INTRODUCTION

How well do we know about peat swamp forests? Arguably, the name combination itself has equated these forests to ‘wet’, ‘smelly’, ‘dirty’ and ‘mosquito-infested’ places that are unfit for humans. These are some of the common perceptions that are conceived by many, including researchers, and consequently, peat swamp forests are one of the least known of the lowland ecosystems in the tropics.

Globally, peatlands (areas with peat substance) cover an estimated 400 million hectares or three per cent of the earth’s land surface (Strack, 2008). About 11 per cent of tropical peatlands are found in Malaysia, which is second to Indonesia that had till the recent past, 80 per cent coverage of tropical peatlands (Rieley et al., 1996; Page et al., 2006). In Malaysia, peat swamp forests form the largest of all wetland areas, accounting for 75 per cent of the total areas (UNDP, 2006). Within Malaysia, Sarawak comes out top with the largest peat...