Indonesia names two national parks

30 March 2011

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The Government of Indonesia has designated two additional Wetlands of International Importance, Rawa Aopa Watumohai and Sembilang National Parks, bringing that country’s Ramsar Sites total to five sites covering 964,600 hectares.

Rawa Aopa Watumohai National Park, located in the Province of South East Sulawesi (105,194 ha; 04°28'S 121°59'E), is one of the most important conservation areas in the Wallacea region, consisting of mangroves, savannah, peat swamps, lowland tropical rain forests and sub-montane forests. The site is biologically rich, with over five hundred recorded species of flora, two hundred species of birds, eleven species of reptiles and over twenty species of fish and mammals. Many endemic and threatened species are found here, with over fifteen mammal species endemic to Sulawesi such as the endangered Lowland Anoa (Bubalus depressicornis) and vulnerable Sulawesi Civet (Macrogalidia muschenbroeckii). The Rawa Aopa Watumohai National Park is an important stopover for migratory waterbirds. The waterbird migration route passes through the Philippine Islands, through Sangihe Talaud (North Sulawesi), and transits through this site before entering Borneo. It supports a population of over 170 vulnerable Milky Stork (Mycteria cinerea) which is more than 3% of the world population.

This site contains the only remaining large mangrove habitat in South East Sulawesi that is an important nursery and spawning area for fish, prawns and crabs. Swamps within the national park (particularly Aopa Peat Swamp) are important regulators of water. It acts as a reservoir for freshwater, while run-off habitats help to control water discharge. Aopa Swamp is the only representative peatswamp wetland in Sulawesi. Threats to the site include illegal logging, poaching of waterbirds and collection of eggs. A section of the Aopa Swamp is being drained to direct water into surrounding agricultural areas. Rawa Aopa Watumohai National Park Office (under the management of the Ministry of Forestry) is responsible for the management of this site.
Sembilang National Park in South Sumatra Province (202,896 ha; 01°57’S 104°36’E) supports a unique estuarine environment which has the largest mangrove formation in East Sumatra, along the western part of Indonesia. The site also supports coastal forest, lowland tropical forests, swamps, and peatlands. This site is biologically rich with over two hundred species of birds, one hundred forty species of fish and over fifty mammal species. Many of these species are threatened such as the critically endangered Sumatran Tiger (*Panthera tigris sumatrae*), and the endangered Indian Elephant (*Elephas maximus*), Storm's Stork (*Ciconia stormi*), and Malayan Giant Turtle (*Oritia borneensis*). Over 43% of the mangrove species in Indonesia are also found here.

The mangroves and large alluvial delta at Sembilang National Park makes this site one of the critical stopover areas for migratory waterbirds along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. Some 0.5-1 million shorebirds use this area and during winter and almost 80,000-100,000 migratory birds feed and rest here. It supports more than 1% of the population of Milky Stork (*Mycteria cinerea*), Asian Dowitcher (*Limnodromus semipalmatus*), Spotted Greenshank (*Tringa guttifer*), Far Eastern Curlew (*Numenius madagascariensis*) and the Lesser Adjutant (*Leptoptilos javanicus*). It has one of the largest breeding colony of Milky Stork (*Mycteria cinerea*) in the world, and one of the largest breeding colony of the Spotted-billed Pelican (*Pelecanus philippensis*) and Lesser Adjutant (*Leptoptilos javanicus*) in Indonesia.
The swamps and peat forests act as container areas to store freshwater; this in turn recharges the ground water table that feeds seventy small rivers in the park. Threats to the site include illegal logging and encroaching development (e.g. harbour and industrial estates). The Ministry of Forestry, Directorate General of Protection and Nature Conservation has jurisdiction over this site.

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