



New hope for Sumatra's lowland rainforest

Protecting the lowland rainforest
of Sumatra through an
innovative NGO partnership





Sumatran lowland rainforest – a biodiversity jewel

A letter from Sir David Attenborough



The ancient lowland rainforests of Sumatra are among the most biologically diverse on Earth. Almost two thirds of Sumatra's 626 bird species rely on lowland forest. In addition there are more mammal species than in any other region in Indonesia, such as Tiger, Sumatran Rhino, Elephant, Sun Bear, Tapir, Gibbons and Langurs, to simply mention some of the most evocative fauna. The Orangutans are distributed to the north of the island of Sumatra. Sumatra has a unique collection of flora including Rafflesia arnoldi, the biggest flower and Amorphophallus titanum, the tallest flower of the world. Like most other lowland forests of the world, due to their relatively easy accessibility, Sumatra's lowland rainforests are a prime target for exploitation and ultimately conversion to oil palm plantations and timber plantations for the pulp and paper industry. This process has been accelerating at a frightening rate in the last few decades. This has resulted in widespread deforestation with less than 650 thousand hectares of Sumatran lowland forest remaining, compared with 16 million hectares less than 100 years ago.

Most of the remaining forests are located in the central part of Sumatra within active logging concessions. Sadly the majority of these are allocated for timber extraction. Once logged, these areas are often converted by large companies to oil palm, rubber and industrial non native tree plantations. Widespread illegal logging and encroachment also occurs within many logging concessions and nature reserves.

Our alliance between Burung Indonesia and a number of other Asian and European Partner organisations of the BirdLife network has developed a new innovative initiative to secure and manage a large swathe of the remaining lowland forests on the island outside the protected area system. We are deeply concerned about the future of Sumatra's lowland forests. It would be an incalculable loss to the world if Sumatra's remaining lowland forests, together with the rich array of animals and plants that live there, were to be destroyed.

In this brochure you can learn how BirdLife International is determined to halt the destruction process. It is a wonderful one-off chance. I give the initiative my full support and encourage you to be part of this new way forward.

Yours sincerely,

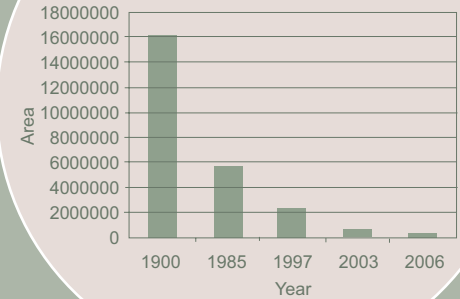
Sir David Attenborough, CH FRS

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Attenborough". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Vanishing forests

Burung Indonesia and an alliance of several other BirdLife Partner organisations around the world planning to secure the long-term conservation of a block of remaining Sumatra lowland rainforest. We aim to deliver this by acquiring the management rights for a large forest concession. Forest land in Indonesia is owned by the state, so we will need to obtain a concession licence from the Government. We are negotiating for a licence that will run, provisionally for 55 years. We will secure the logging rights for approximately over 100 thousand hectares, thus safeguarding the forest from clear-cut for timber, paper industry and palm oil development. Our initiative aims to demonstrate a true balance between ecology, economy and social responsibility, achieved with transparent governance and the participation of legitimate stakeholders. If we succeed, we will preserve and restore a significant forest block for the benefit of wildlife as well as the local communities.

Area of Lowland Tropical Rainforest in Sumatra



The Site

Following a comprehensive study of Sumatran lowland forest, Burung Indonesia identified the Tajau Pecah Lalan Kapas forest block in the provinces of Jambi and South Sumatra as top priority site. This priority setting was based on an analysis on forest size, habitat quality, wildlife, threats and interaction between people and forest. The forest area is destined as production forest and is managed as a logging concession.

The proposed BirdLife conservation concession covers more than 100 thousand hectares containing 30 thousand hectares of tall close canopy forest. The rest is mostly selectively logged forest which is regenerating well.

Biodiversity surveys have revealed 235 bird species and 32 mammal species of which 7 are wild cats and 5 primates. Many of these species are endangered. The area hosts a high density of Sumatran Tiger (5% of the estimated world population), Gibbons, Tapir and most other large lowland mammals, including a small herd of Asian Elephant. The forest is home to a small community of indigenous people, the Batim Sembilan, whose traditional lifestyle depend entirely on a healthy forest ecosystem and whose presence is compatible with our conservation purposes.





This initiative will:

- Prevent the almost certain destruction of the rainforest for conversion into oil palm or paperpulp plantations.
- Protect many threatened birds and other wildlife urgently in need of conservation.
- Halt destruction of habitat important to the survival of > 20 Sumatran Tigers.
- Preserve the option of a traditional forest lifestyle for the Batin Sembilan tribe living within the forest.
- Involve local communities and offer job opportunities in sustainable forest management.
- Provide a model for forest ecosystem restoration and sustainable management in Indonesia and elsewhere, outside the protected area system.
- Become a resource for research on rainforest biology and ecosystem restoration.
- Promote sustainable nature tourism in the area.
- Contribute significantly to carbon sequestration as a consequence of the regeneration of this large area of forest.
- Prevent forest fires and the release of greenhouse emissions responsible for global climate change.



