The TransFly Ecoregion Program:
A Unique approach for a unique area

The TransFly ecoregion straddles the international border of Papua New Guinea and Indonesia. This low-lying coastal region of grasslands, savannas wetlands and monsoon forest habitats covers more than 10 million ha. The area is home to some of the largest and healthiest wetlands in the Asia-Pacific region. It contains landscapes and species found nowhere else in New Guinea.

The TransFly is an ecoregion program managed jointly by WWF in PNG and Papua, Indonesia and is the first example of a cross-border terrestrial ecoregion program developed in New Guinea. A process for developing the Biodiversity Vision for the TransFly was developed with major network partners (UK, US, Australia, International) in May 2003. Throughout 2004 and 2005 various analyses have been completed that have expanded our knowledge of key species, habitats and ecological processes and in the TransFly landscapes. 48 conservation targets have been identified that need protecting within the protected area network (map 1). The current protected area network does not protect all of these – some have no formal protection at all (map 2). WWF, DEC and local communities are working together to establish more protected areas in the TransFly to enhance the coverage of more of these conservation targets in the protected area system. More still needs to be done to ensure coverage of all targets. The biodiversity vision for the TransFly will guide this work.

The TransFly: A threatened landscape

The TransFly is under immense pressure from development threats (map 3). Large areas of native grasslands have been converted for irrigated rice cultivation and almost the entire monsoon forest area is targeted for logging. Numerous roads and settlements are developing in an ad hoc way which threaten key watersheds. Less obvious but equally devastating threats include introduction of alien weed species, exotic fish species that threaten populations of native high value barramundi and saratoga, as well as introduced deer that have brought about large scale changes to the dynamics of native grassland systems.