



Volume 16

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FACTS TO STIR YOUR CURIOSITY



Did you know that some of the most bizarre of plants, animals, birds, fish and objects are indigenous to Perak? It may sound strange but that is the profound truth. Incidentally, a little known orchid which is found predominantly in the disused mining ponds of Kinta is the origin of Singapore's National Flower, the Vanda Miss Joaquim.

Fireflies that help make Kg. Dew a major draw among visitors to Perak consider the berembang trees their habitat. The destruction of these trees that once lined the banks of Sungai Sepetang and its tributaries will negate the state government attempts to rebrand Kg. Dew as the firefly destination of Perak rivaling that of Selangor. Actions to rehabilitate the banks of Sungai Sepetang and to encourage the growth of the berembang trees are underway. A sum of RM11,740 was given to the Malaysian Nature Society recently to initiate rehabilitation works.

And did you know that the once thriving colonies of hornbills in Belum-Temenggor may go the way of the Dodo bird if actions to preserve the birds' natural habitats are neglected. Logging and poaching are two major contributors of the hornbill's fast-dwindling population.



Continued on page 2

foreword

Dato' Hamidah Osman

State Executive Councillor for Tourism



Perak was once the richest state in Peninsular Malaya. Fueled by a universal demand for tin (and rubber) Perak's position in the forefront of the nation's economy was assured. That was the scenario until the collapse of the global tin industry in 1980s forcing the closure of many tin mines and the migration of youthful workers out of the state. Today, agriculture has become one of Perak's major industries, especially rubber, oil palm, coconut and tropical fruits. Another potential contributor is tourism given the state's abundant natural resources.

Our pride is of course the Belum-Temenggor rainforest. Covering about 300,000 hectares, the forest complex is believed to be over 130 million years, older than the Amazon and the Congo. In its heart is the man-made lake of Tasik Temenggor, 15,200 hectares in size and filled with many islands, formerly hillocks which were inundated by the damming of the Temenggor River.

Belum-Temenggor's relatively untouched forest is home to a wide variety of flora and fauna. They include 14 of world's most threatened mammals, namely, the Malaysian tiger, Asiatic elephant, Sumatran rhinoceros, white handed gibbon, sun bear and tapir.

It is also ideal for bird watchers with over 300 bird species including the hornbill. One can spot all 10 species of hornbill that inhabit Malaysia such as the white-crowned hornbill, wreathed hornbill, Oriental pied hornbill, rhinoceros hornbill and helmeted hornbill. Rafflesia, the world's largest flower, can be found in the forest complex. There are three species of Rafflesia along with almost 3,000 species of flowering plants.

You may wonder why I have gone mellow over Belum and Temenggor. The reason is obvious, eco-tourism is a huge money spinner and Perak has what it takes to break into the ranks of a major tourism capital, provided we manage our fragile eco-system well.

In this issue of the tourism newsletter the emphasis is on revealing little-known facts about the nature of things prevailing in the state of Perak. I'll prompt you by asking the time-honoured question, *Did You Know...*?

I have appended a list of some interesting facts about Perak's flora and fauna. The questions may sound trivial and inconsequential. The answers are equally perplexing but they are the profound truth. So, there is still plenty to discover if only you care to look. Happy hunting!

Vanda Hookeriana

The commonplace orchid *Vanda hookeriana*, which makes the wetlands of Kinta its home, is the origin of Singapore's national flower, *Vanda Miss Joaquim*. The Singapore orchid was hybridized with the use of the parent specie *Vanda hookeriana* by Agnes Joaquim in 1899. The disused mining ponds in the vicinity of Kota Baru, Gopeng are home to this orchid variety which can be found amongst floating islands of aquatic vegetation formed by 'Hanguana Malaysana'. It was referred to as 'Kinta Weed' probably due to its abundance and tenacity in thriving in such a harsh environment. (Photographs contributed by Johnny Loh)



Did You Know?

Rajah Brooke Butterfly



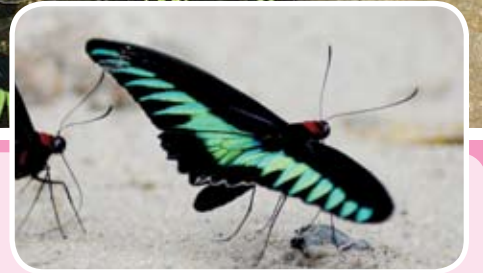
Rajah Brooke's Birdwing (*Trogoptera brookiana*) of the Papilionidae family is a distinctive black and electric-green birdwing butterfly found in the rainforests of the Malay Peninsula, Borneo and Sumatra. The butterfly was named by the naturalist Alfred R. Wallace in 1855, after James Brooke, the Rajah of Sarawak. Its wingspan is 15-17 cm.

