Lembeh Strait: Paradise in Peril

by Constantinos Petrinos

The Lembeh Strait is a unique diving environment located in North Sulawesi, Indonesia. Most divers, photographers in particular, are aware of the Lembeh Strait for its unique biodiversity. Indeed for most divers it is a dream dive destination.

In the year 2000, I spent five months in the Lembeh Strait working for my book "Realm of the Pygmy Seahorse". Apart from fame, glory and the huge profits associated with uw photography, my hope was that this book would become a tool to convince local authorities to give Marine Park Status to the Lembeh Strait. It seems that I have failed along with so many photographers and videographers that praise the biodiversity of the region in their work.

Mark Ecenbarger, owner of Kungkungkan Bay Resort (the famous resort of the Strait) just informed me that already there has been construction of four cold fish storage companies and two ship yards in the southern end of the Strait.

In addition the agreement with the local authorities that the Northern end of the Lembeh Strait would be reserved for tourism seems that it will be violated. The plans for the immediate future are to build a 2000 ton cold storage and slipways in the Northern end of the Strait (in the area of the famous dive site called "Hairball"). These facilities will handle 1,000 fishing boats per year thus destroying some of the best dive sites in the Strait.

The resort management has not been able to see any environmental reports that assess the damage or not to the area.

Kungkungkan Bay Resort has been operating in the Lembeh Strait for 10 years in harmony with the local community. The Resort is responsible for making Lembeh Strait known and for working hard towards its preservation. I have been asked by the management to publicize this imminent threat to the environment of the Lembeh Strait. The intention is to let divers know that the Strait is in serious trouble.





Kungkungkan Bay Resort has been operating in the Lembeh Strait for 10 years in harmony with the local community.



You can help as individual divers by making this known.

I will be visiting the Lembeh Strait during January, February and March 2002 and I will let you know of any developments through UwP magazine.

Constantinos Petrinos

German magazine TAUCHEN used one of Constantinos's pictures for the November 2001 cover of the magazine. The TAUCHEN subscribers/readers voted his image as the best TAUCHEN cover shot for 2001.
The shot was taken with a SUBAL Nikon F4 and 60mm.