

Malaysia scientists tag Borneo saltwater crocodile

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The wild saltwater crocodile was captured earlier this month on the Kinabatangan river in Sabah state and had a tag strapped around its neck before being released, said Benoit Goossens, head of the Danau Girang Field Centre.

The tag is already returning information to the scientists.

Officials said there have been 38 attacks by [saltwater crocodiles](#) -- the world's largest living reptile -- on humans in the Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak over the last 10 years, 23 of them fatal.

"The information gathered from the crocodile will help us better understand the movement of the male crocodiles," said Goossens.

"We are not saying that the information will help stop crocodile attacks.

"But it will help villagers and plantation workers better understand the behaviour of the crocodiles so that they are better able to avoid any confrontation with it."

The three-year project with the state wildlife department is believed to be a first for Southeast Asia, he added.

Land clearance and the creation of new plantations near the river may have caused the crocodile's food sources to decrease, leading to a rise in attacks, he said.

An increase in the crocodile population may also be responsible, and the various theories will be tested against the data gathered from the crocodile.

Last year, state wildlife officials said they were pushing to have saltwater crocodiles removed from a list of endangered species, saying the reptile's numbers have strongly recovered in recent years.

Saltwater crocodiles -- which can grow up to seven metres (23 feet) long -- have the most commercially valuable skin of all [crocodiles](#) and are found from Sri Lanka all the way to the Caroline Islands in the western Pacific.

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