



Projects Abroad Thailand Official Newsletter January 2014

Content

- **Editor's note**
- **What is happening in Thailand?**
 - Photography competition**
 - Global shark awareness campaign**
- **Three and a half month of pure happiness in Thailand**
- **Thijmen Borghart, PT volunteer from Netherlands**

ProjectsAbroad





Editor's note

Firstly, a big happy New Year to all from Thailand. 2014 is here and we are all so excited about this new year. We finished off 2013 with a lovely Christmas party that saw all the volunteers from both the conservation team and the community team celebrate with a Christmas dinner and exchanging of gifts. All of our staff was present and every one had a wonderful evening here at the conservation accommodation.

After that we started off 2014 with a community outreach that included activities with 700 school children. This day was a combination between teaching English, celebrating national children's day and also an education campaign about sharks, which is a new campaign Projects Abroad created under the name Global Shark Campaign.

The Projects Abroad conservation team have been undergoing many exciting changes getting ready for 2014; this includes Diego's new direction for our research divers along side with many

new partners. The conservation team have also been working alongside Mangrove Action Project (MAP) for our mangrove education and restoration work. We will also be conducting many dives for the Krabi Provincial Administrative Office, monitoring their artificial reefs, as well as join them on big cleaning days.



2014 is going to be a great year; once again I hope that everyone has a great year and thank you to all the volunteers in the past and present for all your hard work.

Vishal Pawa

Conservation Project Manager

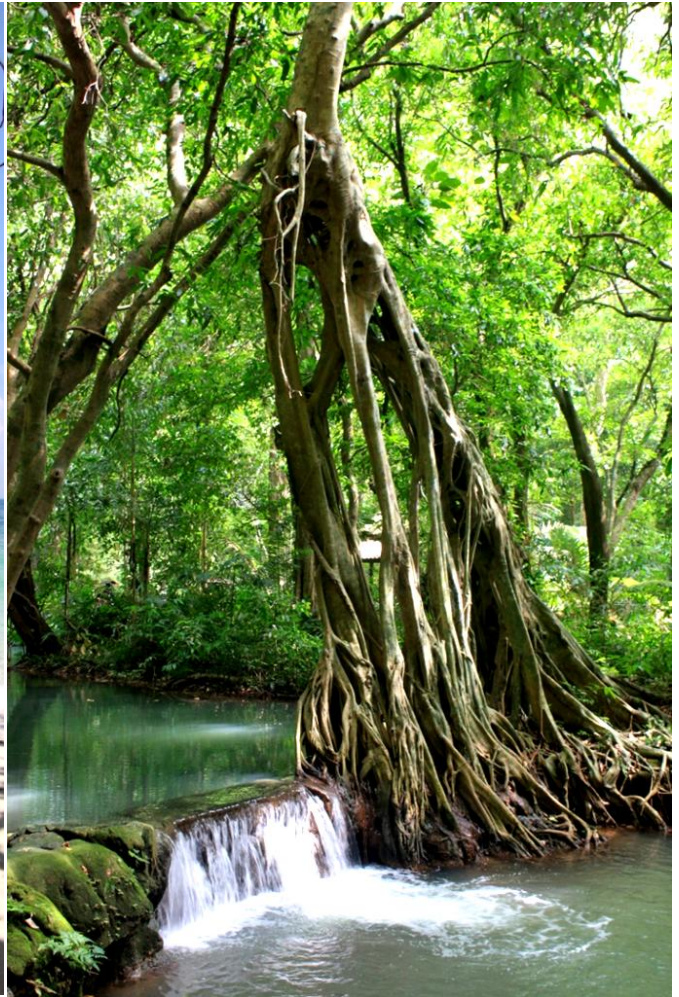
What is happening in Thailand?

- **Photography competition**

Projects Abroad Thailand is introducing a Photography Competition for volunteers! Every month, we're asking you, our talented photographers, to send in your best photos for a chance to win. We have received some amount of photos which all are great and here I would like to share them. The photos received, were from volunteers who did different projects and all of them are from their experience in Thailand: volunteering, weekend excursions, and sights around town.



This picture is from our Danish volunteer, Anja Sommer. She has been doing our conservation projects for 3 months in 2013.



These 3 pictures are from Stefanie Felder, our care volunteer from Switzerland.



This picture is from Lisa Delhom, our French volunteer who has been doing care projects.



This picture is from Loraine Legris, our Conservation volunteer from France.

