

Harimau Untuk Selamanya

Working with the local community to protect forests and wildlife at Hulu Langat, in Selangor – the state with the greatest consumer economy in Malaysia. MYCAT Outreach Programme, 6th to 8th November 2012

Text by Wong Pui May. Layout by Suzalinur Manja Bidin.



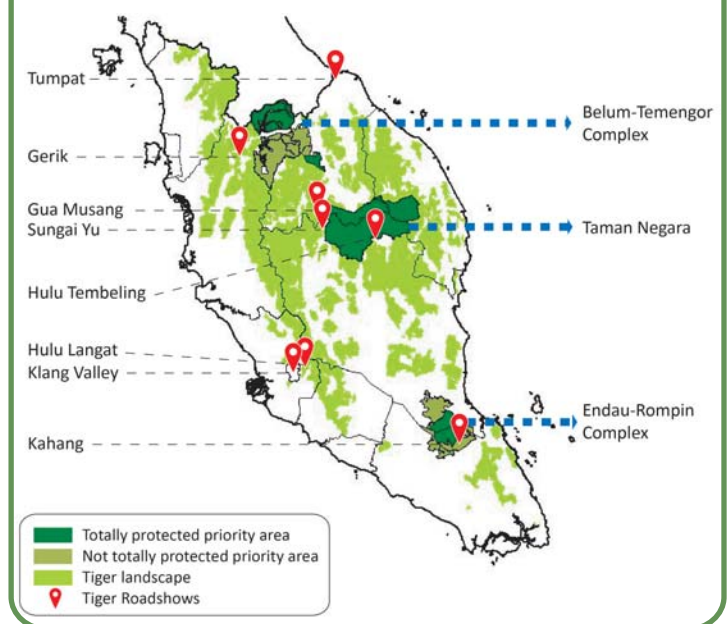
Green hills, still shrouded in the early morning mist, surrounded the school we were at. It was hard to imagine that we were less than an hour away from Kuala Lumpur, and still within the state of Selangor.

In MYCAT's history of conducting outreach programmes since 2005, this was one of many firsts. The first MYCAT "rural" outreach in the state of Selangor. The first time an entire school participated, and we also spent the whole five-hour school session with the children.

Hulu Langat was selected as the location for the programme because it is part of the largest tiger landscape in Malaysia – the Main Range. It was also highlighted by the Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP) Peninsular Malaysia as a poaching and illegal wildlife trade hotspot.

This makes the local community a potential ally to the authorities in combating the poaching, trade and consumption of wildlife. And if the forests come under threat, who better to stand up for them than those who will be directly impacted by its destruction?

Locations of MYCAT outreach programmes since 2005



Tiger Roadshow Counter

Number of people reached:

- in Hulu Langat **00371**

- since 2005 **36496**



Nurturing young minds

A total of 172 children were reached through the school programme – 11 to 12-year-olds from SK Sungai Lui, and 7 to 12-year-olds from SK Kuala Pomson. A team of trained MYCAT volunteers gamely stepped up to the challenge of facilitating a 5-hour programme.

While gathered in the school hall, students were shown “On Borrowed Time”, a short documentary produced by WWF-Malaysia and TRAFFIC Southeast Asia, which highlights the poaching crisis in Belum-Temengor Forest Complex in Perak. Murmurs of wonder rippled through the crowd of students whenever an animal appeared onscreen. Later in the classrooms, facilitators explained that poaching occurs even in Hulu Langat forests and helped the students to understand why it is wrong.

Through games, the children learnt about how increasing human populations impact wildlife and the need to share natural resources, as well as the interdependence among all living things in an ecosystem. The longer session was a bonus as the facilitators had more time to build rapport with the students, and they led small group discussions where each child could share thoughts and ask questions.

Earlier in the hall, the students also watched a short clip from “Wira Rimba”, a documentary produced by WWF-Malaysia on the efforts of park rangers in

Malaysia. At the end of the day, all the students made personal cards for wildlife rangers. This activity was inspired by WWF’s Cards4Tigers initiative. The children were especially excited to hear that the cards will actually be delivered to the rangers in Taman Negara, and many wrote heartfelt messages within, thanking the rangers for protecting our wildlife. Some even wrote that they aspire to become wildlife rangers when they grow up!



