

Threatened biodiversity hotspot? in Indonesian forest sparks action from NABU and Burung Indonesia

Title

BirdLife Partners in Germany (NABU) and Indonesia (Burung Indonesia), have initiated a new project to protect tropical forests on the Indonesian island of Sulawesi. The project will take place in Gorontalo where 68.5% of the province is still covered with forests characterised by a very high and unique biodiversity. For this reason, Gorontalo is listed among the world's 34 'biodiversity hotspots.'

"The project area alone is inhabited by 36 endemic species of birds and numerous other animal species found only in this province, including the Gorontalo Macaque and the Sulawesi Babirusa" NABU vice-president Thomas Tennhardt said.

The project area connects two conservation areas (Panua Nature Reserve and Nantu Wildlife Reserve) and six protected forests. Due to its hilly topography and difficult accessibility, a large part of the forest has survived the destruction caused by palm oil plantations. Unfortunately, in the western area of the forest land allocated for plantations is rising. In order to stop further expansion, NABU and Burung Indonesia have planned to establish an 84,798 hectares large area as an area for ecosystem restoration.

The new project of NABU and Burung Indonesia aims to promote sustainable management of natural resources as well as preserve the endangered tropical forest areas as carbon sinks in order to conserve their unique biodiversity and benefit the livelihood of local communities. It builds on the foundations that began when the Harapan Rainforest was named the first Ecosystem Restoration Concession (ERC) in Indonesia. The ERCs were introduced in Indonesia by law in 2004 and forbid all clearing and conversion of forest area to agriculturally used land. At the same time, they require the holder to protect and restore the forest ecosystem. Prior to their introduction, forest licenses in Indonesia had been granted only for timber extraction.

Now, Gorontalo provides a further chance to protect one of earth's most species-rich forests and its rare inhabitants, and at the same time make an important contribution to climate

protection.