

# **Brunei (Nation of, Abode of Peace) (Negara Brunei Darussalam)**

**Last updated: 31-01-2004**

## **Location and area**

Brunei is a sultanate on the northern coast of the island of Borneo, eastern Asia, bounded on the north by the South China Sea, and on all other sides by the Malaysian state of Sarawak, which also divides the country into two parts. The total area is 5,765 km<sup>2</sup>.

## **Topography**

Brunei consists of a narrow coastal plain and a hilly interior.

## **Climate**

Brunei has a humid, tropical climate, with an average annual temperature of about 27° C. The annual rainfall is heavy and concentrated in the monsoon season of November to March, but there is no dry season (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

## **Land use**

Brunei is still largely (about 59%) covered in primary forest. Mostly this is lowland evergreen forest with small areas of heath forest and some peat swamps in the west.

## **Wetlands**

According to Geoanalytics ([www.geoanalytics.com/bims/bx.htm](http://www.geoanalytics.com/bims/bx.htm)), freshwater swamps originally (before human influence) covered 92 km<sup>2</sup>, peat swamps originally 1,643 km<sup>2</sup>, and mangroves originally 250 km<sup>2</sup>.

The main areas of peat swamp forest are along the basin of the Belait River in western Brunei. Substantial areas of seasonally flooded peat swamp forest occur in the middle reaches of the Tutong River ([www.geoanalytics.com/bims/bx.htm](http://www.geoanalytics.com/bims/bx.htm)). The mangroves on the Brunei coast probably represent the largest remaining intact mangroves in northern Borneo ([www.geoanalytics.com/bims/bx.htm](http://www.geoanalytics.com/bims/bx.htm)).

## **Peatlands**

Anderson (1964, 1984) estimates the area of "peat swamps" to be 984 km<sup>2</sup> (380 square miles), a figure that is also mentioned for the "peatland" area by Schneider (1976).

Rieley et al. (1992) mention an area of "peat swamp forests" of 100 km<sup>2</sup>. This figure is probably a wrong rounding of the 984 km<sup>2</sup>. This rounding error persists e.g. in Lappalainen & Žurek (1996b), who present the number of 100 km<sup>2</sup> for the "recent peatland area", Rieley et al. (1996a) for the "peat swamps" and Rieley (1997) for the "undisturbed peatland" area of Brunei.

According to Davies (2002) "peat soils" make up around 18 % of the land area of Brunei, amounting to around 1,000 km<sup>2</sup>. Almost all of the lower Bealit River is covered with peat soils, together with small pockets in Ulu Betait, in the Lower Tutong River valley, and the coastal plain of Temburong District (Fig. 1). Peat swamp forests still cover ca. 90 % of the peat area, most of which are little disturbed.

Fig. 1: The distribution of peat swamp forests in Brunei (from Davies 2002). **Overnemen!!!**

According to the interpreted World Soil Map (Van Engelen & Huting 2002) 666 km<sup>2</sup> of histosols exist in Brunei and 778 km<sup>2</sup> of gley soils.

### **Mire and peatland losses**

According to Geoanalytics ([www.geoanalytics.com/bims/bx.htm](http://www.geoanalytics.com/bims/bx.htm)), the area of freshwater swamps decreased from 92 km<sup>2</sup> to currently 74 km<sup>2</sup>. Peat swamps decreased from 1,643 km<sup>2</sup> to 1,236 km<sup>2</sup>, mangroves from 250 km<sup>2</sup> to currently 200 km<sup>2</sup>.

According to Scott (1989) all swamp forests were still in almost pristine condition. According to Davies (2002) peat swamp forests still cover ca. 90 % of the peat area, most of which are little disturbed.