

Peat swamp forests, a haven for birds

Bird studies conducted in the peat swamp forest of South-East Pahang in Pahang and Loagan Bunut National Park in Sarawak have confirmed the presence of various globally significant bird species.

About 98% or 223 of the total 237 bird species recorded in Malaysia's peat swamp forests were found in the South-East Pahang Peat Swamp Forest (SEPPSF), according to a bird survey commissioned by the UNDP/GEF Funded Peat Swamp Forest Project in 2004.

The survey confirmed the presence of an additional globally threatened species, Wallace's Hawk-eagle *Spizaetus nanus*, and the importance of *Durio carinatus* (durian paya) in the PSF as a food source for hornbills, other birds and mammals.

The SEPPSF is of importance to migrating Eye-browed Trushes (*Turdus obscurus*) and pigeons especially of *Ducula* and *Theron* species.

Eight species of hornbills were also found in the SEPPSF, comprising the Pekan, Nenasi, Kedondong and Resak forest reserves. The area is believed to be one of the easiest places in Peninsular Malaysia to spot a wide selection of hornbills, far surpassing even the Taman Negara. In fact, the SEPPSF may be the only place in the peninsula where the Wrinkled Hornbills survive in large numbers.

In the Loagan Bunut National Park, 187 bird species have been recorded in a study commissioned by the PSF Project and conducted by the Wildlife Conservation Society since last August 2006. The figure represents 30% of the total Bornean birds, of which 11 are migrants.

The bird species categorised as globally significant species in the IUCN Red List include an Endangered species: Storm's Stork *Ciconia stormi*; and four Vulnerable species: Wallace's Hawk-Eagle *Spizaetus nanus*, Crestless Fireback *Lophura erythrophthalma*, Large Green Pigeon *Treron capellei*, and Hook-billed Bulbul *Setornis criniger* while 41 other species are listed as Lower Risk but Near Threatened.

Compared to Maludam National Park, which is also made up of mostly PSFs, the resident bird population in LBNP is found to be much higher.

One peat swamp specialist species, Hook-billed Bulbul *Setornis criniger*, was the most commonly mist-netted species in the PSF area whereas Little Spiderhunter *Arachnothera longirostra*, in the mixed dipterocarp forest in LBNP. Other species include the Bornean Bristlehead *Pityriasis gymnocephala* and Yellow-rumped Flowerpecker *Prionochilus xanthopygius* are Bornean endemics.

Apart from that, the park is also harbours bats. Six out of the eight families of bats that occur in Borneo are found in LBNP ranging from the largest, the Flying Foxes (*Pteropus vampyrus*), to the smallest Spotted-wing Fruit Bat (*Balionycteris maculata*).

The globally threatened species are the Ridley's Roundleaf Bat *Hipposideros ridleyi*, listed as Vulnerable in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, and three others, namely Creagh's Horseshoe Bat *Rhinolophus creaghi*, Small Wolly Bat *Kerivoula intermedia* and Least Wolly Bat *Kerivoula minuta*, categorised as Lower Risk but Near Threatened.

The park is an important roosting site for a large population of flying foxes. A maximum of 25,000 flying foxes had been observed for an hour flying out their roosting site in LBNP and this is one of the park's many interesting sights.



Spotted-winged Fruit Bat (*Balionycteris maculata*)



Hooked-bill Bulbul (*Setornis criniger*)



Creagh's Horseshoe Bat (*Rhinolophus creaghi*)



Scaly-crowned Babbler (*Malacopteron cinereum*)