

Wetland Biodiversity of Telaga Air, Sarawak: Perception and Conservation of Local

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Abstract

Wetland are among the most productive of the world's ecosystem and the most threatened tropical ecosystem. Mangrove forest is very useful and gives various benefits and it is extremely productive ecosystem that provide numerous good and services both to the marine environment and people. This research was conducted to identify the factors that influence the perception of local communities towards wetland biodiversity conservation which brings more beneficial towards our daily life. The interest group for this study is focuses on communities who live near the mangroves forest area and the location of study is in Telaga Air, Sarawak. The method that been used in this study was Factor Analysis and multiple regression. There are 15 factors that have been extracted by using Factor Analysis. Out of the factors, only 7 factors that are chosen as independent variables to run the regression analysis with the dependent variable of respondent's Perception. Lastly, the study found that the factors of community awareness, garbage disposal and level of pollution have a strong relationship with the perception of residents towards wetland biodiversity conservation in Telaga Air. Overall, this study shows that majority of local communities that live nearby mangroves shows a positive attitude towards the conservation of wetland in Kuching. All the activities that being carried out in mangrove area should be monitor by authorities in order to ensure the sustainable of the mangrove forest are protected and guaranteed.

Keywords: *Ecotourism; Perception; Government Effectiveness; Socio Economics.*

1. Introduction

Wetlands are among the most productive of the world's ecosystem. They equip essential services for people, as well as a place for tourism and recreation and provide a unique habitat for many different species (World Wide Fund (WWF) (1). According to Beavit and Tuen (2), Kuching Wetland National Park (KWNP) is an important spawning and nursery ground for fish and prawn species and also provide a wide array of raw resources. KWNP had contained a wide number diversity of wildlife such as Proboscis Monkeys, silvery langur, long tailed macaque monkeys, estuarine crocodile, monitor lizards, a range of birdlife and bearded pig (Beavit & Tuen, 2010). Besides that, they support a huge number of wildlife that would otherwise become extinct, and they protect millions of people from a tragic flooding(3).

According to WWF (.), mangrove forest is very useful and has various benefits. It supplies a lot of goods and services that include fisheries, timber and plant products, coastal protection and tourism (1). Most of the residents that live near with mangrove plant area are relying on the resources from the mangrove forest and the sea for their daily needs. Moreover, Beavit and Tuen (2) reported that KWNP has good tourism potential, but requires a development of the right promotional strategies.

However, since the tourism activities start to flourishing, the residents had a lot of opportunities to generate income. One of it is supplying the boat services to bring visitors to look around KWNP from Kampung Telaga Air Jetty. KWNP has a long attract nature where people not only attracted with the beauty of the mangrove

but also other protected wildlife found across the 6,610 hectares of land ("Wildlife species an asset to Kuching wetlands", 2015). In addition, according to WWF(1), mangrove forests are one of the most endangered tropical ecosystem in the world. A danger may affect their habitats include clearing, overharvesting, river changes, overfishing, destruction of coral reefs, pollution, and climate changes (WWF, .). In order to conserve mangrove forest, the attitude of people that live near mangrove area is very important in order to minimize the threat.

2. Problem Statement

The practical problem of conservation of wetland in Telaga Air is the mangrove forest has been reduced even though the conservation is measured by Forest Reserve. A huge area of mangrove plant in Kuching has gone through exploitation because of aquaculture and quarrying activities. Meanwhile, there is a certain locations of mangrove area have been turned into a dumpsite. Many other places experience degradation which has affected all the natural resources of wetlands because of the irresponsible activities such as agricultural, urbanization and development activities (4).

The reduction of the mangrove forest is related to the attitude of the communities. Most of the local communities harvest the mangrove forest resources for their daily life and economic activities. They tend to restore the resources and show the positive attitude or just simply harvest the mangrove forest, breaking the rule and shows the negative attitude. This negative attitude will lead to destruction and reduce the area or wetland and bring worrisomely.