



An aerial view of the new Ramsar site in Sabah.
– Photo credit: FD Sabah

malaysia's biggest ramsar site in sabah officially recognized

MALAYSIA CONTINUES TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE HEALTH OF THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT BY SUCCESSFULLY GETTING ITS SIXTH RAMSAR SITE OFFICIALLY RECOGNIZED DURING THE 10TH MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES TO THE RAMSAR CONVENTION ON WETLANDS IN KOREA ON 18 NOVEMBER 2008.

Malaysia's latest Ramsar site is situated in the Lower Kinabatangan-Segama wetlands in the state of Sabah. This Ramsar site is not only the first for Sabah, but it is also the biggest in Malaysia. Three contiguous reserves – Trusan Kinabatangan Forest Reserve (40,471 ha), Kulamba Wildlife Reserve (20,682 ha) and Kuala Maruap-Kuala Segama Forest Reserve (17,650 ha) – together make up an area that is bigger than the whole of the five existing Malaysian Ramsar sites put together (55,355 ha).

The Lower Kinabatangan-Segama wetlands extends over 78,803 ha of peat swamp forest and mangrove forests on the east coast of Sabah. The international listing was awarded in recognition of the area's importance as a habitat for a number of endangered and threatened species such as the Sumatran Rhinoceros (*Dicerorhinus Sumatrensis*), Proboscis Monkey (*Nasalis larvatus*), Tembadau (*Bos javanicus*), Borneo Pygmy Elephant (*Elephas maximus borneensis*) and Storm's Stork (*Ciconia stormi*). It is also an important spawning and nursery ground for fish and prawns.

The Sabah Biodiversity Centre (SBC), established under the Sabah Biodiversity Council in May 2008, played a pivotal role in the Ramsar application process. The SBC mobilised and coordinated the cooperation of a number of agencies like the Forestry Department, Wildlife Department, Land & Survey Department, the Fisheries Department, Department of Irrigation & Drainage, the Economic Planning Unit and Universiti Malaysia Sabah.

In addition, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) also played a role by supporting the Bornean Biodiversity & Ecosystems Conservation Programme Phase II (BBEC II) in initiating the establishment of this Ramsar site in early 2008. JICA would continue its support in the preparation of a management plan for the site. 🌱

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The Lower Kinabatangan-Segama wetlands is also an important spawning and nursery ground for fish and prawns.– Photo credit: FD Sabah



With the latest inclusion of this site in Sabah, Malaysia now boasts a total of six Ramsar sites in the country. The complete listing of the Ramsar sites in Malaysia is provided in the table below:

site	location/size	biodiversity importance	date of listing
lake bera	pahang/ 38,446 ha	Supports 328 species of algae, 19 aquatic plants, 64 zooplankton, aquatic insects, shrimps, crabs, 95 fish species, tropical swamp amphibians and reptiles and 119 bird species.	10 Nov 1994
tanjung piai	johor/526 ha	Home to many wetland-dependent species such as Pig-tailed Macaque and Long-tailed Macaque, birds like Mangrove Pitta, Mangrove Blue Flycatcher, Mangrove Whistler and the Lesser Adjutant Stork.	31 Jan 2003
sungai pulai	johor/9,126 ha	Houses the rare 'Api-Api' tree and animals such as the Long-tailed Macaque, Smooth Otter, the rare Flat-headed Cat, Mangrove Pitta and Mangrove Blue Flycatcher.	31 Jan 2003
pulau kukup	johor/647 ha	Supports species such as the Flying Fox, Bearded Pig, Smooth Otter, Long-tail Macaque and Lesser Adjutant Stork.	31 Jan 2003
kuching wetlands national park	sarawak/6,610 ha	Home to flora species such as Rhizophora, Avicenna and Sonnerratia; and fauna species like the Estuarine Crocodile, Proboscis Monkey, Lesser Adjutant Stork and Griffith's Silver Leaf Monkey.	8 Nov 2005
lower kinabatangan-segama wetlands	sabah/78,803 ha	Host to fauna species such as Sumatran Rhinoceros, Proboscis Monkey, Tembadau, Borneo Pygmy Elephant and Storm's Stork.	18 Nov 2008

Sumatran Rhinoceros.



backgrounder: the Ramsar convention on wetlands

The Convention on Wetlands, signed in Ramsar, Iran, in 1971, is an intergovernmental treaty which provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world. There are presently 158 Contracting Parties to the Convention, with 1,822 wetland sites, totaling 168 million hectares, designated for inclusion in the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance. Malaysia ratified the Convention in 1995 and its national focal point agency is the Malaysian Ministry of Natural Resources & Environment.

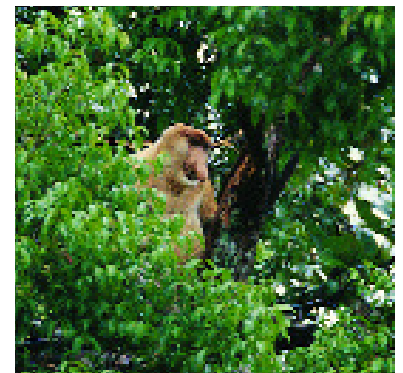
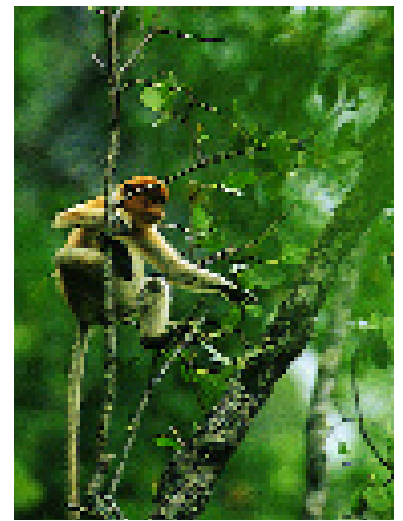
Further information on the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands can be obtained from www.ramsar.org.

what are wetlands?

Wetlands are ecosystems whose formation, processes and characteristics are determined by water. Floodplains, marshes, deltas, swamps, peatlands, dambos and lakes are all types of wetlands. Wetland ecosystems are diverse, both in terms of their physical characteristics and their geographical distribution.

why are wetlands important?

Wetlands are important for regulating the ecosystem through services like water storage/supply, groundwater recharge/discharge, flood control/river regulation, water purification and sediment retention. Wetlands are also a source of livelihood for the local communities surrounding them. Apart from that, wetlands also provide homes, as well as feeding and breeding grounds for many different species of fauna.



Proboscis Monkey.
Above: Female
Below: Male.

traditional knowledge still under threat, experts say

Despite global moves to improve the rights of indigenous peoples, the wisdom and knowledge accumulated by indigenous communities over thousands of years is still being lost or plundered for corporate profit, according to a report released in Paris by an international coalition of experts. Their conclusions are described in a case study released on 13 November 2008 as part of a new report: "Toward a New Era of Intellectual Property: From Confrontation to Negotiation," from the Montreal-based International Expert Group on Biotechnology, Innovation and Intellectual Property. The authors looked at how traditional knowledge is treated in three countries – Brazil, Kenya and Northern Canada, each of which has its own unique indigenous knowledge systems, innovations, customary laws and practices, and its own approach to protecting them. The authors concluded that more than property rights are needed to protect traditional knowledge and ensure fair and equitable benefit sharing with indigenous communities for the use of their knowledge.

source: *EurekAlert*, 13 November 2008