

# Tanjung Puting National Park under siege

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An example of illicit infrastructure penetrating the forest interior to support illegal logging activities.  
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No forest in Indonesia is safe from the exploits of illegal logging.  
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## National Parks under siege

Illegal logging is rampant and out of control in Indonesia. It has permeated virtually every forest including areas that are protected from exploitation. In Central Kalimantan, the once pristine Tanjung Puting National Park (Appendix 1) is one of many protected areas under siege by illegal and destructive logging from the country's corrupt timber barons.

Information regarding the illegal logging of Tanjung Puting has been made available to the government of Indonesia since August 1999 when the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) and Indonesian NGO Telapak first published their report exposing the forest crimes in the Park.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the regular personal briefings and cooperation between the government and NGOs that resulted in the occasional flurry of activity to remove illegal loggers from the park, these brief bursts of enforcement have been short-lived<sup>2</sup>. Loggers have always returned to the park and the destruction continues unabated.

Vast tracts of Tanjung Puting have now been fragmented by illegal infrastructure of log rails, logging camps, roads, canals and log ponds. Today, the situation is far worse than in 1999. Recent estimates by the Indonesian Ministry of Forestry admit that about 40 per cent of Tanjung Puting has already been damaged by illegal logging and forest fires.

## What's at stake?

Tanjung Puting National Park is a 400,000 hectare conservation area of global importance, providing an island of biodiversity amid the rapidly diminishing forests of the island of Borneo. It is recognised as a world Biosphere Reserve by the United Nations<sup>3</sup> and forms the largest protected area of swamp forest in south-east Asia.<sup>4</sup> It is one of the few remaining habitats for the endangered orang-utan.

1 The Final Cut, EIA 1999.

2 Ibid.

3 Herry Djoko Susilo, The Tanjung Puting National Park and Biosphere Reserve, South-South Cooperation Programme on Environmentally Sound Socio-Economic Development in the Humid tropics, working paper, 22 July 1999.

4 Dr Birute Galdikas and Dr Gary Shapiro, A Guidebook to Tanjung Puting National Park, 1994

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*Illegal sawmill near Tanjung Puting National Park.  
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*Indonesian workers load containers of plywood destined for Europe on to a Maltese bulk carrier, The Greveno, anchored near the mouth of Lamandau River, on the west side of Tanjung Puting National Park, Kalimantan February 5, 2004. Greenpeace activists from the Rainbow Warrior expose the loading of suspected illegal plywood bound for Belgium, The Netherlands, and The United Kingdom.*

The park embraces tropical heath forest, mangrove and peat swamp forest. It contains a number of commercial tree species including Ramin (*Gonystylus spp.*) and Meranti (*Shorea spp.*) as well as over 200 bird species, 17 reptile species, and 29 mammal species including endangered species such as the estuarine crocodile, clouded leopard, Malayan sunbear and storm's stork.<sup>5</sup>

Nine of Borneo's thirteen primate species occur in the park, including the orang-utan, the proboscis monkey, the agile gibbon and the silvery leaf-eating monkey.

**Failed Promises**

Tanjung Puting has been accepted as a test case by the Indonesia government in its fight against illegal logging, especially in national parks. To date, the government has utterly failed to reduce the logging or prosecute the timber companies who are coordinating this trade. One such player in the region is Abdul Rasyid who runs a group of companies called Tanjung Lingga<sup>6</sup>.

There is increasing evidence of local unrest as local residents feel that when action takes place it concentrates on the loggers and not on the timber tycoons. Logging will only stop when the corrupt political and business elite profiting from the logging are seriously confronted and those responsible are prosecuted.

There has been little attempt to combat the logging infrastructure or stop the loggers despite an enforcement operation involving 70 policemen in September 2002. EIA/Telapak provided the government with a detailed map outlining locations of the logging infrastructure and the names of the timber barons working in the east of the Park at the end of 2001. This infrastructure is still in place and logging operations expanded in the area.

For a brief period it appeared as if logging had been reduced in the north of the Park where log rafts had previously been seen day and night on the Sekonyer River. This area is easily accessible and frequented by tourists visiting Tanjung Puting to see the wildlife, especially the orang-utans. Yet, recent reports, including one from local parliamentarians who saw a 200 metre log raft on the Sekonyer River with around 100 cubic metres of Ramin and Nyatoh logs suggests even this area continues to be destroyed.

<sup>5</sup> E. Colijn, The Nature reserves of Kalimantan.

<sup>6</sup> Update on Tanjung Puting National Park: A Report to the CGI Meeting, Jakarta, December 2003.

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*Greenpeace activists investigate a large cargo of raw, unmarked timber, on a barge anchored off the coast of southern Kalimantan. Illegal logging and corruption within the logging industry is widespread in Indonesia. It is estimated that as much as 70 percent of the raw timber supplying the country's wood processing industry is logged illegally. A World Bank report warned that some of the richest forests in the region could be wiped out in 3 to 10 years, unless government action is taken to halt the rampant illegal logging and habitat destruction.*

Many logging camps are also reported to be located along the park's Buluh Kecil River banks accompanied by an infrastructure of log rails penetrating the forest interior. Recent local reports confirm that these rails have now entered the world renowned Orang-utan research area established by Professor Birute Galdikas, 31 years ago at Camp Leakey. The illegal loggers, who come from all over Indonesia as well as from the local town of Kumai are also hunting and stripping trees of bark causing further untold damage to this fragile ecosystem. Recent local reports state that there are now fires burning along the Buluh Kecil River.