There are more than 140,000 species of Lepidoptera in the world, only 20,000 species are butterflies, the rest being moths. Malaysia has around 1,200 species of butterflies.

Butterflies have a rather short lifespan; whenever the trees and plants where they lay their eggs and metamorphose, are destroyed, they are reduced in number.

Remember, butterflies are part and parcel of Nature's food chain. While they pollinate flowers and plants as adults, when as caterpillars they are food for most birds and insects.

The Rajah Brooke can be found in abundance in the forest of Ulu-Geruh, Gopeng. Call Orang Asli guide, **Pak Insan** at **012-400 7564** to guide you to the many spots in the area.



Rafflesia



Rafflesia is a genus of parasitic flowering plants. It contains approximately 28 species, including four incompletely characterised species as recognised by Willem Meijer in 1997. All four are found in the Malay Peninsula, Borneo, Sumatra, Thailand and the Philippines.

Rafflesia was found in the Indonesian rainforest by an Indonesian guide working for Dr Joseph Arnold in 1818, and named after Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, the leader of the expedition. It was discovered even earlier by Louis Deschamps in Java between 1791 and 1794, but his notes and illustrations, seized by the British in 1803, were not available to western science until 1861.

Species native to Malaysia include *Rafflesia pricei*, *Rafflesia tengku-adlinii*, *Rafflesia keithii*, and *Rafflesia arnoldii*. Some Malaysian species, such as *R. keithii*, begin blooming at night and begin to decompose only two to three days afterwards. The budding period lasts for six to nine-months.

Did you know that the Belum-Temenggor rainforest is home to three such species?



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Spawning *Ikan Loma*



Did you know that we have our own version of the famous Salmon right here in our backyard? **Ikan Loma** (*Thynnichthys thynnoides*), a type of freshwater fish found aplenty in the Perak River, especially in the Chenderoh Dam area, will make its migratory journey to Sungai Rui to spawn.

While the salmon have to put up with brown bears and other natural predators in their perilous journey upstream, the poor Loma have to contend with overzealous humans who would scoop and net the egg-bearing Loma either for commercial purpose or simply for the heck of it. Pickled Loma (*pekasam*) is a niche market in the wet market of Lenggong.

Most of the Loma survive the perilous journey with some dying after spawning. However, more are killed by irresponsible humans than ever. Overfishing may one day cause the demise of this migratory fish whose only mission is to ensure the continuation and survivability of its kind.

The Loma annual migration takes place during the rainy season (September to December). The best place to see the fish is at Dataran Sg Rui located within Kampung Sg Rui, 13km from the town of Gerik. For details on the Loma call the Gerik District Council at **605-7911 686/7912 305**.

Gamat – Sea Cucumber



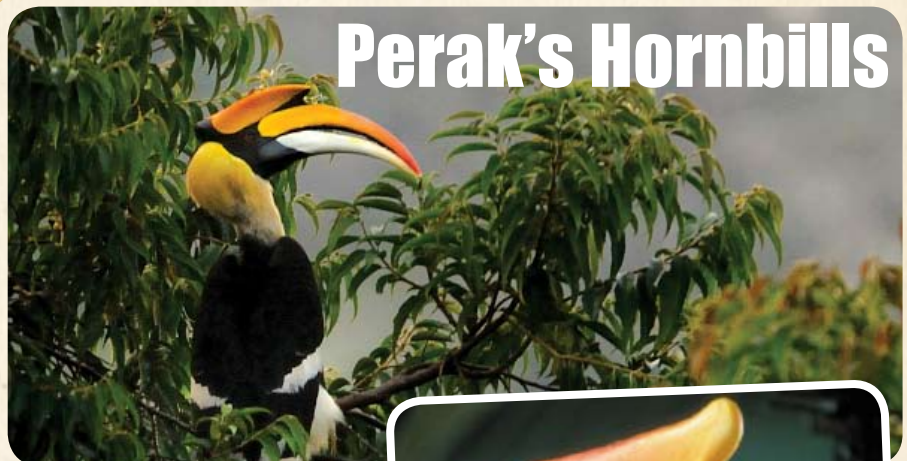
Gamat or sea cucumbers are echinoderms from the class *Holothuroidea*. They are marine animals with a leathery skin and an elongated body containing a single, branched gonad. Sea cucumbers are found on the seafloor worldwide. The number of holothurians species worldwide is about 1250 with the greatest number being in the Asia Pacific region.