A photograph of three hornbills perched on a tree branch. The birds have black bodies, white underparts, and large, colorful (red and yellow) bills. The background is a clear blue sky with some green foliage visible on the left side.

Why is this a new way forward ?

The management of this concession by an alliance of NGOs under the BirdLife International umbrella will be an important demonstration project not only for BirdLife, but for the whole of Indonesia. Currently, many forest conservation projects in Indonesia, including some within protected areas, are in difficulty because of lack of funding and commitment. Thanks to an innovative decree issued in June 2004 by the Ministry of Forestry, the Government of Indonesia is now encouraging the management of logged forest concessions for conservation and rehabilitation purposes. The BirdLife initiative would, for the first time in the history of Indonesia, give an alliance of non-governmental conservation organizations the opportunity to manage and restore a large rainforest ecosystem. This initiative will be a model for innovation and best practise in international conservation and forest management.

The challenges for the BirdLife initiative:

Challenge	Solution
Guarantee adequate funding to support conservation and ecosystem restoration	Raise international awareness of the importance of lowland rainforest in Sumatra and mobilise financial support for a designated trust fund, the interest from which will be sufficient to cover the core management costs.
How to minimize the risks of negative impact from illegal logging, encroachment and forest fires	Active management of the area. Strengthen the support of the local government, stakeholders and communities for BirdLife's initiative.
Safeguard the long-term existence of the forest block as viable ecosystem	Turn the support and commitment that exists in the Indonesian Government into long-term action for lowland rainforest conservation.
Benefit and gain support for local communities	Create long term jobs for communities adjacent to the forest and secure forest land for the small indigenous communities.





Project sustainability

The largest part of the conservation concession is currently managed by a logging company which extracts yearly 24.000 m³ wood. As concession holder we will take over the management structure, roads, buildings and human resources from the logging company.

The license for the forest concession will be held, according to the Indonesian law, by an appropriate Indonesian entity set up by the BirdLife alliance of NGOs. The project implementation team will be led by a project manager and co-leader supported by technical staff based at the conservation concession. The daily management will be undertaken by a forest management team who will handle the planning and development and will be responsible for security and forest fire management. They will be supported by an administrative and finance management staff. People will also be employed to work with communities living within and around the conservation concession.

The yearly management cost for preserving the forest will be approximately 500 thousand Euros. To cover in perpetuity the management costs of the forest concession the BirdLife Partnership will set up an endowment fund of more than 15 million Euros. The endowment fund will be administered by BirdLife International and its Partners. The promotion of eco-tourism, development of research facilities and specific conservation projects will also generate additional revenues for the management of the area.



Building local support

The mitigation and prevention of illegal logging, encroachment and forest fires will be largely obtained by building local support and setting up appropriate management structures.

Currently the area is virtually free from encroachment and suffers a limited and small scale illegal logging operations. The neighbouring areas are sparsely populated and most of the forest area is very remote and difficult to access apart from few controllable roads.

There are several important local stakeholders including the Batin Sembilan indigenous families, villagers in nearby translocation camps, local authorities and managers of adjacent plantations and concessions.

Our community team will build from the relationships developed during the feasibility study. They will involve local stakeholders in planning and monitoring, for instance in participatory boundary demarcation.



Inspiring and innovative partnership

The conservation concession will be preserved by a partnership of Burung Indonesia, the RSPB and BirdLife International Secretariat, the latter representing several other national organisations part of its global network.

Burung Indonesia was established as an independent national NGO in 2002, after 10 years as a country programme of BirdLife International. It is now the BirdLife Partner organisation in Indonesia.

The portfolio of research and field projects totals around a million euros annual budget, and membership and public outreach programs are being successfully developed since its launch as a national, membership based, Indonesian NGO. BirdLife International's institutional relationship with the Department of Forestry has been renewed through an MOU with Burung Indonesia.

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) is a registered charity organisation in the United Kingdom with more than 1 million members, managing 180 nature reserves and more than 20 years' experience of working with partners in developing countries. The RSPB will provide technical input to concession management planning, international policy research and advocacy work, biodiversity survey and monitoring, dissemination, and fundraising for the trust fund. The RSPB is the BirdLife Partner organisation in the United Kingdom

BirdLife International is a global Partnership of over one hundred independent, grass root, national conservation NGOs, supported by over 10 million people worldwide. Partners work together on shared priorities, programmes and policies. These organisations share the same mission of protecting birds, biodiversity and their natural habitats by promoting priority setting, action, awareness, education and sustainable use of natural resources.





Help us to protect this unique rainforest

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"a joint initiative of Burung Indonesia, the RSPB and BirdLife International"
with the contribution from other BirdLife Partner organisations across the world

