

Call to preserve Tanjung Tuan Forest Reserve for migration of predatory birds



Malaysian Nature Society president Prof Dr Ahmad Ismail says the migration of birds of prey across the Straits of Malacca occurred once a year between January and April. BERNAMA PIC

ALOR GAJAH: The Tanjung Tuan Forest Reserve here should be conserved and preserved for the migration of predatory birds so that the survival of the bird population, also known as raptors, can be maintained in balancing the ecosystem.

Malaysian Nature Society (MNS) president Prof Dr Ahmad Ismail said the migration of birds of prey across the Straits of Malacca, from Sumatra in Indonesia to Tanjung Tuan in Melaka, as far as 38km, occurred once a year between January and April, while the peak period to watch the birds crossing the straits was in March.

"Each year, tens of thousands of raptors migrate across the Straits of Malacca to return to the Northern Hemisphere over 10,000km to Japan and South Korea to continue breeding. The bird movement is aided by the winds from

the west or southwest.

"As these birds have heavy bodies, they glide through the air, conserving energy across the Straits of Malacca, by minimising fluttering their wings which requires a lot of energy, hence their path should be maintained to avoid obstructing migratory routes," he said at the Tanjung Tuan Recreational Forest here.

The migration of the birds is important because raptors that are threatened with extinction, are influential in environmental balance as they are at the top of the food-chain as well as a benchmark for environmental quality.

Tanjung Tuan, formerly known as Cape Rachado, is an important stop for migratory raptors after crossing the Straits of Malacca.

"Tanjung Tuan's uniqueness is that it is the only coastal forest on the west coast of Peninsular

Malaysia gazetted as a Forest Reserve, Wildlife Reserve, a fisheries prohibited area and a historic site," he said.

He said Tanjung Tuan, which covers 60ha, was listed as one of the 55 Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBA) in Malaysia.

"IBA is an important biodiversity conservation site that uses birds as the key indicator to determine the level of environmental health," said Ahmad, who is also a lecturer in Ecotoxicology and Wildlife Ecology, Department of Biology, Faculty of Science, Universiti Putra Malaysia.

He said to raise awareness of the need to protect the birds and their habitat, MNS has since 1999 been organising "Raptor Watch" in Tanjung Tuan and this year the programme was expected to be held for two days in March.

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