

Indonesia sees bird species decline

Conservation association Burung Indonesia said Tuesday that 122 Indonesian bird species included on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) red list could go extinct without tougher efforts to protect them from loss of habitat and illegal capture.

Burung Indonesia program manager Ria Saryanthi said that Indonesia had the highest number of birds that could go extinct.

According to Burung Indonesia, 18 bird species in Indonesia are in critical condition, 31 species are endangered and 73 species are categorized as vulnerable.

“It is important for us to preserve the habitat of birds by protecting trees and forests from deforestation,” Ria said in a press statement to commemorate A Million Trees Day, celebrated on Jan. 10th every year.

Forest was the most important habitat for bird life, she said, adding that 50 percent of the world’s total bird species face extinction due to increased forest degradation caused by human activity. Half of Indonesia’s endangered bird species live in forests.

Citing an example, Ria said that doves and pigeons in Indonesia, including the forest pigeon (*Columba sp.*), barred cuckoo-dove (*Macropygia unchall*), ground doves (*Chalcophaps sp* and *Gallicolumba sp.*) new imperial pigeon (*Ducula sp.*) and fruit dove (*Ptilinopus sp.*) depended on forest habitats.

“It doesn’t sound strange for us that 12 out of 122 endangered bird species are *Columbidae* [doves and pigeons],” she said.

Indonesia has a tremendously diverse variety of bird species. According to Ria, 1,594 bird species from a total 10,000 known birds in the world are endemic to Indonesia. This ranks Indonesia fifth in terms of nations with the greatest diversity of bird species.

Apart from illegal hunting and trade, Ria said that significant pressure on Indonesia’s bird species came from habitat loss caused by forest conversion for industry, agriculture and plantation areas.

The public could participate in conservation management, including brokering agreements with land owners not to give up their land, she said.

“The voluntary agreements provide more flexibility in utilization of natural resources,” she said, as quoted by *Antara* news agency.

“Citizens and the government could cooperate to manage conservation areas,” Ria said, adding that such agreements could be beneficial for local communities living nearby.

Another option was to rehabilitate decaying ecosystems by restoring biodiversity capacity, she said.