Some varieties of sea cucumber are said to have excellent healing properties. There are pharmaceutical companies based on gamat. Extracts are prepared and made into oil, cream, or cosmetics. Some products are intended to be taken internally. A study suggested that the sea cucumber contains all the fatty acids necessary to play a potentially active role in tissue repair.

Another study found that a lectin from the gamat impaired the development of the malaria parasite transmitted by transgenic mosquitoes.

Did you know that most of Perak's gamat products are made from gamat sourced from the waters off the island?

Perak's Hornbills



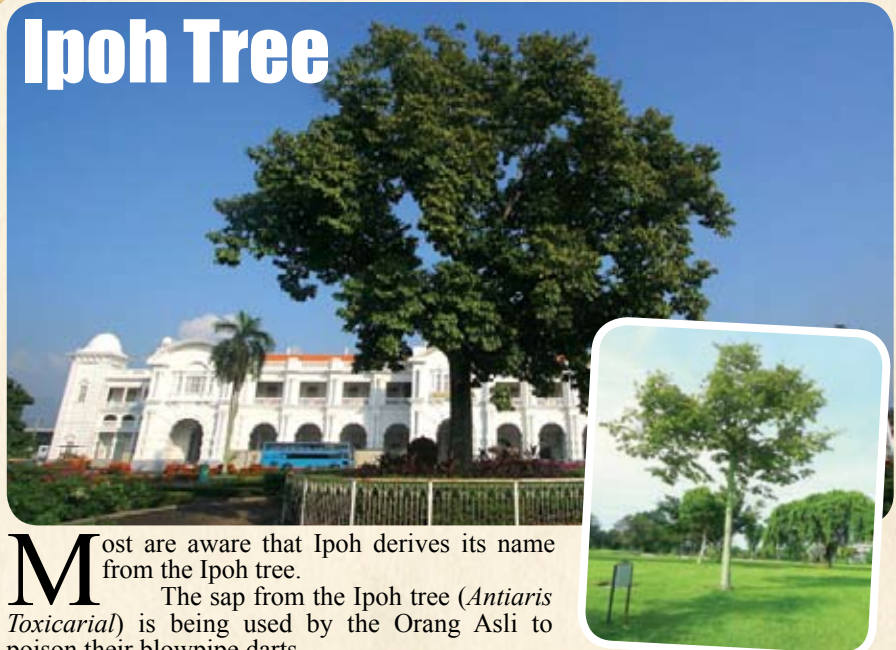
Hornbill is a name for members of the *Bucerotidae* family, birds of tropical and subtropical forests. Their name is derived from their enormous down-curved bills surmounted by grotesque horny casques. Measuring 2 to 5 ft in length, they are the largest of a species of birds that also include the kingfishers.

Omnivorous, hornbills eat fruits, berries, insects, and small animals. They have loud, far-carrying voices and a variety of calls, including brays, toots, bellows, and cackles. They are noted for their unusual nesting habits; presumably as a defense against monkeys and snakes. The female is sealed into the nesting cavity by the male, who feeds her through a bill-size aperture for a period of 6 weeks to 3 months while she incubates the eggs. This practice, and the fact that hornbills mate for life, has made them the subject of superstition among native tribes, who use them (or representations of them) in religious rituals as symbols of purity and fidelity.

The hornbill, *Buceros bicornis*, ranges from India to Indochina, Peninsular Malaysia, Sumatra and Borneo. Incidentally, this bird is being anointed as the state emblem of Sarawak and is known by its name, *Burong Kenyalang*.

Did you know that the Belum-Temenggor forest is the only location in the world where you can spot all 10 species of hornbill that inhabit Malaysia? They consisted of the white-crowned hornbill, bushy-crested hornbill, wrinkled hornbill, wreathed hornbill, plain-pouched hornbill, black hornbill, Oriental pied hornbill, rhinoceros hornbill, great hornbill and helmeted hornbill.

Ipoh Tree



Most are aware that Ipoh derives its name from the Ipoh tree.

The sap from the Ipoh tree (*Antiaris Toxicaria*) is being used by the Orang Asli to poison their blowpipe darts.

In the old days the Ipoh tree could be found everywhere but due to its poisonous nature, many of these trees were cut down, as the city expands outwards.

