

BANGGAI RESCUE Release

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Rescue Project comes to the aid of the endangered Banggai Cardinalfish

Team of scientists and aquarists will use “crowd-funding” in the marine aquarium and conservation worlds to underwrite research and publish new book

SHELBURNE, Vermont
March 12, 2012

Banggai Rescue Project comes to the aid of an endangered reef fish

SHELBURNE, Vermont “It’s time to save this fish,” says James Lawrence, as he and an interdisciplinary team of aquarists and marine scientists today announce the launch of a major initiative to prevent the Banggai Cardinalfish, *Pterapogon kauderni*, from being wiped out in parts of its native range.

Uncommonly beautiful and known for its unusual mouthbrooding reproductive habit, the species was listed as Endangered in 2007 on the International Union of Concerned Scientists’ (IUCN) Red List. Uncontrolled harvest for the aquarium trade is cited as the major threatening factor for a fish with a very limited natural range.

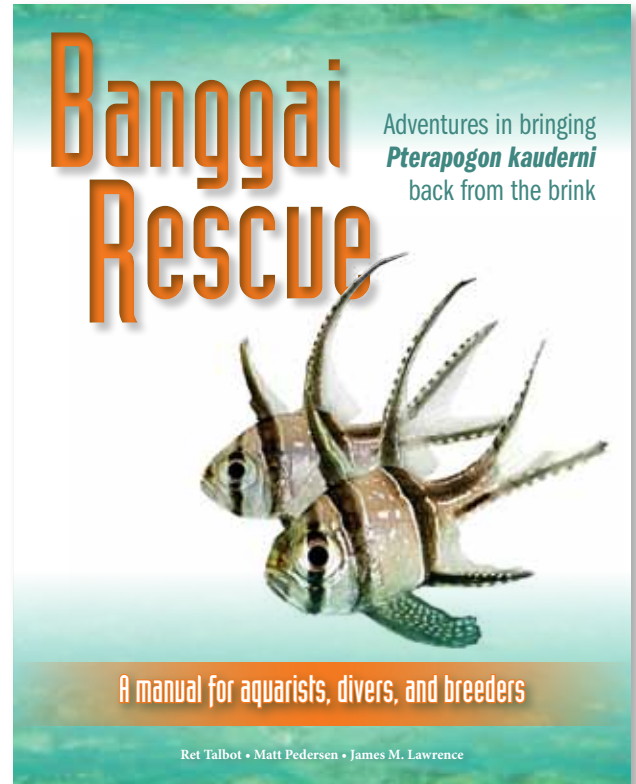
Project BANGGAI RESCUE will send a team on an expedition this May to the remote Banggai Islands in Sulawesi, Indonesia, with several simultaneous missions: assessing the situation; tracking the source of a mysterious disease that kills many Banggai Cardinals collected for the aquarium trade; exploring the possibility of establishing mariculture operations run by local Indonesian families; and collecting healthy broodstock for captive aquaculture research in the United States.

“We need approximately \$25,000 for the first stage of this project,” says Lawrence, editor and publisher of *CORAL* Magazine and head of Reef to Rainforest Media, based in Shelburne, Vermont. “Today we are going live with a Kickstarter.com campaign to raise funds for the expedition, captive breeding research, and seed money to produce a book covering all aspects of the project.

Entitled ***BANGGAI RESCUE, Adventures in bringing Pterapogon kauderni back from the brink***, the book is scheduled for publication in time for the annual Marine Aquarium Conference of North America in Dallas/Fort Worth at the end of September, 2012. Sales of the book will help fund ongoing research and sustainability initiatives.

Coauthors of the book include Lawrence, Ret Talbot, who will be embedded in the Expedition, and Matt Pedersen, with the senior science participants to be named in coming weeks.

Matt Pedersen, winner of the Marine Aquarium Societies of North America Aquarist of the Year Award in 2009 for his pioneering successes in breeding marine fishes and as an advocate for captive culture of popular aquarium species, will stay home in Duluth, Minnesota to write the husbandry



A must-read book, coming September 2012.

and breeding sections of the book. The project will fund the establishment of a breeding room with 20 pairs of Banggai Cardinalfish that will help Pedersen revisit existing protocols and pitfalls in the propagation of Banggai Cardinalfish. Pedersen seeks to establish a modern breeding approach that private aquarists and small commercial breeders throughout the world can leverage.

"When this species first entered the aquarium trade in the mid-1990s, we all thought it would prove to be the Marine Guppy," says Lawrence, who will edit the book and write an introduction to the endangered species, whose wild populations have been severely impacted by aquarium collectors and reportedly wiped out in some areas.

"The fact is, very few captive-bred Banggai Cardinals are being sold, and we hope to change that."

"This should be a perfect species for a home breeder," says Pedersen. "Captive-bred Banggais are in demand, they command a very healthy price, and they should be easy to produce. They are not prolific, but we think small-scale breeders should be able to produce them profitably and thus take pressure off the wild stocks. We also need to educate aquarists about the reasons to buy captive-bred fishes, while remembering that wild-caught fish are essential for captive-breeding broodstock."



Banggai Cardinalfish pair. Image by Scott Michael.

"We, as aquarists, are being blamed for overharvesting this species in the wild,"

says Lawrence. "This is the first serious, organized attempt by a team of cutting-edge scientists and dedicated aquarists to turn this situation around while there is still time. Ideally, captive breeding and mariculture will take some of the pressure off the Banggai Cardinal while the collection of wild fish is made more sustainable by Indonesian environmental groups that also recognize the problem."

"Kickstarter is an easy way for anyone to become part of this team," says Ret Talbot, of Laguna Beach, California, who is coordinating fundraising and social media communications for the project. "You can get involved as a backer for as little as \$10. We hope the marine aquarists of the world will show their support, starting today."

For more information, go to:

Kickstarter: <http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/603466482/the-banggai-rescue-project>

Website: <http://Banggai-Rescue.com>

Media Resources: <http://www.banggai-rescue.com/contact/media-support/>

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