- **Global Shark Awareness Campaign**

This is our 2nd time campaigning the Projects Abroad - Global Shark Campaign. We are so proud that we have increased the number of our audiences from 120 to 700 students from the past month. We really hope that we have successfully created a good understanding about sharks in children and that they will help us protect sharks in their local oceans.

The day began with our volunteers acted out the story of "Sheldon the Misunderstood Shark", than we set up 8 game stations that all 700 students rotated to play. We told the students facts about sharks and we also asked them questions and in the end. If they answered it correctly, we gave them prizes.



The children have learnt about how important it is to have sharks in the ocean and how they keep the balance perfect. Without sharks, our ocean will have no predator and our beautiful beach will turn to a massive space full of jellyfish. This doesn't mean that jellyfish is bad, but an ocean full of jelly fish is not a place where other kinds of fish will be comfortable living in.



At the end of the day, the children have learnt much and they have built such a strong and positive relationship with the Projects Abroad volunteers that they came and asked our volunteers not to leave. It was such a nice and productive day entertaining and also educating the children.



Three and a half month of pure happiness in Thailand by our German volunteer, Laura Scheele



After graduating from High school, I made the decision to take a gap year and to go do some volunteering in Thailand. Projects Abroad seemed to be one of the easiest and best ways to volunteer abroad with, especially in such a wonderful country such as Thailand, while having everything planned beforehand. It turned out to be the best decision I could have made. Living with a Thai family; getting to know a new culture and the local people while working with children and being able to explore a new country by traveling and getting to know amazing people from all over the world made the experience so special. It was exactly what I needed. It made me grow up; be more responsible, independent, open-minded and content with life. The positive vibes surrounding me and all the lovely smiles I got wherever I went, made me a happier person.

Krabi, "Lively town, lovely people" – Every one of the kids I was teaching knew that slogan, and I must say, it is true. Krabi has so much to offer and I felt so lucky to call it my new home. Whenever I got back home from another weekend trip, I felt happy coming back to my

neighborhood and being greeted by everyone. I had a lovely host mom but because of health issues she couldn't really spend so much time with us. Luckily I got to know some wonderful local people in Krabi, who I felt really close to by the end of my stay. The lovely staff from my favorite café and bar always treated me like a true friend and I felt blessed to get to know them better. When I left, they said: "Laura, now you have family in Thailand!" That truly touched me and makes me want to visit everyone back in Krabi as soon as I can.



During my stay in Thailand I was able to work in different placements with children of different age groups. I spent my first weeks at Ban Non Thaley School, working in the Kindergarten with children aged from 3 to 5 years old. It was a little hard at the beginning as with such small children, each day is an adventure, but once I got used to it, teaching was a lot of fun. It's amazing how working with small children make you forget about everything in the world. You run around on the playground with the children, you act funny to make them laugh and you don't really care about what you look like because you know that children won't judge you because it's not part of their nature.

The second month was special because the schools were closed for holidays and we got the opportunity to work all together as one big group to do some special activities such as a 2 week English camp with 8 to 12 year olds. It was very different from the care project I did before because of the children's age. In the mornings we'd always start with teaching English and later put the students into smaller groups to play games or do arts and crafts. By the end of the camp, you could really feel that special connection between the volunteers and the students. The ending ceremony was very emotional.

We also did a trip all together to the beautiful island Koh Yao Noi, participated in a workshop with locals and learned how they try to improve their agriculture to self-sufficiency farming. Another day we visited the school on the island and did a whole day of fun activities combined with English classes. We also did a wonderful puppet show that we prepared beforehand. It was great to do such a trip with all the volunteers, all the wonderful people I was with really made it special.

The third month I was again working at Ban NongThaley School, but with a different class. The teacher I was teaching with really made it easy for me to do a great job, she spoke good English and we could easily decide over the day's teaching plan. She let me work very autonomously, which was great and yet, if I needed her she was always there to help and teach in Thai before I taught in English. Working there has been my best teaching experience during my stay. The kids were aged from 5 to 6 years old and talking about my class, I often described them as "my little angels"- because that's exactly what they were to me. Always smiling, always listening, always attentive and wanting to learn more. I knew everyone's name and despite the language barrier, I was proud and happy to feel that there was a special bond between me and the kids. Whoever gets to teach that class next is lucky and should really make the best out of it, because these children are simply the best. When I left, they all did wonderful drawings for me and their "Thank you teacher" gave me goose bumps. Thinking about them now that I am back home, only good memories come to mind which I will never forget.

