

BORNEAN FROG RACE A GIANT LEAP FOR MANKIND

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Rarest Amphibian Photographed & Best Photo (Mobile Phone) Rough-sided Frog (Pulchrana granulosa) by Hamir Kiprawi.

MIRI: The frog, although not given the same status as the Hornbill in Sarawak which is recognised as the state's bird, commands considerable attention from the global community.

While frogs are valued as food by humans with many cultural roles in literature, symbolism and religion, its population is said to have declined significantly since the 1950s.

One of the global efforts conceived and coordinated by SAVE THE FROGS! is the 'Save The Frogs Day' — the world's largest day of amphibian education and conservation action.

The objective is to raise the appreciation and celebration of amphibians by people from all walks of life.

Frogs are biologically known as an indicator species and gives scientists an invaluable insight into how an ecosystem is functioning. Because it is both a predator and prey, many animals are affected by it and thus, frogs provide an insight into the health of the ecosystem.

In Sarawak, this year the 'Save The Frogs Day' was observed by organising the 5th International Bornean Frog Race held on April 30 at Lambir Hills National Park, Miri, one of the world's most complex and diverse forest eco-systems.



Frog Race – clocking in and clocking out.

Fifth International Bornean Frog Race

Listed on the tourism calendar of events by the Ministry of Tourism Sarawak and Tourism Malaysia, the International Bornean Frog Race was organised to draw attention to the world's declining amphibian population and the urgent need for its conservation.

It was organized jointly by the Sarawak Forestry Corporation (SFC), the Institute of Biodiversity and Environmental Conservation and the Faculty of Creative and Applied Arts of University Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas).

Among the activities held were talks, workshops, exhibitions and culminating with the 'Frog Race', offering a total of RM5,000 in prize money.

The race attracted 103 'frogging' enthusiasts from 12 countries — Malaysia, India, New Zealand, Sweden, US, China, Germany, Pakistan, Japan, France, Holland and Curacao.

“The number of participants for the race had to be pegged down to 100 due to the sensitivity of the frogs and its habitat to mass presence of humans at any one time walking around with flash lights and cameras clicking away for a good two hours of the night,” a spokesman for the organisers told The Borneo Post.

List of Prize winners in 5th International Bornean Frog Race

A total of nine frog species were photographed during the race and only one rare species was photographed. It is the Rough-sided Frog (*Pulchrana glandulosa*) photographed by Hamir Kiprawi.

He consequently won the Rarest Amphibian Photographed. He also photographed all nine frog species and thus won the category for the Most Number of Amphibian Species Photographed as well as the Best Photo Taken with Mobile Phone.

Winners in the category for Best Photo Taken with DSLR camera respectively were Badiozaman Sulaiman (champion), Phui Chun Hwa (2nd); Yong Hock Chai (3rd); Compact Camera category was won by Wan Nurainie Wan Ismail.

The Special Awards for Most Enthusiastic Participant was won by Muhammad Shavez Cheema while the Conservationist Award went to Lambir Hills National Park (Kamal Abdullah/Januarie Kulis).

For the most number of amphibian species found and rarest amphibian found categories, the winner received RM1,000 and certificate each; while Best Photo via DSLR camera first to third place received RM1,000; RM500 and RM300 respectively plus certificate; for Compact Camera and Smartphone, winner took home RM400 each plus certificate.

All participants upon registration were given a t-shirt and other souvenirs like an exclusive Frog Race 2016 goodie bag with two books — ‘Frogs of Lambir Hills National Park’ and ‘Amphibian postmarks from around the world’ — postcards, button badge, notebook, pen, programme/bookmark, regular sticker and car sticker.

A Frog Race 2016 personalised stamp (from Pos Malaysia) on a postcard will be mailed to participants who leave their addresses with the organisers.

Present to officiate at the closing ceremony was SFC’s deputy general manager Oswald Braken Tisen who later presented the prizes to the winners.

Among those present at were Professor Dr Gabriel Tonga Noweg (director of Biodiversity and Environmental Conservation at Unimas) and the institute’s senior lecturer Professor Indraneil Das.

The spokesman said Miri was chosen in recognition of the increasing followers of ‘frogging’ in the division while Lambir Hills National Park was selected due to its proximity of half an hour’s drive from Miri City.

The 6,952-hectare park, among the world’s most complex and diverse forest eco-systems, has 55 species of amphibians out of over 160 species in Sarawak.

The park also has over 240 species of birds, including all eight Hornbill species found in Sarawak.

The spokesman said the venue for the next race has yet to be finalised. However, the organising committee is considering between Kubah National Park or Sama Jaya Nature Reserve, both in Kuching Division.



Winner Best Photo (DSLR) White-lipped Frog (Chalcorana raniceps) photo by Badiozaman Sulaiman.

Where to see frogs in Sarawak?

All National Parks in Sarawak are excellent places to see and enjoy the spectacular frogs of Borneo. Explorers can go both during day and night – where they need torches and headlamps preferably with LED technology.

In Miri Division besides Lambir Hills National Park, another ideal spot is the Gunung Mulu National Park – a world heritage site with beautiful mountain scenery that has about 100 species of amphibians.

In Kuching the Kubah National Park is another excellent venue, although a small park, it has a wealth of 55 amphibian species.

It was reported that in Borneo Island there are 180 species of frogs (83 species are threatened, 130 species are endemic to Borneo).



Paintings put up for auction during the Frog Race.

Basic facts about frogs

Frogs are amphibians living a ‘double life’ — one in water with gills and the other on land by growing lungs as they age. They are vertebrates and cold blooded (ectothermic).

Defenders of wildlife said frogs are amphibians, which comes from the Greek language and means 'both lives'.

Most frogs are born in water as tadpoles and gradually change into frogs. They don't need to drink the way human do as they absorb water through a permeable skin. This enables them to be born and live far away from water, such as on mountaintops.

Frogs can be found on every continent except Antarctica, with the highest concentration in warmer tropical climate.

A frog's diet mainly consists of insects and small animals like earthworms, minnows and spiders.

Wikipedia says frogs are a diverse and largely carnivorous group of short-bodied and tailless amphibians, with approximately 4,800 recorded species in the world.

An adult frog is generally characterized by a stout body, protruding eyes, cleft tongue, limbs folded underneath, and the absence of a tail in adults.

The world's tiniest frogs are smaller than a dime (US ten cent coin), and the largest frog can grow to more than a foot and weighing over 3.1kg.

Its skin colour varies from well-camouflaged dappled brown, grey and green to vivid patterns of bright red or yellow and black to advertise toxicity and to ward off predators.



Braken (squatting ninth right) with officials, participants and winners of the 5th International Bornean Frog Race at Lambir Hills National Park.