

# QUICK FACTS ABOUT SUMATRA

- Sumatra is the only place in the world where tigers, elephants, rhinos and orangutans co-exist.
- It is home to the forest with the greatest vascular plant diversity of any lowland forest ever studied.
- It has perhaps the world's highest deforestation rate.
- It has lost 48 percent of its forests – more than 12 million hectares of forest – since 1985.
- It contains nine “tiger conservation landscapes” identified by experts as important habitat for Sumatran tigers.
- It is home to two of the world's largest pulp mills, owned by Asia Pulp & Paper (APP) and APRIL.
- It is estimated to contain the largest store of peat carbon in Southeast Asia under its peat forests.



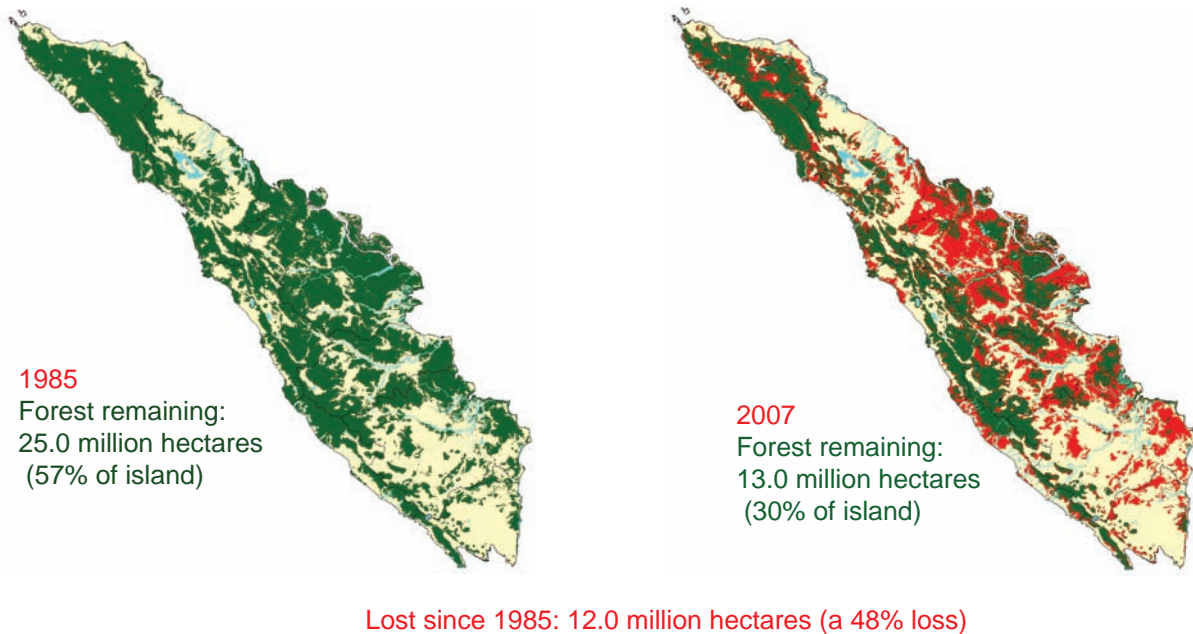
## Sumatra's Natural Forest

Sumatra is the world's sixth-largest island and the second-largest Indonesian island, after Borneo. This island has diverse natural forest types; 218 species of vascular plants were recorded in a single 200-square-meter plot of dry lowland forest in the Tesso Nilo landscape of central Sumatra, more than twice as many as recorded in the Amazon or any other forest studied. No lowland forest known to science comes close to matching the hyper-richness of species diversity in Tesso Nilo. Sumatra is also high in plant endemism – plants found nowhere else in the world -- including exotic species like the tallest flower in the world, titan arum (*Amorphophallus titanum*). Many of these natural forests are also important to protect deep peat soil underneath, which is concentrated mainly on the eastern coast of the island.

Yet Sumatra has seen the highest rate of natural forest loss not only in Indonesia but also in the world, due to transmigration, pulp & paper and palm oil production, and other development. Between 1985 and 2007, the island lost 12 million hectares of natural forest, a 48% loss in 22 years. By 2007, the island had only 30% forest cover (13 million hectares). The lowlands on the east side of Sumatra's mountain ranges especially are at high risk of extinction. Some areas there lost more than 70% of their natural forest cover and are close to being lost forever.

In recent years, natural forest loss has been driven mainly by expansion of pulpwood and oil palm plantations. This is pushing flagship species like Sumatran elephants, tigers and rhinos closer to extinction, and is also causing significant greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere from the loss of natural forest itself and also from the peat under the cleared areas. Land and forest fires that are deliberately set to clear land in Sumatra also cover the region with transboundary haze that is so severe that it blankets Southeast Asia some years and causes significant economic losses to the region. Blackouts have become more frequent because the majority of Sumatra's electricity relies on access to a good supply of water, which is getting more and more difficult to acquire due to loss of natural forest in watersheds.

It is critical that the remaining natural forests on the island be protected. Fortunately, nine governors – representing all eight terrestrial provinces on Sumatra and one of two adjacent island provinces – and key ministries of the central government signed an historic joint agreement to commit for the first time to an island-wide, ecosystem-based land use plan to allow restoration of critical areas, protect ecosystem services and protect areas with high conservation values.



## What WWF is Doing

WWF works in three provinces – Aceh, Riau and Lampung -- to protect natural forests and flagship species: Sumatran elephants, tigers, orangutans and rhinos. WWF, together with other NGOs and scientists, has been:

- collecting and analyzing data on natural forest, wildlife and other biodiversity and environmental values on the island, which can be used for designing and implementing ecosystem-based land use plans and forest-carbon financed conservation projects;
- monitoring natural forest cover and land use by companies and communities to identify drivers of loss and fragmentation of natural forest, as well as, decomposition and burning of peat at ground level;
- engaging local, national and international stakeholders to convince such drivers to avoid such activities and supporting intervention and law enforcement efforts;
- reducing human-wildlife conflict that results from loss of wildlife's forest habitat.

WWF is recommending that government and industry protect the remaining high conservation value forest left in Sumatra and instead develop agricultural plantations on so-called "wasteland" -- land where natural forest had been cleared, but not replanted by any crop cover and left idle to have grass lands, shrubs, and other secondary regrowth. In Riau Province alone, WWF Indonesia identified approximately 900,000 hectares of "wasteland." While WWF is not against pulpwood and oil palm plantation development, it is against such development when it comes at the expense of natural forest.



[www.savesumatra.org](http://www.savesumatra.org)

### WWF INDONESIA

Kantor Taman A0, Unit A-1  
Jl. Mega Kuningan Lot 8-9/A9  
Kawasan Mega Kuningan  
Jakarta 12950  
Indonesia  
Ph. +62 21 576 1070 Ext. 509  
Fax. +62 21 576 1080  
[www.wwf.or.id](http://www.wwf.or.id)

Photos copyrights:

WWF Indonesia/Tiger Team Survey  
WWF Indonesia/Elisabeth Purastuti  
WWF-Canon/Peter Hofland  
WWF Indonesia/Sri Maryati