In China, this plant is known as "Arrow Poison Wood" in the colloquial language. It is regularly used to poison arrow tips for use during warfare.

Presently, five Ipoh trees are found within city limits. One is in front of the Ipoh Railway station, the other is at Taman D.R. Seenivasagam and three are found, of all places, on the fairway of the Royal Perak Golf Club.

A signboard, describing the tree, is placed near the trees for curious onlookers.

Rebana Perak



Did you know that one of the many traditional musical instruments of the Malays is the *Rebana Perak*? And as the name suggests this instrument has its origins from Perak.

Rebana Perak is a kind of drum whose frame is made of wood, especially from the *angka* (jackfruit) tree and other riverine species found along the Perak River. The drum's cover is made from cow or buffalo hide. These two animal skins provide a distinct sound which is far superior to goat skin.

Rebana Perak is normally played in groups of 8 to 10. This is, however, not the mandatory number. The group is being divided into three sub-groups with the sole purpose of drumming a melody peculiar to the occasion.

World Amateur Inter-Team Golf Championship



The Grand Final of the World Amateur Inter-Team Golf Championship was held at the Royal Perak Golf Club (RPGC) recently.

The championship is an annual event organised by Tourism Malaysia and is open to all golfers with a valid handicap. It was held at



six other venues in the country before making an appearance in Ipoh for its final leg.

The final at RPGC saw teams from 8 countries participating and they included Australia, Brunei, Philippines, Thailand, France, Japan, Singapore and Malaysia.

The overall team gross winners were the Lapor Po Tigers from Brunei with a score of 693 points. Second and third placings went to Camdencrunch and The Amphibians from Australia. They scored 709 and 719 points, respectively.

Besides the golfing fraternity, members from the media were also present to cover the event. The golfers acknowledged that Malaysia have plenty of scenic and playable golf courses.

For the players it was a leisure way to enjoy the country and to meet new golfing friends from around the world. According to Tourism Malaysia this year's championship had attracted over 500 participants.

Tourism Roundup

Firefly Festival Kg Dew



In spite of a heavy downpour a sizeable crowd turned up for the Kg. Dew Firefly Festival 2012 on Sunday, November 11. The objective of the one-day fest was to highlight the sensitivity of the fireflies that inhabit the banks of Sungai Sepetang. The habitats of these flies are under threat as their "homes" the *berembang* trees are being wantonly destroyed for the commercial cultivation of shrimps and freshwater fish, a major economic activity in the area.

Dato' Hamidah, the Executive Councillor for Tourism in her welcoming speech stressed the need to preserve the fragile eco-system as its destruction might endanger the fireflies and with it the livelihood of the kampung folks.

Actions to prevent further destruction of the beetles' habitats are underway. Tourism Perak has allocated a sum of RM11,740 to the Malaysian Nature Society to undertake survey and zoning works of the affected area. The replanting of *berembang* trees will proceed concurrently with the survey and zoning works.

Professor Ir. Maketab Mohamed, President of MNS, received the mock cheque for the said amount from Hamidah.

TOURISM CALENDAR – DECEMBER 2012

- December 1 to 9 – **Karnival Taman Tasik Taiping** – Taiping by Taiping Municipal Council/Tourism Perak. Tel No: **605-5290897**. Fax No: **605-8053000**. Website: www.mptaiping.gov.my.
- December 2 – **Karnival Kacang Putih** – Ipoh by Tourism Perak. Tel No: **605-208 3600**. Fax No: **605-2410671**. Website: www.peraktourism.com.my.
- December 15 to 17 – **Festival Puisi dan Lagu rakyat Antarabangsa Pangkor 2012** - Pulau Pangkor by Executive Councillor of Arts and Culture/Institut Darul Ridzuan. Tel No: **605-2547104/605-5291001**. Fax No: **605-2555188/605-5291000**. Website: www.idrperak.com.
- December 22-23 – **Karnival Ikan Bilis** – Teluk Batik by Tourism Perak/Berita Harian. Tel No: **605-208 3600**. Fax No: **605-2410671**. Website: www.peraktourism.com.my.
- December 27 to 31 – **Fiesta Pelancongan Perak**– Ipoh by Tourism Perak. Tel No: **605-208 3600**. Fax No: **605-2410671**. Website: www.peraktourism.com.my.
- December 29 – **Malam Gala Pelancongan 2012** – Ipoh by Tourism Perak/Perak Tourist Association. Tel No: **605-208 3600/ 605-2424588**. Fax No: **605-208 3600/605-2410671**. Email: ppodzman@hotmail.com.