



KUMPULAN YAYASAN SABAH

Menara Tun Mustapha

Kompleks Ibu Pejabat Yayasan Sabah

Teluk Likas, Peti Surat 11623

88817 Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia

Tel: 6 088 326300 Faks: 6 088 326424

E-mel: ysinfo@ysnet.org.my

Laman Web: <http://www.yayasansabahgroup.org.my>

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EXPLORING UNTAPPED HORIZONS IN BORNEO'S HIDDEN VALLEY

KOTA KINABALU (Tuesday): Deep within Borneo's hidden valley, a groundbreaking survey ventures into the Imbak Canyon Conservation Area (ICCA), Tongod. From 3 to 15 September 2024, the Imbak Canyon Resources and Wildlife Survey aims to uncover new insights and reveal untapped horizons, offering a fresh perspective on the region's abundant natural resources and diverse wildlife.

Imbak Canyon is one of Sabah's last substantial unlogged lowland dipterocarp forests. Nestled in the heart of Borneo, it serves as an important water catchment area for the Kinabatangan River, the longest river in Sabah.

Beyond its hydrological significance, Imbak Canyon functions as an indispensable wildlife corridor, bridging the Danum Valley and Maliau Basin. It is a sanctuary for endangered giants such as the Bornean pygmy elephant, Orangutan, and the elusive Clouded leopard. Additionally, it plays a crucial role in forest restoration, acting as a gene bank for regenerating degraded areas.

In a statement, the Director of Yayasan Sabah, Dato' Sri Haji Gulamhaidar @ Yusof bin Khan Bahadar said, "With the expiration of the ICCA Strategic Management Plan in 2023, it is imperative to acquire the most current data on resources and wildlife abundance. This survey is poised to provide crucial, up-to-date insights into the biodiversity of flora, fauna, and animal species within the ICCA and its surrounding areas, laying the groundwork for a comprehensive successor plan that will advance future conservation initiatives."

The survey's objectives include compiling essential data for the ICCA Strategic Management Plan, documenting wildlife abundance and distribution, and assessing potential threats such as poaching, forest fires, and the impact of surrounding land use. Beyond conservation, the survey will also explore the area's potential for tourism development prospects and identify research questions for future explorations.

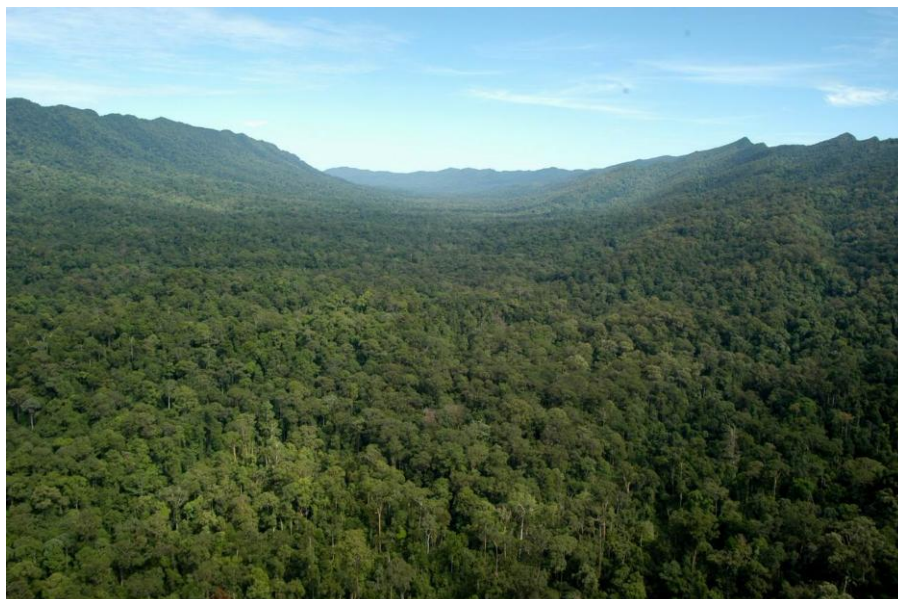
This survey is the second iteration, following the initial study conducted in 2012.

Dato' Sri Haji Gulamhaidar added, "With over 150 participants, including distinguished researchers, government officials, and support personnel, we aim to examine every facet comprehensively."

Seven campsites have been identified for the survey, and participants have been allocated to ensure comprehensive coverage within a 2 km radius of each campsite.

Spearheaded by the Sabah Wildlife Department, the Organising Committee comprises distinguished members, including the Yayasan Sabah Group, Sabah Forestry Department, Sabah Parks, WWF-Malaysia, Sabah Environmental Trust and various universities such as the Universiti Malaysia Sabah and Universiti Teknologi MARA.

After the survey concludes, a seminar will showcase the findings. "We aim to substantially evaluate the data gathered. This will be achieved through a collaborative approach, ensuring diverse perspectives for the benefit of both environment and people," concluded Dato' Sri Haji Gulamhaidar.



Aerial view of Imbak Canyon Conservation Area.

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For more information, please contact : **Sam S. Karnail**
Group Manager, Corporate Communications Division
Yayasan Sabah Group
Tel. : 088-326448
Fax : 088-421526/088-326424
Email : ynwaskarnail@gmail.com