

MESSAGE

Foremost congratulation on the publication of the special edition of the Hyogo Museum Bulletin. It contains many research and survey findings from Borneo. Information from this megadiverse island is much needed since management and conservation of its biodiversity must be based on sound ecological and taxonomic understanding of the ecosystem.

Secondly, it must be pointed out that the research and survey is facilitated by the memorandum of understanding (MOU) signed between Universiti Malaysia Sabah and the Museum of Nature and Human Activities Hyogo, Japan in 1997. As such it is proven that the MOU indeed is an active one.

Besides the lowland dipterocarp forest, there are several other ecosystems existing in the island of Borneo - montane, submontane, heath, peat swamp, mangrove forests to mention some. These various ecosystems give rise to the huge biodiversity. In turn this huge diversity supports the various ecological processes maintaining the complex and intricate life system of this island. Scientists all over the world come to Borneo to study the biological components as well as this complex and intricate life system. But comprehensive, long term studies are few and many more needed. For example, although fauna of the butterfly has been comparatively well studied, new species and records are still being found. As for the ecology of butterflies in Borneo, few have started.

The Convention on Biological Diversity dictates that biodiversity should be inventoried and conserve, biodiversity should be used sustainably and that the benefits derived from the use of biodiversity should be shared equally. The huge biodiversity in Borneo has several values. Besides its tangible direct uses as food, building materials, clothing etc. it is also vital in maintaining unique life systems in the tropics, an obvious example, the watershed. The fascinating wildlife and nature of Borneo has attracted visitors all over the world and this has created a lucrative economically viable industry in the region - nature tourism or also known as eco-tourism. By conserving biodiversity we are observing their right to live. In turn we are also ensuring and maintaining a genetic pool for the future generation. This undoubtedly will ensure that future research such as genetic engineering for the improvement of crop production is sustainable. Another area of research to discover new products to treat illness such as drug development or herbal remedies also depend much on conservation of biodiversity. These are the kinds of research and development that will provide for human welfare in many aspects - health, social and economic - now and in the future.

However, conserving biodiversity in Borneo has not been easy. The rapid development of the countries in Borneo - Malaysia, Brunei and Indonesia - demands the heavy use of natural resources. Thus, we see rapid depletion of forested areas and the degradation of its marine ecosystems. Logging has been intensive. Land clearance for plantations and infrastructures such as housing, roads etc has been massive. In addition, the slash and burn agriculture is still rampant and at an increasingly greater intensity. And to top the list are the forest fires, cause basically by human ignorance and negligence and selfishness. These are real threats, happening on this island, at times uncontrollable and causing huge damage to biodiversity. We do not know the actual effect, but we could feel that these threats are causing the decrease in population of certain life forms and we are afraid that the decrease will eventually lead to extinction of certain species. The case of the Sumatran rhinoceros (*Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*) is a good illustration of the problem.

On the part of the Malaysian government she has produced her own National Policy on Biological Diversity. In the document Malaysia has stated clearly its vision with regard to its biodiversity. The mission statement also showed that Malaysia wanted to be in the front line of research and development on conservation of biodiversity. The line of actions to follow for conserving biodiversity in Malaysia is illustrated under the fifteen strategies outlined in the document. As conservation of biodiversity includes protection, the natural resources in Malaysia is also given legal status. At this moment of time the government of Malaysia is completing the process to produce an Act to Access of Natural Resources in Malaysia. The two Malaysian states in Borneo, Sarawak and Sabah have actually, individually produced their own Enactment on Access to Natural Resources. These are guidelines to facilitate the use and benefit sharing of natural resources which form the biodiversity.

However, as we all know, besides the rules and regulations, scientific knowledge are vital to the management and conservation of biodiversity at all levels - genetic, species and ecosystem. This is lacking. What we need are to know what we have and how are they interrelated in their environment. Then only can we plan how to use them

sustainably, sharing the benefits derived from their use. Sustainable use will mean proper management of these resources and without doubt will need scientific knowledge. This vicious cycle pointed out clearly the need to increase immediately taxonomic and ecological information of the biodiversity in Borneo.

As I can see this special publication dedicated to studies in Borneo is a timely effort to initiate further studies on the rich island. May this create awareness among the scientific community on the need to increase taxonomic and ecological studies on the biodiversity. Such studies are normally long term and this will need core funding. I do hope this publication will stir interest among funding agencies in Japan and elsewhere to assist in financing long term research in Borneo.

Conservation of biological diversity which determines sustainable socio-economic development of the human kind is everyone's concern and responsibility. The megadiversity in Borneo is under several threats. We hope some focused research will be carried out soon to understand more on what and how to conserve. The actual management of conservation effort should also be given due attention which may require an across discipline approach to otherwise straight-forward scientific studies.

Last but not least, let me repeat my congratulation to Museum of Nature and Human Activities, Hyogo, Japan on the publication of this special edition of the Museum Bulletin. Let the good work continue and may this strengthen the scientific collaboration and human relationship between us.

Professor Datin Dr. Maryati Mohamed
Director
Institute for Tropical Biology and Conservation
Universiti Malaysia Sabah