

**News release**

**Indonesian conservationist honored as biodiversity  
'Hotspot Hero' by Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund**

*Deni Purwandana is being recognized for achievements in protecting the country's species and ecosystems*

**Arlington, Virginia, USA (22 May 2020)** – On this International Day for Biological Diversity, the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) announces that Deni Purwandana and nine other conservationists from around the world have been named "Hotspot Heroes" for their efforts to protect the world's biodiversity hotspots. The honorees were chosen from the hundreds of civil society organizations that have received grants from CEPF in the 10 global biodiversity hotspots where the fund is currently active.

CEPF is recognizing these heroes as part of the celebration of its 20th anniversary. The fund empowers nongovernmental organizations, indigenous groups, universities and private enterprises to protect the world's biodiversity hotspots—the world's most biologically diverse yet threatened terrestrial regions—and help communities thrive. CEPF does this through grants and technical support for conservation, organizational strengthening and sustainable development.

The Hotspot Heroes and the nongovernmental organizations they work for are making outstanding contributions to the conservation of the hotspots. They exemplify the kinds of dedicated, dynamic people who work to ensure that intact ecosystems can continue to sustain flora and fauna and provide clean air, fresh water, healthy soils, sustainable livelihoods, resilience to climate change and much more.

For nearly 20 years, Purwandana has focused his career on protecting, researching and advocating for the often maligned Komodo dragon (*Varanus komodoensis*), and serving as the program coordinator of the Bali-based nonprofit organization Komodo Survival Program (KSP) since 2011. The Komodo dragon is found on only a few small islands within Indonesia and is listed as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

One significant population of Komodo dragons is located on Flores Island—part of the Wallacea Biodiversity Hotspot—where human conflict is threatening the species' survival. KSP is working with the local community to increase awareness, bolster tourism efforts and better manage livestock. Their efforts have seen results: An

agreement to protect key habitat was signed, an ecotourism board was established and there have been no recent retaliatory killings of Komodo dragons following livestock attacks.

"Mr. Purwandana is giving new meaning to being a scientist, educator and advocate for community-based conservation. Among his many great attributes, one is presence—he is there, with the people of eastern Indonesia, demonstrating the value of species and site conservation," said CEPF Grant Director Dan Rothberg, who oversees CEPF's investment in the Wallacea Biodiversity Hotspot.

Mr. Purwandana has authored multiple scientific papers on Komodo dragons and, in 2017, received the Arnold Berliner Award for an article published in the journal *The Science of Nature*, which documented his research on the Komodo dragon's feeding habits.

"The Hotspot Heroes represent the many tenacious, committed conservationists who are taking action every day to ensure the future of the biodiversity hotspots and the people who depend on these vital ecosystems," said CEPF Executive Director Olivier Langrand. "They endure a multitude of challenges—long hours, grueling travel, difficult working conditions, political hurdles and even threats to their lives—in pursuit of a healthy, sustainable world."

"Mr. Purwandana and KSP have really engaged the communities of Flores in conserving these amazing lizards and finding sustainable ways for the people to earn their livelihoods," said Langrand. "He has helped the communities understand the value of maintaining strong, diverse ecosystems."

Read more about [Deni Purwandana](#) and the other [Hotspot Heroes](#).

CEPF is a joint initiative of l'Agence Française de Développement, Conservation International, the European Union, the Global Environment Facility, the Government of Japan and the World Bank.

Since 2001, CEPF has catalyzed enduring, locally led biodiversity conservation through US\$250 million in grants to more than 2,400 organizations in 98 developing and transitional countries. Results include more than 15 million hectares of formal protected areas established, at least 890 globally threatened species supported, and more than 3,500 communities benefiting. Learn more at [www.cepf.net](http://www.cepf.net), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

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Download a photo of Deni Purwandana [here](#). (\*Note: you will need to read through Conservation International's terms of use document before downloading.)