Despite the government's promise to combat illegally logging in Tanjung Puting corruption maintains its grip on suppressing enforcement. The shadow leader of the Central Kalimantan Provincial parliament (DPRD) has said that the illegal logging activities are backed by corrupt politicians in the local government office. The Partai Bulan Bintang (PBB) political party faction from the DPRD in West Kotawaringin has made a plea for enforcement in the Park. Commissions from the local parliament observed damaged areas of the Park between the Sekonyer River and the Buluh River and counted more than 40 huts with 400 workers living there.

**Partners in crime**

The markets for illegal timber being extracted from Kalimantan spread the entire globe, in the form of logs, sawn timber, plywood and finished timber products manufactured outside Indonesia. Two of the largest producers of plywood in the region are the Barito Pacific Group and the Indonesian-Korean company Korindo. Both groups are notorious for the involvement of large-scale illegal logging operations in the region.

The Barito Pacific Group is the single largest operator in Kalimantan and the largest producer of plywood in the world. They hold 52 timber concessions in Indonesia covering over five million hectares, making it the largest concession holder in the country. Its 31 plywood mills and sawmills consume around 4.3 million cubic metres of timber.<sup>7</sup> Nearly half of these mills are located through Kalimantan, with the major plants being in Banjarmasin, Samrinda and Pontianak.<sup>8</sup> While a large part of Indonesia's plywood goes to Japan, Barito Pacific's plywood has also been found with traders in France, Germany, the UK, and the Netherlands.

Korindo also operate most of their mills in Kalimantan and also belongs to the top 10 forest companies in Indonesia.<sup>9</sup> In Kalimantan they have operations in Pangkalanbun (Central Kalimantan) and Balikpapan (East Kalimantan). The Pangkalanbun plywood mill (Korindo Ariabima Sari) is close to the west border of Tanjung Puting National Park.<sup>10</sup> Korindo's plywood has been found in Europe in France, the UK, the Netherlands and Germany. Their major European trader is Brussels based Fepco.

Although the Indonesia government has banned the export of logs to try and curb illegal logging, EIA/Telepak has recently documented log shipments from Kumai (in the Tanjung Puting National Park) into Malaysia and Vietnam.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>7</sup> PiC report, GP UK, 2003, citing 104 Brown (1999) Addicted.

<sup>8</sup> [www.ebarito.com](http://www.ebarito.com)

<sup>9</sup> [www.korindo.id.co](http://www.korindo.id.co)

<sup>10</sup> [www.korindo.id.co](http://www.korindo.id.co)

<sup>11</sup> Update on Tanjung Puting National Park, EIA, December 2003

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**Urgent Need to Save the Orang-utan**

The orang-utan is Asia's only Great Ape and as a keystone species (an indicator of the ecological health of its environment) its dwindling populations reflect the deteriorating ecological health of Indonesia's remaining forests.

The last refuges for the endangered orang-utan are the rapidly disappearing forests of Indonesia. The archipelago of Indonesia is home to around 80 per cent of the world's remaining wild orang-utans. Yet the escalating critically systematic pillaging of these forests, orchestrated by those looking to make short-term profits, is driving the country to an environmental catastrophe with devastating implications for the future of one of mankind's closest relatives.

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century 315,000 orang-utans existed in the wild. Today, as few as 20,000 remain in the forests of Sumatra and Borneo. Orang-utan populations have declined by 50 per cent over the last ten years alone – a frightening decline. In Sumatra they are disappearing at a rate of 1000 individuals a year; in Borneo it is estimated to be higher. The orang-utan crisis is so profound that in 2000 the World Conservation Union (IUCN) raised the status of the Sumatran orang-utan to "critically endangered", and the Borneo orang-utan to "endangered" from "vulnerable".

The orang-utan has been listed under Appendix I of the Convention on Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) that bans international trade in the species, yet hunting of young orang-utans for the pet trade continues.

Even protected areas - the last strongholds with viable populations of Orang-utans – are being devastated by illegal logging. EIA is working with local organisations on the ground in two key National Parks – Gunung Leuser in Sumatra and Tanjung Puting in Kalimantan – in an effort to stem the tide and secure a future for Asia's Great Ape.



*As few as 20,000 orang-utans remain in the forests of Sumatra and Borneo and could be extinct within 20 years unless illegal and legal destructive logging is not brought under control.  
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**Protect Life on Earth**

Life on the planet is rapidly disappearing, our forests are being destroyed and our oceans are being depleted. Local peoples are being robbed of the natural resources they need for their survival. At this year's CBD governments must stop this destruction and honour the commitments they have already made to stop the trend of biodiversity loss. Governments must provide money for this urgently needed protection instead of wasting it on wars and activities that ultimately end life rather than protect it. Instead of having endless discussions about the devastation, governments must stop the destruction now. As the future guardians of the planet, we have the right to receive a planet rich in life.

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