

Alex, First German Doctoral Graduate from Faculty of Forestry UGM

Friday, 20 January 2017 WIB, By: Marwati




Alexander Markus Mossbrucker (34) is one of 11 international students among the new graduates of Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM) who are inaugurated on Thursday (19/1). He is the first German student to get his doctoral degree at Faculty of Forestry UGM, completing it in 2 years and 10 months, thus passing *cum laude*.

Alex said he was excited and proud to get the doctoral degree from UGM and the science he has obtained from UGM will support his job as elephant researcher at the Sumatran Elephant Conservation Initiative (SECI) Jambi .

"I have learned a lot here, which is very beneficial to supporting my work in wild life conservation in Jambi," he said after the graduation ceremony at Faculty of Forestry.

Alex has lived in Indonesia since 2010 to do research on elephants in Jambi. In 2014 Alex decided to pursue his education at UGM. He said he did not encounter any major difficulties whilst studying. The graduate from University of Freiburg, Germany, said he was happy to be able to study at UGM and live in Yogyakarta.



Vice-Dean for Research and Community Service of the Faculty, Dr. Muhammad Ali Imran, S.Hut., M.Sc., said that Alex was the first German student to have ever taken a doctoral degree at the Faculty.

Researching Sumateran Elephants

Alex graduated after submitting his dissertation on Sumateran elephants (*Elephas maximus sumatranus*) that are located in Bukit Tiga Puluh, Jambi, where there are 150 elephants that are divided in two small populations. Both are critically endangered and risk extinction.

Alex said the sustainability of Sumateran elephants in Bukit Tiga Puluh was increasingly worrying due to forest conversion. In the past 10 years, their habitat has reduced significantly.

“Between 2007-2017, the habitat of Sumatera elephants in Bukit Tiga Puluh Jambi has reduced down by 70 percent. This has obviously affected the elephant population in that area,” he said.

In addition, many conflicts with humans have contributed to the drastic drop of elephant population. Another factor is the elephant poaching, also alienating the elephant from their group, which would threaten their sustainability as it increases the chance for same-family mating that would reduce the elephant’s quality of life.

Concerned with these problems, Alex presented a number of recommendations to conserve the Sumateran elephants. The first is to increase elephant protection so they are free from illegal killing, hence law enactment needs to be firm to suppress the rate of elephant’s deaths. The other thing is to address the conflict between human beings and the animals by involving local society, industry, and government.

Furthermore, trans-location or reconnecting elephant groups by making connectors to suppress the risk for same-family mating. Returning the natural habitat of the elephants is further required to increase their population. “The industrial plant forest that is located in the area of elephants has to be managed wisely, which is friendly to the elephant, including in implementing the harvesting protocols and additional allocations for elephant refuge and grazing,” he concluded.

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