

Komodo Dragons found in unprotected Indonesian IBA

Title

A team including staff from BirdLife Partner [Burung Indonesia](#) has confirmed the presence of the Komodo Dragon, the world's largest lizard, in the west of Flores Island, Indonesia. The discovery adds further urgency to the BirdLife Partnership's campaign to gain formal protection for the [Mbeliling Important Bird and Biodiversity Area \(IBA\)](#), which includes the forests where the giant lizards were found.

Komodo Dragon *Varanus komodoensis* is classed as Vulnerable on The IUCN Red List. Camera traps recorded at least 12 individuals in the Mbeliling forest in the extreme west of Flores, opposite the small islands of Komodo and Rinca, which are the known strongholds of the Komodo Dragon. The [Komodo National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site](#), includes these islands and a section of the Flores coast, but the Mbeliling IBA lies outside its boundaries.

As recently as 2004, Komodo Dragons were found at sites on the north and south coasts of Flores, but the survey work by Burung Indonesia and others provides the first confirmation that they also survive in the west.

“We hope these discoveries will be widely publicised and help our efforts to protect this irreplaceable biodiversity-rich forest area”, said Burung Indonesia's communications officer, Irfan Saputra.

BirdLife has identified Mbeliling as an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area because of its populations of threatened restricted range species, including the Critically Endangered Yellow-crested Cockatoo [Cacatua sulphurea](#), and Flores Hanging-parrot [Loriculus flosculus](#), Flores Monarch [Monarcha sacerdotum](#) and Flores Crow [Corvus florensis](#), which are all considered Endangered.

Without formal protection, the forest of Mbeliling IBA is being cleared to create agricultural land, which soon becomes exhausted, leading to further forest clearance. BirdLife has been working with the people of 27 villages around the IBA to make agricultural practices more sustainable, and to restore and enhance soil nutrients using organic farming methods, thereby reducing the pressure on the forests.

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