

Rare bat found in oil palm plantation's oasis

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(PhysOrg.com) -- The discovery of a rare bat species in a tiny fragment of rainforest surrounded by an oil palm plantation has demonstrated that even small areas of forest are worth saving.

This first record of the Ridley's leaf-nosed bat in Sumatra follows the publication of a paper in Conservation Letters that suggests retaining forest fragments within oil palm plantations is not an effective strategy for protecting wildlife.

Conservationists from ZSL, Queen Mary, University of London and the Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology (DICE – University of Kent) discovered the Ridley's leaf-nosed bat in a 300ha fragment of forest during a biodiversity survey in West Sumatra, Indonesia.

Amongst many other species found by the biodiversity survey were sunbear, tapir, agile gibbon and banded langur, all of which are also of

conservation concern.

Sophie Persey, ZSL Biodiversity and Oil Palm Project Manager says, “Protecting large areas of connected forest will always be a priority for wildlife conservation, but if ambitious future plans for oil palm expansion are realised, conserving forest fragments within oil palm landscapes will also be important for maintaining Indonesia’s biodiversity.”

To meet the Principles and Criteria of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil relating to biodiversity, member palm oil producers have to identify High Conservation Values within their concession, or that could be affected by their operations, and then implement measures to maintain and enhance these values.

The area surveyed in Sumatra is currently managed as a conservation area by the palm oil company, limiting the impact of logging and encroachment on the forest fragment.

“The finding of this survey suggests that a network of forest fragments may be appropriate for some species of high [conservation](#) concern. The scientific community needs to continue to support the business community to find ways in which our threatened wildlife can persist in these managed areas over the long-term,” says Dr Matthew Struebig of Queen Mary, University of London and DICE, who led the survey.

The progress and future of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil certification scheme will be discussed at the upcoming 8th Annual Roundtable Conference, starting on Monday 8 November in Jakarta, Indonesia.

Provided by Zoological Society of London

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