

Wildlife Conservation Legislations in Malaysia: Evolution and Future Needs

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Abstract

Malaysia is considered a leader among Southeast Asian countries with regard to conservation legislation and programs; it was among the first ASEAN country to develop national conservation legislation, sign CITES, and develop a national conservation strategy. Malaysia has a protected area system covering over 12% of its land area, and many target species occur in parks and reserves. As many species are being included in the endangered species list, there are also some causes of concern, including staff shortages, financial constraints, and inconsistencies within wildlife protection legislations between Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak. This paper looks into selected threats to wildlife in Sarawak and compare legislations relating to wildlife protections in Malaysia. Primary needs include a comprehensive review of these legislations and a nationalized strategy to ameliorate the shortcomings.

Introduction

Wildlife protection was established as early as 1880s in Peninsular Malaysia. Historically, biological resources such as forests were set aside as hunting grounds or forest product reserves. Some of these written records of different types of protection to various wildlife and prohibitions have been reported in Laws of Perak (Maxwell, 1904) and other State legislations in Peninsular except Kedah and Perlis (i.e. protect birds with bright plumage that were much sought after). However the first legislation to protect wildlife in the Federation of Malaya or Peninsula Malaysia was the Wildlife Commission of Malaya in 1932 which provided the fundamental framework to Wild Animals and Birds Protection Ordinance 1955. Later the *Protection of Wildlife Act (PWA)* was passed in 1972 followed by the *National Parks Act (NPA)* in 1980 with the Department of Wildlife and National Park (DWNP) enforcing both laws on behalf of the federal government. Increasing hunting pressure due to various factors and the outdated penalties due to reduced value of money over time has raised question on the efficacy of the PWA1972. Therefore after 39 years a new Bill was passed by the Parliament in August 2010. Wildlife Conservation Act 2010 (Act 716) gazetted and enforced in 28 December 2010 is aimed to improve and strengthen Peninsular Malaysia's wildlife legislation.

Protected area boundaries have not been enforceable due to inadequate government resources, weak management capacities, remote sites, and

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