Another reward for the facilitators was when the students indicated their desire to one day become MYCAT volunteers to spread the message among other children. The goal of MYCAT school outreach programmes is to kindle such interest in wildlife conservation among Malaysia’s future generations, towards creating a greater guardianship for our wildlife and nature.





Bridging the knowledge gap

After the school programmes, the team scoured the Sungai Serai night market, talking to vendors and visitors alike, promoting the Wildlife Crime Hotline (019-356-4194) and encouraging people to visit the MYCAT booth.

The 24-hour hotline enables members of the public to contribute directly towards saving wildlife by acting as the eyes and ears of the authorities and reporting illegal activities. Those who save the hotline number in their mobile phones received a free MYCAT shopping bag at the booth!

The rainy season had just begun, and two hours into the night market programme, a big thunderstorm hit. But rain did not dampen our spirits as we waited out the rain and continued talking to people.

It struck us that many Hulu Langat locals were relatively open about poaching activities going on in the area, definitely more so than the rural folks MYCAT roadshows have met in Pahang and Kelantan in the past. Understandably, the locals dislike outsiders going there to hunt, but they seemed not at all afraid of getting caught poaching. This was illustrated by derisive calls the Wildlife Crime Hotline received after the outreach, about the callers' own poaching activity. There is much work to be done in Hulu Langat.

Before wrapping up the outreach programme, the team also visited 30 shops at the 14th and 18th Mile in Hulu Langat, speaking to shop owners and passerbys, distributing flyers and pocket calendars to promote the hotline and putting up posters featuring the threats to tigers and the freeze on deer hunting. Shop owners were also enlisted to promote the hotline by giving out pocket calendars to their customers.



Hulu Langat has proven to be a place of contradictions. Some say that wildlife populations in the area have been decimated by over-poaching while others say that wildlife are plentiful if you know where to look. The forests of Hulu Langat are part of a larger forest landscape, but are threatened by infrastructure and other development projects and poaching. More needs to be done to educate the local community on the importance of forests and wildlife as well as the implications of violating the wildlife law, and to empower them with the knowledge and tools to defend the natural wonders in their backyard.

Acknowledgements

This MYCAT joint project was financially supported by the Selangorku grant.

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Thanks are also due to Maybank for providing activity books for the students, and DWNP for loaning display materials for the roadshow. Additional thanks to SK Sungai Lui and SK Kuala Pomson for their participation.

Credits for the photographs used in this report are due to Suzalinur Manja Bidin, Umami Junid and Wong Pui May.



The biggest cheers are reserved for the tireless team members who braved both rain and shine – Azwan Roslan, David Chin Hoong Weng, Maimunah Mohd Noor, Michelle Chua Khit Yeng, Mohd Shah Rizuan Kamaruddin, Najua Ismail, Nur Hidayah Abu Kasim, Raziznurirwan Abdul Rahman, Siti Mariah Abd Wahid, Siti Safiah Mohammad, Umami Junid, Wong Pui Yi and Wong See Kee, aided by TRAFFIC Southeast Asia Project Officer Or Oi Ching – they were the heart and soul of MYCAT's first "rural" outreach programme in Selangor.

Take action!

- Report crimes involving tigers and tiger prey to the Wildlife Crime Hotline at 019.356.4194
- Learn about tigers and tiger prey from reliable sources and share this with your friends and family
- Request legal herbal alternatives to traditional medicines which can contain endangered species
- Do not eat the meat of tigers, other endangered species and tiger prey (wild deer and wild pig)
- Boycott all wildmeat restaurants
- Voice your opinion on issues like indiscriminate development, illegal logging and poaching
- Do not support zoos or theme parks with illegally acquired wildlife
- Pay more for wildlife-friendly products
- Support conservation organisations

About MYCAT

MYCAT is an alliance of the Malaysian Nature Society (MNS), TRAFFIC Southeast Asia, Wildlife Conservation Society-Malaysia Programme and WWF-Malaysia, supported by the Department of Wildlife and National Parks Peninsular Malaysia for joint implementation of the National Tiger Conservation Action Plan for Malaysia (NTCAP).

The NTCAP was developed by DWNP in collaboration with the MYCAT partners and published by the Malaysian Government in 2008 as the national tiger conservation strategy for Malaysia.

Check out www.malayantiger.net for information on the Malayan tiger and to download your copy of the National Tiger Conservation Action Plan.

Saving tigers together



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