

## **Anoa, Dwarfs Buffalo Which are Endangered to Extinction**

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Anoa, also known as Dwarf Buffalo, are a subgenus of *Bubalus* comprising two species; the Lowland Anoa (*Bubalus depressicornis*) and the Mountain Anoa (*Bubalus quarlesi*). The body length of anoa is approximately 160-172 cm, and tail is 18-31 cm. The anoa, which are essentially miniature of water buffalo has become especially attractive. The mountain anoa are usually smaller.

"The stand barely over 75 centimeters. Some are only 69 cm, but some are reached 106 centimeters. They are usually weighing 150 kg. The coat of baby Anoa are usually thick and yellowish brown color. The color of adults varies from dark brown to black, with males generally being darker than females," said wildlife expert of the Department of Forest Resources Conservation and Ecotourism, Faculty of Forestry, Bogor Agricultural University, Dr. Abdul Haris Mustari.

Anoa is endemic to Sulawesi, the species are distributed across most of its known historical range, that include North Sulawesi and Gorontalo, Central Sulawesi, West Sulawesi, Southeast Sulawesi and Buton Island. Especially those in South Sulawesi, the species of anoa have been classified as endangered and the population continues to decrease to the extinction.

Despite their legal protection in Indonesia, Anoa are an endangered species and have been listed as Endangered by the IUCN (International Union for the Conservation and Natural Resources), meaning that these endangered species will become extinct if no immediate action against the population and habitat conservation. Anoa also listed in Appendix I of CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora), i.e. animals that should not be hunted, captured and killed and traded. Both anoa species have been included in the list of ten species of mammals that became a national priority to preserve.

Further, Dr. Mustari explained the behavior of anoa. The life expectancy for anoa is about 25 years. The sex maturity of adult female anoa is 3 years while for male is 4 years. Anoa travel singly or in pairs, but never associate in larger groups of more than three. A pair of anoa is most likely to be comprised of a mother and her offspring, or an adult male and female. Anoa males more often solitary and tend to be aggressive toward other males especially in mating season which take place at the end of the dry season (August-October). Anoa gestation period is 9 months, and only one per birth. Their plant food, however, is largely composed of a variety of dicotyl group consisted of 70% of ferns, including shrubs, bushes and lianas as well. Anoa also eat plants from monocotyl groups namely grasses that grow in forest floors, and bamboo shoots as well. Ripe fruit of various types trees such as *Ficus* spp, *Dillenia ochreatea*, *Parkia timoriana*, and *Artocarpus* sp that falls to the forest floors are the delicacies for anoa. Anoa affect forest systems in Sulawesi in some important ways: they can change vegetation composition and structure through grazing and browsing, and can be seed dispersers for a wide range of species.

The current population the endemic species, anoa, is somewhat 5000 animals. The population has been in decline due to habitat loss, and hunting in the Southeast and Central Sulawesi. Anoa populations in three protected forest areas in Gorontalo, namely Nantu and Panua Nature Reserve, and Bogani Nani Wartabone National Park, is estimated about 450 animals. In Tanjung Peropa Nature Reserve, Southeast Sulawesi, the anoa population is estimated about 350 animals, said Dr. Mustari.

"The predicted highest number of anoa in the Nantu Nature Reserve is about 100 animals, in the Panua forest is about 50 animals, and in the Bogani Nani Wartabone National Park is about 300 animals," said Dr. Mustari who carried out his research project on anoa on 1994-2003. During which he revealed that local people who live in the borders of Nantu Nature Reserve and Papualangi forest area, as well as in the area Cempaka Putih village, North Gorontalo, and Tanjung Peropa Nature Reserve consumed anoa meat.

According to the researcher who spent years to study anoa, anoa populations are shrinking dramatically compared with several years ago. It is believed unlikely that there are more than 5000 animals of each species remaining. One of the natural predators that threaten anoa is the python, which prefer to prey on anoa offsprings, he said. In addition, the reproductive ecology of anoa which only to give a birth one per birth.

"However the most dangerous predator of anoa is human. According to the local communities living in the borders of anoa habitats, anoa are wild cows that might be hunted for meat, but some are for sale by door to door sale methods," said Dr. Mustari. In addition for meat, the horns of anoa are being used as decoration for the living room of local people in Sulawesi. The man who spent for years studying the ecology and conservation of the natural anoa habitats in Sulawesi since 1994, stated that local authorities do not seriously protect the anoa. Up to present no one has been red-handed as the anoa hunters. Forest clearing for plantations, loss of habitat due to the advancement of settlement and illegal logging also contribute to accelerate the process of the extinction of this shy animal.

In fact, anoa are very potential to be the source of animal protein for the local people of Sulawesi. The consumption of anoa meat will reduce the dependence on meat importation from the outside of Sulawesi. "However, serious study on how to domesticate or how to breed such wild species to be the farming animal is really needed. The domestication program will assist the conservation of the endangered anoa from extinction, and also will increase in the local community nutrition. It is the reason the local communities exploit the local resources for their food supplies," said Dr. Mustari.

According to Dr. Mustari, at the moment, the government is in the process to compile the national document on the Conservation Strategy and Action Plan as effort to conserve anoa, which includes several programs, namely:

1. Wildlife management;
2. Management of its populations dynamic and their natural habitats;
3. The management anoa habitat;
4. Increasing the role of the Conservation institutions including zoos and safari parks to conserve anoa ex-situ;
5. The establishment of data bases and the information centers for anoa management;
6. Intensifying the education programs for public awareness to conserve anoa;
7. Improving the cooperation of all parties (stake holders) on the conservation of anoa; and

8. Funding support for anoa conservation program.

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