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Move to step up wildlife enforcement in Sabah

By STEPHANIE LEE
stephanielee@thestar.com.my

KOTA KINABALU: Wildlife enforcers are looking at stepping up their enforcement efforts in locations that are out of the usual high-risk areas for better wildlife protection.

Conservationist Dr Benoit Goossens said the areas enforcers might be looking at include Kinabatangan and Tabin (Lahad Datu) as well as Kota Belud and Kudat as they had comparatively less focus on anti-poaching.

He said that although there were Sabah Wildlife Department (SWD) patrol units at these places, the focus was more on the turtle egg trade among others.

"There is always a need for more anti-poaching efforts. The issue here is about the lack of manpower and equipment," he said.

Dr Goossens, who is also the Danau Girang Field Centre (DGFC) director, hopes the government will provide more manpower and equipment for this purpose "if they are committed to protecting Sabah's flora and fauna".

On the issue of enforcement, he noted that it was considered active in Sabah as the various agencies work together for a common goal. The efforts include having the Sabah Forestry Department's Protect team continuously patrolling the grounds for any illegal activities, he added.

"As for the SWD, it is setting up an intelligence unit with the support of DGFC and funding from the US government," he said.

"I believe that Sabah is getting stronger in terms of enforcement," Dr Goossens said, adding that poaching activities might have declined during the past year due to Covid-19 but it was still occurring.

Meanwhile, SWD director Augustine Tuuga reminded hunters that the issuing of licences for the hunting of animals permissible under the law had yet to resume.

He warned hunters that its enforcement units were constantly on the lookout for offenders and urged local communities to be the eyes and ears of the SWD to enable the conservation of forests and wildlife to be carried out smoothly.

On other matters, Tuuga said the SWD was in the midst of hiring more staff to strengthen its department and operations as well as enforcement activities.

He also revealed that the recent arrest was that of a suspect who had with him four deer believed to have been obtained illegally in Kalabakan on Aug 8.



Illegal hunting: A poacher sitting on a banteng bull he just shot in Tabin Wildlife Reserve. — DGFC