KEMENTERIAN TENAGA DAN SUMBER ASLI

KERATAN SURAT KHABAR

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TARIKH	:	15/11/2021 (ISNIN)	MUKA SURAT	:	3
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PERAK

Birdwatchers report good and bad news at hornbill haven of Royal Belum

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THERE was good and bad news for birdwatchers during a recent expedition at the Royal Belum State Park in Gerik.

Ecotourism and Conservation Society Malaysia (Ecomy) president and chief executive officer Andrew Sebastian said although fewer plain-pouched hornbills were sighted, there was an addition in the number of helmeted hornbills seen.

"It was heartening to observe that the state park continues to at least be a safe haven for helmeted hornbills.

"We are thankful the 10 helmeted hornbills are still around, and during this expedition, we spotted an additional bird, bringing the total to 11.

"We must continue to protect them from poachers and ensure their habitat is not destroyed through excessive logging activities," he said.

Andrew said with Royal Belum dubbed the "hornbill capital of the world", Ecomy has been organising the annual International Hornbill Expedition for the past five years.

He said the objective of the event was to promote the state park as one of Malaysia's unique birdwatching destinations, and a key eco-tourism site in Perak.



The helmeted hornbill caught on camera during a three-day expedition by Ecotourism and Conservation Society Malaysia at the Royal Belum State Park.

Andrew said the three-day event was to observe and collate raw data on the distribution and movement of hornbills in the area, especially the migratory and vulnerable plain-pouched hornbill as well as the helmeted hornbill.

"The number of plain-pouched hornbills observed has been dropping over the years from the record of 3,261 in the late 1980s.

"We don't want to jump to conclusions at this point as more research is still ongoing by another non-governmental organisation, but our feedback seems to confirm the sharp decline in the numbers of these hornbills," he said.

Andrew said the state government must do more to phase out logging, especially at important habitat areas of the bird.

"It will be better to replace it with sustainable activities such as ecotourism, edutourism, research hub, community based tourism and other sustainable forms," he added.

Perak tourism committee chairman Datuk Nolee Ashilin Mohammed Radzi launched the event that saw participation from about 25 birdwatching enthusiasts.