

Coal road threat to original Forest of Hope

Title

A proposed coal road through the [Harapan Rainforest in Sumatra](#) could undo almost a decade of good work by the BirdLife Partnership, acting with the support of the Indonesian Government.

Harapan is the Indonesian word for hope. The fact that this flagship tropical forest project in Indonesia bears that name couldn't be more appropriate this week as this amazing place is once again under threat. Despite opposition, there is a proposal to build a 50km road through the middle of Harapan Rainforest, effectively cutting this area in two and putting the already-threatened wildlife and the indigenous people who call this area home under even greater pressure.

“We've formally objected to this proposal and we're working with our partners on the ground to do everything we can and we're optimistic that the company concerned and Indonesian authorities will understand the consequences of allowing such a proposal to proceed”, said Dr Jonathan Barnard, Head of the Tropical Forests Unit at the RSPB (BirdLife in the UK).

At almost 100,000 ha, Harapan protects 20% of the island's remaining lowland forest. Harapan was the first of BirdLife's “Forests of Hope”. It was established after BirdLife Partner Burung Indonesia, with the backing of the entire BirdLife Partnership, persuaded the Indonesian Government to change forest law to allow concessions originally earmarked for logging to be allocated for conservation.

To date, 305 bird species have been recorded at Harapan, with nine globally threatened species including the Endangered [Storm's Stork *Ciconia stormi*](#). Harapan is one of the increasingly rare Asian rainforest sites to hold a truly diverse large mammal fauna, including five primate and seven cat species, with a population of up to 20 Sumatran Tigers *Panthera tigris sumatrae*. Harapan and its resources are also critical to the way of life of the indigenous Batin Sembilan people.