



Sulawesi & Halmahera Summary

Sulawesi (formerly Celebes) is one of the main islands of Indonesia, and the 11th largest island in the world. With four spindly arms spinning outward, Sulawesi's spidery shape is easily recognizable. This enormous island has much to offer the visitor from extraordinary unique cultures, to an under-explored mountainous hinterland, and several truly world class diving spots. Sulawesi and Halmahera are ever growing in popularity for birding trips and this is one of the most biologically diverse and endemic-rich areas on earth.

Sulawesi is part of Wallacea, meaning that it has a mix of both Asian and Australasian species. There are 8 national parks on the island with the largest being Bogani Nani Wartabone with 2,871 km² and Lore Lindu National Park with 2,290 km². Bunaken National Park protects a rich coral ecosystem and has been proposed as an UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Sulawesi has been ranked by Birdlife International as the most endemic bird area on earth. The main island of Sulawesi is home to no less than 12 endemic genera and 41 endemic species. A further 56 species are endemic to the Sulawesi sub-region, (which includes neighboring islands, such as Sula and Banggai) and most of these can be found on the main island. While many Sulawesi bird species tend to be found on other nearby islands as well, such as Borneo, 34% of Sulawesi's birds are found nowhere else! There are around 400 known bird species in Sulawesi. Sulawesi and Halmahera have some of the most remarkable bird species in Asia including Maleo, Wallace's Standardwing, Ivory-breasted and Red-bellied Pitta, Knobbed Hornbill, Red-backed Thrush, Great Shortwing, Piping Crow, Malia, White Cockatoo, Ashy Woodpecker, Purple-bearded Bee-eater. The endemic chicken-sized Maleo is a largely ground-dwelling megapode, which uses hot sand close to the island's volcanic vents to incubate its eggs. An international partnership of conservationists, donors, and local people have formed the Alliance for Tompotika Conservation in an effort to raise awareness and protect the nesting grounds of these birds on the central-eastern arm of the island.

There are 127 known mammalian species in Sulawesi. A large percentage of these mammals, 62% (79 species) are endemic, meaning that they are found nowhere else in Indonesia or the world. The largest native mammals in Sulawesi are the two species of anoa or dwarf buffalo. Other mammals inhabiting

Sulawesi are the babirusas, which are aberrant pigs, the Sulawesi palm civet, and primates including a number of tarsiers (the spectral, Dian's, Lariang and pygmy species) and several species of macaque, including the crested black macaque, the moor macaque and the booted macaque. Although virtually all Sulawesi's mammals are placental, and generally have close relatives in Asia, several species of cuscus, marsupials of Australasian origin, also occur.

Halmahera is another K-shaped Island, and another region of enormous importance for endemic birds. Here and in the surrounding islands, are found 26 endemic bird species (including 4 endemic, single-species genera). Ten further species on Halmahera are endemic to the Moluccas.

Two species of bird of paradise are found in Halmahera. These are the western-most members of the family and neither of them is found in New Guinea: Wallace's Standardwing is a truly extraordinary creature. The plumage of the male includes a pair of long white pennant feathers that extend from the joints of its wings. These are extended most prominently during its parachuting courtship displays. The Paradise Crow is less spectacular in appearance - looking more like a plain crow than a Bird of Paradise.

Most birdwatching activities on Halmahera are conducted at Kali Batu Putih. This unprotected area is the location of a display tree, where Wallace's Standardwing can be reliably observed. It is also the best-known site for another spectacular and highly elusive bird; the Ivory-breasted Pitta. Other sought-after species here include the White (Umbrella) Cockatoo, Chattering Lory, Goliath Coucal and Purple Roller.

Of the 26 regional endemics, 22 can be found at Kali Batu Putih. The remaining four are difficult to locate. Carunculated Fruit Dove is known only from neighbouring Obi Island. Moluccan Woodcock is confined to Obi and Bacan. Moluccan Cuckoo is known from 5 specimens collected in 1931 (though a sighting was reported in the lowlands of Halmahera in 1996). The Invisible Rail mostly lives up to its name!

In spite of the extensive degradation of Halmahera's forests, most endemic birds on the island are not currently threatened with extinction. Those which are threatened are Invisible Rail, Moluccan Woodcock, Moluccan Scrubfowl, White Cockatoo, Chattering Lory and Carunculated Fruit Dove (all of which are classified as Vulnerable).

Birdwatchers and naturalist alike who visit this wondrous K-shaped landform are guaranteed to find a wealth of new and exciting species.