Even though I was the teacher, I feel like all the students that I taught let me learn a lot as well. I had to become more patient because things you plan to do never end up the way you wish, kids

are unpredictable. I had to be spontaneous and creative to make the best out of every situation, as well as learn how to be respectful and responsible. Working, living and traveling on my own in Thailand made me grow up and happier about the smaller things in life. I never felt that content, relaxed and free. Getting to know a new culture and also so many different people with amazing personalities and completely different life stories gave me an even more open minded view on the world.

I want to thank all the people that I met during my time in Thailand; the great, always helpful & caring staff from Projects Abroad; the welcoming and always smiling local people, the teachers I worked with and of course every single one of the volunteers who shared that amazing experience with me – it wouldn't have been the same without you!



"There was no doubt for me there would be a lot of differences between physiotherapy in the Netherlands and in Thailand. Not better, not worse, just different." - Thijmen Borghart



Thijmen Borghart, 26 years old PRO Physiotherapy Volunteer from Netherlands, volunteered in Surat Thani Hospital for one month. Here he has observed a lot of differences in terms of giving treatment and also language and culture. After getting to know the staff at the physiotherapy (also known as physical therapy/PT) department, it was time for Thijmen to go to work. At first Thijmen was a little bit nervous to come closer to 'his' patient. His first patient was a gentleman who fell of a roof and suffered a bruised spinal column. This resulted in loss of control of the extremities and a few weeks in bed slowly made him regain his functions. Because of his expertise in orthopaedic complaints, Thijmen has spent a lot of time in the electrotherapy room where he finds more patients in this category.

When he was studying to become a physiotherapist, he tutored freshmen students in anatomy and clinical reasoning, in his opinion, two of the most difficult parts of the healthcare-job. He found it exhilarating to teach others and ask questions to make them think rather than give them the answer. These skills come in handy by transferring his knowledge to the PT's in the hospital. *"When I am treating patients, the PT's in the hospital are very interested in what I do and why and what the theory behind the treatment is. This resulted in slightly longer treatment-time for the patient, since I was explaining to the PT's and interns what I was doing and giving my therapy at the same time. Afterwards we discussed it a little bit more and now they want me to teach them the techniques!"*



Because of his expertise is in the orthopaedic complaints, he likes to work with his hands in the electrotherapy room the best. His patients in this room vary from 'frozen' shoulder to complicated multi-pathology back problems and 'idiopathic scoliosis. The way he treats these patients attracts a lot of attention from the other PT's and interns. When he was treating his patients with Western,

Dutch techniques some of the staff started to hurdle up around and try to see and understand what it is that he was doing. *"My confidence is growing through the appreciation of patients and colleagues. A young boy, post-operative, after removing the cervical tumor that I am seeing for the third week as my patient is getting to know me, and getting used to my stumbling Thai sentences... We fool around a little bit and he starts looking and smiling at me!"*

During Thijmen's time volunteering, he was asked to look after a 'VIP'-patient, not knowing what that was supposed to mean. he went there for a look. It appeared to be an inspector with a complicated complaint. The patient had several doctors looking for the problem and now wanted Thijmen's opinion. After investigating and asking a few questions he went to work. After about half an hour he was able to remove the pain in the man's lower leg, but nothing had changed in his hip while sitting in a certain position. Together with another staff member, he brainstormed a little and came up with a few possible explanations and things to try next week, when he would return.

His experiences with the patients, colleagues and host family are the most memorable things he has gained while living in Thailand. *"Patients are starting to recognize me as one of the staff and greet me with a mixture of respect and curiosity. I am trying to get used to the Thai customs like bowing and putting my hands together in the appropriate way. The few words and sentences that I got to know in Thai makes people smile and correct me when I am wrong. This makes me feel comfortable and makes it easier to make mistakes and try to improve my manners and language."* Before leaving, it was time to say goodbye. It was so difficult because every moment was wonderful and nobody wants him to leave. *"My patients are very happy. People are still asking for me, and the patients I treat don't want me to leave the hospital. I cannot think of a greater compliment."*



He was very happy with the way Projects Abroad communicate and organizes everything on the ground. Projects Abroad made sure he was well prepared for the first overwhelming days in the hospital and provides enough information to last for the few weeks that he would be working there. *"You do pay a lot of money, but it is definitely worth it."*