

Borneo's crocodiles 'no longer endangered'

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File photo of a young saltwater crocodile enticed by meat, jumping completely out of the murky waters of the Adelaide River, near Darwin in the Northern Territory of Australia. Wildlife officials in Malaysian Borneo are pushing to have its saltwater crocodiles removed from a list of endangered animals, saying the reptile's numbers have strongly recovered in recent years.

Wildlife officials in Malaysian Borneo are pushing to have its saltwater crocodiles removed from a list of endangered animals, saying the reptile's numbers have strongly recovered in recent years.

Deputy director of the Sabah Wildlife Department Augustin Tuuga told AFP that a survey of the *Crocodylus porosus* population showed there

were about 11,000 to 15,000 in the state compared to 1,000 to 5,000 two decades ago.

"We are pushing to have the crocodile downgraded from the 'endangered' to the 'not necessarily threatened' list on the Convention of International Trade of Species (CITES)," he said.

Tuuga said there was big demand for legal crocodile leather from handbag and clothing accessory manufacturers as well as for crocodile meat in kitchens throughout Asia.

"Under CITES, these [crocodiles](#) can only come from breeding farms but once the crocodile is downgraded, manufacturers will be able to get the crocodiles from the wild," he added.

"However, before this can happen we must have an effective monitoring mechanism to keep track of the crocodile population to ensure its numbers do not fall below acceptable levels."

Saltwater crocodiles have the most commercially valuable skin of its species and are found from Sri Lanka all the way to the Caroline Islands in the Western Pacific.

Tuuga said the increase in the crocodile population has also seen 38 attacks on humans in the last 10 years with 23 deaths and 15 injuries.

The latest was reported this month when the remains of a man who was eaten while looking for shellfish were found in the south of the state, he said.

However, Tuuga said the increasing population was not the only factor that led to the attacks.

"A lot of the crocodile's habitat has been destroyed by development and much of its food sources have also been depleted so this and the frequent human use of the rivers mean that such attacks will occur," he added.

With some growing up to seven metres (23 feet) in length, the saltwater crocodile has a large head with ridges that run from the eye along the centre of the snout, with bands on its lower flanks and a yellow underside.

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