

Sulawesi: Island between the Realms – Biodiversity Research in Central Indonesia –

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The majority of earth's biodiversity occurs in the tropics. Indonesia with its thousands of islands is one of the megadiversity countries of the world bridging Asia, Australia and the Malay Archipelago.

Sulawesi (formerly known as Celebes) lies right in the centre of this vast archipelago. Due to its exceptional topographic position between these distinct faunal regions, Sulawesi together with the Lesser Sunda Islands in the south, and the Moluccas in the east represents a zoogeographic transitional region called Wallacea. Thus, Sulawesi's fauna comprises an assemblage of typical Oriental and Papu-Australian species. In addition, and because of long periods of isolation in its geological history Sulawesi is characterized by a high degree of endemism (e.g., >40% in butterflies) embedded in a complex biogeographic setting.

Despite the investigations of numerous famous scientists of the 19th and 20th century such as P. Bleeker (fish, amphibians, reptiles), G. A. Boulenger (fish, amphibians, reptiles), L. Martin (butterflies), G. G. Musser (rodents), F. and P. Sarasin (fish, invertebrates), E. Stresemann (birds), and M. Weber (fish), recent fieldwork on Sulawesi reveals several new records for that island as well as many more undescribed species of fish, amphibians, reptiles, and butterflies. Thus, the peculiar fauna of Sulawesi is still far from being completely inventoried and further systematic investigations are urgently required to fill these gaps.