini elegan lagi tangguh. Cocok untuk keluarga dengan empat atau enam orang, kapal ini memiliki instruktur selam (plus sertifikasi menyelam PADI gratis), *chef* profesional, kepala pelayan, juru pijat, insinyur kelautan dan satu-satunya kapten kapal perempuan di Indonesia. Untuk informasi lebih lanjut, kunjungi www.coraltrianglesafaris.com.

“Walaupun sudah lebih 10 tahun menyelam dengan ikan-ikan besar ini, detak jantung saya tetap berdegup kencang saat berada di air bersama mereka.”

bertemu salah satu hewan paling menakutkan di planet ini.

Menyelam di bawah permukaan, saya disambut kepaan ekor sabit yang sangat besar dari hiu paus sepanjang 7 m, mulutnya yang seukuran kulkas melahap ikan puri berkilauan yang dijatuhkan dari atas oleh Akbar dan teman-temannya. Walaupun sudah lebih 10 tahun menyelam dengan ikan-ikan besar ini, detak jantung saya tetap berdegup kencang saat berada di air bersama mereka.

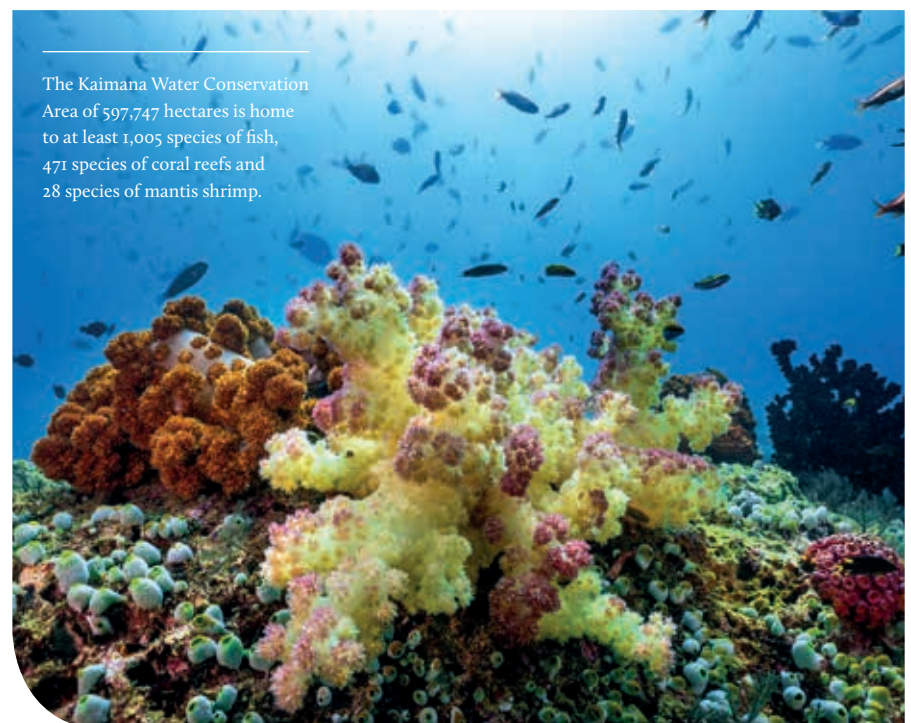
Di bawah bagan, Teluk Triton benar-benar hidup. Penyelam dan *snorkeller* menyaksikan dari permukaan saat sekawanan lumba-lumba muncul di bawah untuk mengambil potongan ikan yang dimakan oleh hiu.

Bersama Pinneng dan teman sekapal Tania di kedalaman 7 m, saya bisa mendengar suara nyaring lumba-lumba saat mamalia laut kesayangan ini berenang ke sana kemari. Kartu memori kamera saya pun terisi dengan cepat dan tidak mungkin memotret semua yang terjadi di sini.

