

Rare deer found on Philippine island: scientists

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A Negros Interior Biodiversity Expedition shows a rare Visayan spotted deer. One of the world's rarest deer appears to be just holding out in a tiny patch of the Philippines forest that is rapidly being cut down by farmers and loggers, according to a British-Filipino scientific expedition.

One of the world's rarest deer has been found in a tiny patch of Philippines forest that is being cut down by farmers and loggers, according to a British-Filipino scientific expedition.

The team said it "found fresh [deer](#) droppings, deer tracks and evidence of feeding activity" by the Visayan spotted deer during the group's three-week sortie into Mount Mandalagan in the north of Negros island last month.

"This is a critically important find to discover such an important animal

alive and well in its natural habitat," expedition leader James Sawyer said in a statement released after the British members' return to London.

Not much larger than a dog, the short-legged, rainforest-dwelling deer that feeds at night is the largest endemic species of the west Visayan islands.

It is notable for its distinctive pattern of buff-coloured spots scattered across its dark brown back and sides.

Cervus alfredi are found only in the central [Philippines](#) and before the herds dwindled through heavy hunting and rapid habitat loss, they were present on the islands of Cebu, Guimaras, Leyte, Masbate, Negros, Panay and Samar.

Only a few hundred are now thought to remain on Panay and Negros due to intensive hunting and extensive deforestation as land is cleared for farming.

The northern Negros herds themselves had not been seen "for many years," according to the expedition statement.

The expedition also proved that "Philippine forests still harbour many rare and unique species, found nowhere else in the world," said the team's research leader Craig Turner.

The [forest](#), which comprises the core of the protected North Negros Natural Park, is described by the expedition as "a biodiversity hotspot of great importance" and "one of the top 10 most vulnerable forest ecosystems globally".

The team said it would present its findings at Britain's Royal Geographical Society on September 3.

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