

World Wetlands Day & World Migratory Bird Day 2012

11-12 February 2012

Bako-Buntal Bay, Malaysia



**Report from Yeap Chin Aik, Head of Conservation, Malaysian Nature Society
(MNS) to the East Asian – Australasian Flyway Partnership**

Financial Support: Ministry of Environment of Japan and BirdLife Asia Division

For World Wetlands Day 2012, MNS organised two small scale events in Kuching on 11th and 12th February 2012 with support from the Ministry of Environment of Japan and BirdLife Asia Division. For the former, Yeap Chin Aik (MNS Head of Conservation) gave a public talk on the importance of wetlands and shorebird conservation at the Limetree Hotel in Kuching. The event was attended by well over 50 people.

A belated celebration of the World Wetlands Day was held at Kampung (Kg) Bako the following day which was organised by the MNS Kuching Branch, with support from the MNS Secretariat (based in Kuala Lumpur) and Kg. Bako villagers. Kg Bako is one of the important villages located within the Bako-Buntal Bay IBA apart from the more well-known Kg Buntal. For MNS, this was a first time that the Branch has engaged this village and villagers in its effort of promoting Bako-Buntal Bay as an IBA and a potential Flyway Site.

Thus, the purpose of this event was two-fold namely; (1) to generate awareness on the importance of Bako-Buntal Bay as an IBA/potential Flyway Site, and (2) to cement foundation for future flyway conservation work at the bay.

The event kicked off with a trip onto the Bako-Buntal Bay mudflats at low tide with the village headman (Tuan Haji Wahid bin Sani) and several honorary wardens of Kg Bako. Led by an experienced MNS birder, the villagers were given a briefing on the types of migratory waterbirds (including globally threatened species such as the Chinese Egret) and shown birds through telescopes. For the honorary wardens, this was a new experience for them and showed interest to learn. A local news reporter also interviewed the village headman on his views about Bako-Buntal Bay. At the same time, a colouring competition for kids was held back at the village. 19-20 kids participated.

Subsequently, the group headed back to the village for the official opening of the WWD2012 event by the VIPs at the village community house. The VIPs that attended were:

- Dr Hazland bin Abang Hipni, elected representative of the Demak Laut (constituent for Bako)
- Tuan Haji Suhaili bin Othman, “penghulu” Kg Bako
- Tuan Haji Wahid bin Sani, village headman of Kg Bako
- Mr Moktar Maarop, chief of the local political party for Kg Bako.

The presence of Dr Hazland signalled strong support for this event despite its small scale.

Yeap presented an overview on wetlands, waterbirds and importance of the bay to migratory shorebirds to the audience to generate awareness in the VIPs. In closing, Dr Hazland later thanked MNS and Kg Bako for organising this event and hope that it will continue next year.

Additionally he shared that he is more aware of Bako-Buntal Bay's biodiversity and importance and pledged that as long as he would ensure, to the best of his ability, that such qualities be maintained. He also hoped that all parties continue to work together for the betterment of the bay.

Dr Hazland later presented prizes to three winners of the colouring competition. Yeap presented Dr Hazland and Tuan Haji Wahid with the EAAF flyway posters.

The WWD2012 celebrations in Kg Bako provided MNS with the opportunity to get to know Kg Bako and its villagers better and to know their reception and knowledge towards Bako-Buntal Bay as an important site for migratory waterbirds. Through this activity, MNS now is able to consider developing long-term conservation activities with this village and not just Kg Buntal.

Several articles are expected to be published in the local newspapers post event.

Report by Yeap Chin Aik, MNS Head of Conservation

WWD2012 Programme (Kg Bako)

8.00 – 8.20 am	Arrival of guests and villagers for registration at Bako Terminal (High tide at 4.7 m)
8.20 – 8.30 am	Safety briefing for the trip to Kuala Bako mudflats
8.30 – 8.40 am	Boarding the boats to Kuala Bako
8.40 – 9.00 am	Journey time to the mudflats (Between 8.30 am and 9.00 am, the tide goes down to 4.2 m quickly to expose the mudflats. Timing is crucial to catch the tide.)
9.00 – 9.30 am	Enjoy the spectacle of birds returning to the exposed mudflats to feed and sharing of sightings with the villagers
9.30 – 10.00 am	Head back to Kampung Bako
10.00 – 10.15 am	Speech by YB Dr Hazland bin Abang Hipni (Demak Laut State Assemblyman)
10.15 – 11.00 am	Powerpoint presentation on the importance of wetlands at Bako Buntal Bay at by Mr Yeap Chin Aik, Head of Conservation, Malaysian Nature Society
11.00 – 11.15 am	Presentation of prizes for Children Activities
11.15 am – 12.00 pm	Closing and Refreshments

SELECTED PHOTOGRAPHS (Note: Please credit MNS accordingly).



Tides receding at the Bako-Buntal Bay in the morning. Mount Santubong is at the background.



Experienced MNS birders and Kg Bako villagers i.e. headman and honorary wardens being introduced to migratory waterbirds from the mudflats.



Kg Bako honorary wardens taking a closer look at migratory waterbirds through telescopes.



The village headman, Tuan Haji Wahid bin Sani, being interviewed by a local reporter.



Yeap Chin Aik from MNS being interviewed by a local reporter.



Demak Laut State Assemblyman, Dr Hazland bin Abang Hipni, being greeted and accompanied by Mdm Cheong Ah Kwan, chair of the MNS Kuching Branch.



Rows of VIPs on the front.



Yeap Chin Aik from MNS giving the presentation.



Children of Kg Bako taking part in the colouring competition.



Prize-giving ceremony for the art competition winners.



Yeap from MNS presenting a flyway poster to Dr Hazland as a token of appreciation.



Yeap from MNS presenting a flyway poster to Tuan Haji Wahid as a token of appreciation.



Dr Hazland giving his closing speech.