

Protecting vulnerable species

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Credit: Cardiff University

Sabah Wildlife Department (SWD) and Cardiff University's Danau Girang Field Centre (DGFC) have launched new state action plans to protect vulnerable and endangered species in Sabah, Borneo.

Informed by several years of biological and ecological research and information gathering, the ten-year action plans aim to secure the continued existence of viable populations of the Sunda clouded leopard, proboscis monkey and the Bornean banteng.

DGFC Director and Reader at Cardiff University, Dr. Benoit Goossens, explained that the three species are threatened by a combination of habitat loss and fragmentation, poaching, and road development.

"The decline in proboscis monkey populations is directly attributed to the expansion of aquaculture projects in mangrove areas and the conversion of riparian habitats to agriculture land and human settlements," he said.

"Sunda clouded leopards suffer mostly from low population density while the Bornean banteng decline is due to heavy poaching, snaring and habitat fragmentation."

Dr. Goossens stressed that one of the most important actions is to increase enforcement on the ground with the establishment of Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART) patrols.

"But more specifically, for the Bornean banteng, the setting up of a captive breeding programme is imperative," he said. "Moreover, any area with the presence of bantengs must be managed sustainably by developing and maintaining pastures within and near the home ranges of the existing herds.

"As for the proboscis monkey, increasing suitable mangrove and riparian forest areas as well as habitat connectivity between their different [habitat](#) ranges are crucial for their survival.

Following this week's soft launch of the action plans by Deputy Chief Minister and Minister of Tourism, Culture and Environment, YB Christina Liew, a cabinet paper will be prepared and tabled at the next State Assembly in early November.

Augustine Tugga, Director of the Sabah Wildlife Department, is hopeful that the action plans are on the final lap towards implementation.

"We hope that the plans will be approved by the Cabinet and that the Chief Minister will officially launch them before the end of the year. His support of these plans will give a boost to the conservation of these three endangered species," he said.

Provided by Cardiff University

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