



The Leuser Ecosystem: **a rainforest like no other**

The Leuser Ecosystem in Indonesia is one of the world's largest intact rainforests, stretching from mountain to sea and teeming with life. Located at the northern tip of Sumatra - the sixth largest island in the world - it is among the most biodiverse regions in South East Asia, home to an incredible array of animal and plant species, and the last place on earth where orangutans, rhinos, elephants and tigers co-exist in the wild.

Covering over 10,000 square miles, the Leuser forests and peatlands regulate water supplies for over seven million people, mitigate against floods and landslides, and comprise one of Asia's biggest carbon stores.

This is an ecosystem of exceptional worth which urgently needs our protection.



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The context

Huge areas of Indonesian rainforest have been cleared over the last few decades. As Sumatra's largest remaining region of near-continuous tree cover, the Leuser Ecosystem is a rare survivor – plotted on a map, it stands out like a giant pair of green lungs.

Most of the Leuser forests lie within the province of Aceh, which has avoided the large-scale commercial development happening elsewhere. However, high demand for commodities like palm oil persists in driving plantations into new regions, including Aceh's lowland forests and peat swamps.

While responsibly produced palm oil can be a reality, parts of the industry are still failing the most basic tests of all – to keep out of the world's last intact forests, to curb emissions of climate-warming gases, and to respect the rights of local communities and workers.





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The challenge

Habitats and wildlife are under threat from the advancement of plantations, energy infrastructure and roads, which open the forest up to further development. Some keystone species, like the Sumatran rhino, have been poached to the edge of extinction.

With hundreds of villages situated within the Leuser Ecosystem, it is essential to balance the economic and agricultural needs of local communities with lasting conservation. The shrinking forest is also associated with a higher incidence of floods and landslides downstream.

Given the ongoing threat of deforestation and poaching, the Leuser Ecosystem needs our attention and care if this important area of rainforest is to survive.



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Our Partners

LEAF's strength derives from the skill and determination of the civil society groups we support. As frontline wildlife heroes, they keep illegal logging and wildlife crime in check. As advocates and big-picture thinkers, they encourage decision-makers to build value from natural capital, not destroy it for short-term gain. As organisers and entrepreneurs, they engage local communities and create opportunities for sustainable development.

Between them, our grant partners work across the numerous strategies we need to stop these precious rainforests from slipping away. They need time, money and capacity to deliver all this work.

LEAF is proud to collaborate with these inspiring leaders, and to share learnings from their ambitious conservation plans.

WILDLIFE PROTECTION TEAM



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Who we are

LEAF'S MISSION

Connect new international donors to our capable conservation partners in the Leuser Ecosystem.

LEAF'S VISION

A secure future for the Leuser Ecosystem - protected for people and planet, forever.

We will realise our vision by driving additional funding to strategic conservation actions, by investing in the resilience of local civil society groups, and by boosting collaboration among donors.

Our staff team has substantial experience of forest grantmaking strategies, and our steering committee includes conservation, philanthropy and climate finance experts.

The Leuser Ecosystem Action Fund was created in 2017 with support from the Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation and Goldsmith Family Philanthropy, and is hosted by The Ecology Trust, a UK-registered charity.





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Our track record

LEAF has contributed to a kaleidoscope of mutually reinforcing successes. Our funds have helped to open new ranger patrols in key rhino habitat, to engage local communities in conservation, and support Aceh's foremost orangutan rescue centre through Covid-19.

Our civil society partners have trained dozens of elite ranger teams, removed thousands of snare traps and restored over 12,000 hectares of forest. They have amplified law enforcement, curbed damaging road, energy and plantation schemes, and galvanised multinational companies to shun unsustainable sources of palm oil.

Our partners are undertaking pioneering work to empower more women to participate in landscape management and protection, and are championing the rights of communities who have protected the Leuser forests for generations.

This work has stabilised the populations of some endangered species and achieved a sharp reduction in annual deforestation rates - but much more remains to be done.



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What your funding could support

LEAF can offer high-impact funding opportunities that speak to the intrinsic value of these forests, as well as their relevance to the global climate and nature crises.

We are raising funds for three streams of work:

Communities, livelihoods and social justice:

Conservation needs to work for people and nature alike. LEAF will invest in community rights, the creation of forest-friendly jobs and in bringing sustainable finance into the region.

Species and habitats:

Agriculture and forestry are eating into intact forest, while poaching threatens many birds and mammals. These forces need to be addressed in a holistic way, and degraded land restored to its life-giving best.

Systems change:

Some of the pressures bearing down on rainforests originate in global supply chains. Alongside other funders, LEAF supports campaigns to stop the products of illegal deforestation from being sold in Europe and elsewhere.





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Why support LEAF

Your grant or donation will make a tangible difference to one of the world's most special places. Whether your interest lies with climate, nature or social justice, we are confident of finding projects to match.

LEAF provides a high-quality regranting service for donors who want to connect with the Leuser Ecosystem via a reputable UK charitable trust. Our service is particularly well-suited to individual donors who want to place grants with the benefit of expert guidance, and to foundations who use LEAF to manage cross-cutting grant portfolios on their behalf.

All that we do is rooted in trustful working relationships with colleagues in the philanthropic and civil society sectors. Our purpose is to add value, and our passion is to make every grant dollar go the extra mile - for the Leuser Ecosystem, there is not a moment to lose.





Thank you for your interest in protecting the Leuser Ecosystem!

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“If the Amazon rainforests are the lungs of the Earth, the Leuser is its heart - beating with vitality for us all. It is the last place on Earth where Southeast Asia’s most iconic species - orangutans, tigers, rhinos and elephants - still live side by side in the wild, a rich ecosystem pulsating with life”

Dr Ian Singleton OBE

Director, Sumatran Orangutan Conservation Programme