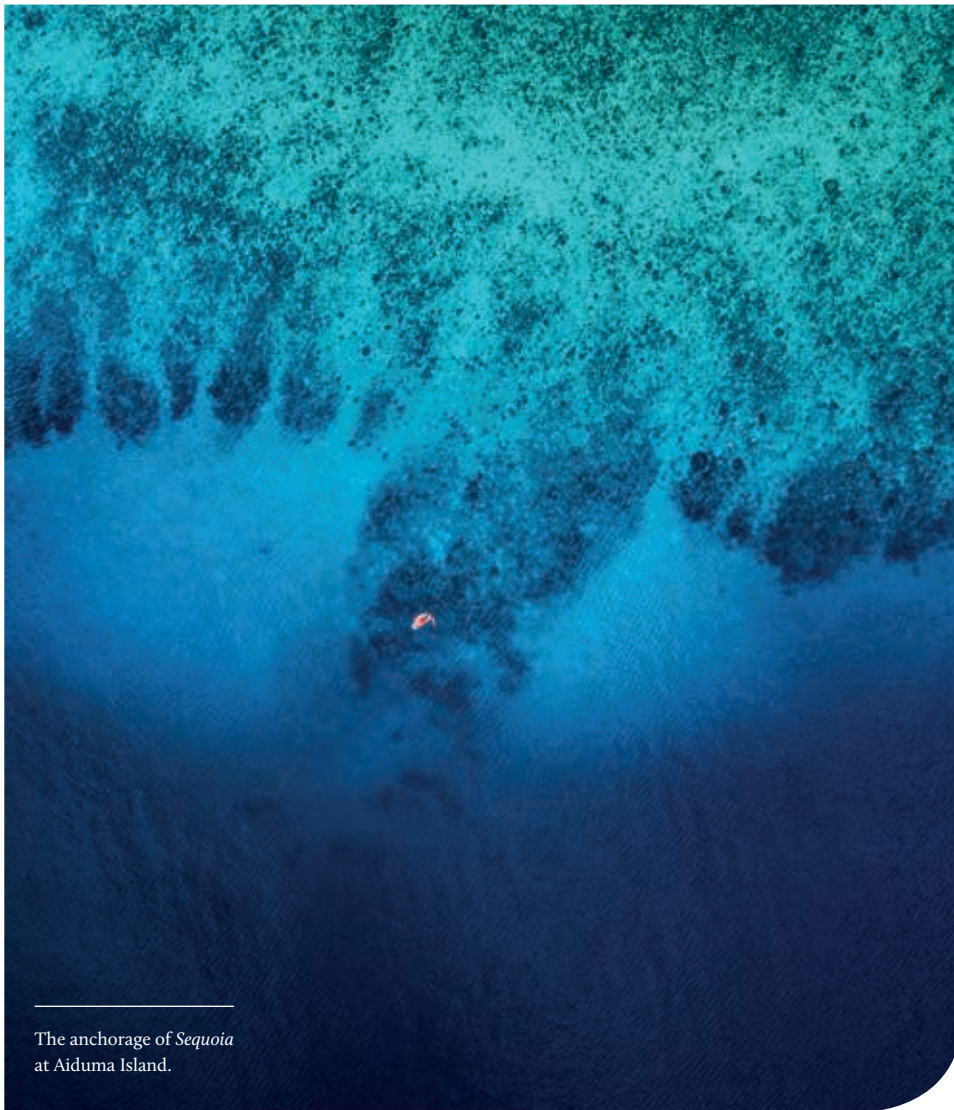
Kami menghabiskan hampir dua jam menyelam dan *snorkelling* di sekitar bagan—sampai akhirnya lumba-lumba berganti dengan sekelompok ikan kue. Rasanya luar biasa, pagi ini kami sudah melihat lebih banyak dari yang bisa dilihat sebagian besar penyelam seumur hidupnya.

