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Magnificent Life of Birds

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We, humans can learn a lot from studying nature past and present; hence, the importance of a Natural History Museum in each country. The records that are preserved and kept for aeons can give us a glimpse of what was, and prepare us for what will be. Our climate changes and we have to adapt to survive. The lessons from the bird group as pollinators ensure the continuation of the plant species. There are flowers solely pollinated by birds such as that by hummingbirds.

The health benefits conferred by the edible bird nests are well known, so much so that a National Centre of Excellence has been established in Malaysia and led by Universiti Putra Malaysia. It is envisioned that this Centre will propel the local swiftlet farming industry to a higher ground, and this can then be a major earner for the country.

The birds can also be the harbinger of disease, whereby their habit of migration can be a mode of transmission of harmful microbes for countries in their path. We are fortunate that the Department of Veterinary Services Malaysia monitors any hazardous movements. The presence of a seagull look-alike in a human's stomach is also an indicator for a bacteria that causes inflammation.

Indeed signs shown by birds can have a powerful impact. The male bowerbirds of Australia and Papua New Guinea

can give lessons to our men as to the best way to attract a girl. The birds make a huge effort in building a gallery and selecting what to display to enchant the female.

The bird's nest is a humble weaving of materials that the bird can find in its midst. Normally it would be of natural materials such as twigs, grasses, and leaves. The artefact shows other materials that can be utilised in building this cup of security and comfort.

In this challenging times, humans should respect the behaviour of the species around us. We should take time to admire, study, learn, understand, digest, analyse, innovate – what I like to call Nature Inspired Innovation. The answers are all around us, but we must stop, look, listen, feel, smell, think, and understand. Materials can be recycled as decorative items for the bowerbirds in their courtship rituals, and the swiftlets' saliva can be a beauty enhancing product for the women. The interwoven nests can teach us to make baskets, and other woven decor.

Birds are magnificent, and the life of birds are amazing to research. In some ways, we can be envious of them because they have the power to fly. We do owe our flight technology to them as we seek to emulate them as much as possible. I dream of a day that humans can freely fly side by side with birds (unencumbered by being in an aeroplane), and see our world through their eyes.