

CALL OF DUTY

Protecting Brunei's biodiversity

Nabilah Haris
BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN

THE Biodiversity and Natural History Society (BruWILD) is striving to build a future for Brunei, where people and nature, sustainable development and natural heritage, can co-exist peacefully.

The non-governmental organisation was

Brunei Biodiversity and Natural History Society (BruWILD) President Liaw Lin Ji (2nd L) presenting tokens of appreciation to International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council Wildlife Rehabilitators Dr Kelli Knight (3rd L) and Lloyd Brown (4th L). *Picture: BT file*

set up by a group of local biologists with a passion in biodiversity conservation, as a way for them to share their knowledge with the larger public in pursuit of protecting Brunei's biodiversity.

"The reality is, we share the same planet, and we are required to co-exist with nature for our survival and livelihood. It dawned on us that everyone must do their part in order to maintain a healthy relationship with nature — not just the scientists, conservationists and naturalists," said the society's president, Liaw Lin Ji.

The NGO was registered itself in April, 2014 with 20 members, including eight who provide advisory support.

During the launch of a wildlife rescue and rehabilitation training at Universiti Brunei

Darussalam (UBD), Lin Ji said that the country's biodiversity is threatened by various challenges.

"The wild animals we have in Brunei are precious, and we are fortunate we still have them in our country," she said, urging for greater protection from further population decline.

For more information on BruWILD and its activities, check out its Facebook page 'BruWILD: Brunei Natural History Society', or send an e-mail to bruwildorg@gmail.com.

If you come across injured animals or the illegal sale of endangered species, please contact its hotline at +673 712 7379 hotline.

The Brunei Times



The President of BruWILD, Liaw Lin Ji (2nd R, standing), with other members of the NGO during one of its activities. *Picture: BT file*

Hitting the road for biodiversity awareness



A recently hatched green turtle monitored by BruWILD during its release to the sea. Green Turtle is considered as 'endangered' by International Union for Conservation of Nature. (Left) A member of BruWILD (R) talking to students about insects as part of a wildlife awareness roadshow. (Right) A member of the BruWILD (left) helping the visitors to create their DIY bookmarks at BruWILD booth during the National Family Day celebration. *Pictures: BT file*

Abdul Aziz Ismail
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THE Brunei Biodiversity and Natural History Society (BruWILD) is committed to providing the best educational support to local schools and institutions through conducting roadshows across the nation.

According to BruWILD President Liaw Lin Ji, many schools and teachers have sought engagement with the non-governmental organisation since its inception in 2014 as a step to educate the students on Brunei's flora and fauna, such as its functions, importance to the ecosystem and people.

There have been a number of teachers that have approached the NGO to organise roadshows at their respective schools.

She said the roadshows and activities that are carried out by BruWILD have been designed based on the National Education System for the 21st Century (SPN 21) curriculum.

"The teachers often engage with us because of our roadshows, because (the roadshows) are applicable to the modules that the teachers are teaching," she told *The Brunei Times* in an interview.

The president said ecology, biodiversity conservation, environment protection are some of the topics that are taught in schools, which is why BruWILD has focused its roadshows on those topics to provide students with an "out-of-classroom educational experience".

According to the NGO's website, BruWILD has visited numerous schools in the country to engage the students in environmental topics as it could help them in their studies, especially those who will be sitting for the O-Level and A-Level examinations.

The programme is also aimed at providing them with the opportunity to put conservation principles into action.



"Students can benefit substantially from these materials to create a better understanding of the topic and raise the awareness of the country's bio asset and natural heritage," BruWILD stated.

The NGO will continue to educate the public through its roadshows, and include other topics

relating to the environment, such as owning and caring for exotic pets.

"Exotic pets by definition means animals that are not native to Brunei; that are either bought from stores or brought in illegally," she explained.

Although owning an exotic pet is not a big issue, Lin Ji said releasing the pet into the

wild — when the owner has decided to stop looking after it — is.

"Releasing the exotic pets could cause a negative change in the balanced food web of the forest because the natural prey and predator of these species is likely not to be found in Brunei," she said.

The Brunei Times

Strength in numbers

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VOLUNTEERS who join the Brunei Biodiversity and Natural History Society (BruWILD)'s in carrying out their programmes and roadshows see it as a step towards making the world a better place.

One of the many volunteers, Fahim Ibrahim, joined the non-governmental organisation, as he wanted to contribute to the sustainable development of the country.

"It wasn't something I wanted to do for fun or games. For me, it was something I desperately needed, in order to help me achieve what I wanted to do, and how I was going to help build a future where people, environmental and sustainable development can live towards a mutual benefit," he said.

He said the NGO has given him and others the opportunity to take action to look after the country's flora and fauna, at the same

time, provide them with hands-on experience and training.

Fahim said his commitment stems from his interest in the area of environmental sustainability and conservation.

"Everytime I'm in the forest and listening to what it's telling me, wondering what the forest is trying to say to me. That is why I want to protect it — somebody has to," he said, encouraging others to also follow their dreams and work hard to achieve what they believe will be good for them and for the country.

Faridah Hj Yahya, another volunteer who joined BruWILD in 2015, said she joined the NGO as she was interested in its mission (biodiversity conservation).

"Wildlife conservation and preservation of their habitat has always been a dream of mine, so joining this NGO falls naturally in line with my goals," she said.

She said BruWILD has given her the opportunity to get proper training and take part in activities that allows her to fulfill her dreams.

To ensure the sultanate's flora and fauna are well looked after, Faridah said people will need to have the passion, focus, teamwork skills, open mind and sincerity as she believes these are the keys to work towards successful biodiversity conservation.

The Brunei Times