Walaupun Teluk Triton belum sepopuler tetangganya, **Teluk Cenderawasih** sebagai tempat melihat hiu paus, para ilmuwan yakin populasi raksasa jinak ini ada sepanjang tahun di seluruh Bird's Head Seascape. “Kami telah mengidentifikasi 28 hiu di Teluk Triton dan sekitar 120 di Cenderawasih, hanya lima dewasa yang jantan,” kata Abraham Sianipar dari CI. “Beberapa minggu lalu, kami memberi *tag* satelit pada hiu paus betina pertama kami dari Kaimana, yang kami beri nama ‘Susi’ untuk menghormati Menteri Kelautan dan Perikanan, Susi Pudjiastuti. Peneliti awam sekarang bisa melacak Susi dan hiu paus lainnya dengan aplikasi Whale Shark Tracker CI,” tambah Sianipar.

Data dari hiu paus lain yang diberi *tag* di Cenderawasih menunjukkan bahwa hewan ini berenang cukup jauh. “Salah satu hiu paus



The Kaimana Water Conservation Area of 597,747 hectares is home to at least 1,005 species of fish, 471 species of coral reefs and 28 species of mantis shrimp.



The anchorage of *Sequoia* at Aiduma Island.

“ Kami menemukan bahwa, walaupun sebagian hewan ini bermigrasi jauh, kebanyakan dari mereka tetap berada di wilayah masing-masing sepanjang tahun...”

kami, Kodo, jantan 4 m, berenang sampai pantai timur Filipina sebelum kembali ke Raja Ampat, lalu Kaimana, kemudian mengunjungi Teluk Carpentaria di Australia dan akhirnya sampai di Merauke, di situ *tag*-nya kehabisan baterai,” kata Sianipar.

Sejak penelitian dimulai tahun 2015, ilmuwan CI telah mendapatkan pengetahuan baru. “Kami menemukan bahwa, walaupun sebagian hewan ini bermigrasi jauh, kebanyakan dari mereka tetap berada di wilayah masing-masing sepanjang tahun,” kata Sianipar. Informasi berharga ini digunakan oleh Pemerintah Kabupaten Kaimana untuk merancang program ekowisata berbasis paus hiu.

Melihat keberhasilan kawasan hiu paus lainnya di seluruh dunia sebagai destinasi ekowisata populer—majalah *Time* pernah menobatkan Donsol di Filipina sebagai The Best Animal Encounter in Asia—pegiat konservasi dan komunitas lokal di Bird’s Head Seascape berharap perlindungan hewan-hewan ikonis ini akan mendorong pengembangan destinasi ekowisata baru di Indonesia.

Dinilai dari pengalaman pelayaran kami yang luar biasa di Kaimana dan Teluk Triton, saya yakin tidak lama lagi ekosistem yang menakjubkan ini bakal terkenal seperti tetangganya di utara.



5 Senses – Sound DOLPHIN SONG

Using concentrated bursts of air delivered via their blowholes, dolphins use a specialised form of echolocation (like sonar) to navigate and communicate underwater. Their otherworldly clicks, wails and cries can carry for hundreds of metres, a symphony of incredible sounds that few humans are lucky enough to hear. Divers and snorkellers at the *bagan* lift nets of Triton Bay sometimes encounter pods of dolphins feeding with the whale sharks, their unmistakable calls echoing through the underwater world.

Lewat semburan melalui lubang udaranya, lumba-lumba menggunakan ekolokasi (seperti sonar) khusus untuk menavigasi dan berkomunikasi di bawah air. Suara klik, siulan dan jeritan mereka bisa terdengar hingga ratusan meter. Tak banyak orang yang beruntung bisa mendengar simfoni suara luar biasa ini. Penyelam dan *snorkeller* di sekitar jaring angkat di Teluk Triton kadang menemukan sekelompok lumba-lumba sedang makan bersama hiu paus. Suara mereka yang khas bergema di bawah laut.

wonderful indonesia 

JAKARTA TO KAIMANA VIA AMBON

Flight Time 1 hour, 45 minutes

Frequency 6 flights per week

