

IX. CONSERVATION

(edited by H.P. Nooteboom; continued from Volume 9, page 413)

The Pahang and Johore State Governments have agreed to declare the 92,000 hectare Endau-Rompin Forest as a State Park. It had been proposed as a National Park in 1975, but, as usual, this did not prevent logging in the core area in 1977. This was halted after considerable national protest, but logging still occurs around the fringes and between S. Kinchin and S. Kemapan.

The area is not only important for its animals (largest breeding population of Sumatran rhinoceros), but also has an outstanding botanical significance (see also articles on the

Malaysian Heritage and Scientific Expedition to the area by e.g. B.H. and R. KIEW). It is one of the sites proposed for inclusion in the forthcoming 'Centres of plant Diversity Book'. The predominant vegetation is lowland mixed Dipterocarp forest of a type that contains many Bornean elements and is, therefore, rather different from the forests elsewhere in Peninsular Malaysia. During the expedition many rare and/or endemic plants were met, e.g. the dwarf banana *Musa gracilis*, and several undescribed ones in *Codonoboea*, *Didisandra*, *Didymocarpus*, *Dischidia*, *Garcinia*, *Hoya*, *Livistona*, *Loxocarpus*, and *Phyllagathis*. (After Threatened Pl. Newsl. 19, 1988, 8, map).

The entire Mata Ayer Forest Reserve in Perlis is being cleared, whereby the only Thai type rain forest in Peninsular Malaysia will be lost, while the hill forests of the Thaleban National Park across the border in Thailand will also be affected. This action ignores the conservation strategy which WWF-Malaysia had prepared for the State, but cupidity and graft is of course stronger than good intentions. (After Threatened Pl. Newsl. 19, 1988, 8-9.)

The destruction of the native vegetation of Mt. Ophir, Fraser's Hill, and Kedah Peak is almost complete now.

One million acres are said to have been issued as new timberlogging areas in Sabah in forests formerly classified as non-commercial in the protective watersheds of Mt. Trusmadi and around the Crocker Range by order of the new Cabinet of the Pairin Government. Fortunately C.M. PAIRIN has urged with good results the people of Sinsuran and Tambunan to stop fellings in and near the new *Rafflesia* reserve with *R. pricei* along the Crocker Range. Plans are now underway to start a new *Rafflesia* survey in Sabah. A few new localities were reported from local village source around Mt. Trusmadi and from Mt. Kinabalu. At least three of the known localities were lost through trampling by tourists and logging. — W. MEIJER.

The forest with *Trigonobalanus* near the Headquarters of the Kinabalu Park underwent a drastic 'cleaning' operation to make place for a children's playground by order of the Department of Tourism and Development. New sites have been razed for a Community Center and more chalets. Clearings there and near Bt. Hampuan now have gone up to ca. 1675 m. The plateau near the cattle station suffered from a huge landslide. The fate of Bt. Hampuan has been pleaded by Drs. J.H. BEAMAN and W. MEIJER, and the Survival Committee at Kew, which is chaired by Mr. G. LUCAS, will support them. — W. MEIJER.

Malaysian delegation visits Europe. A 15 men strong Malaysian delegation, headed by the Minister for Primary Industries and consisting of important timber merchants and amongst others the directors of forestry of Sabah and Sarawak, visited Europe to defend their logging policies against forces in Europe who want a boycott of tropical timber that is not grown under sustainable management. In spite of all the evidence against their case, the delegation expressed their concern with ecological damage of the tropical rain forest and their efforts in favour of stability of the environment and sustainable management of their forests. The Minister accused the European softwood merchants to pay the environment lobby to raise a case against tropical hardwoods. Obviously he does not know that, on economical grounds, the wood trade in Western countries always has been opposed against any boycott of wood. The delegation did not impress the audience of environmentalists and journalists.

In *The Star*, a Malaysian newspaper, April 11, 1987, an article was published on the subject. Some quotations: 'Malaysian officials will be aware that a campaign is underway in several Western countries to dissuade consumers from buying timber and timber products derived from tropical rain forests' ... because ... 'forests are exploited with little regard for the future of the people who live there and without proper environmental controls during logging operations. How justified are such claims? On paper, for Malaysia at least, they would appear to be unfair. A National Forest Policy for Malaysia was formulated in the late 1970s, and this sets out laudable and responsible prescriptions for forest management that will provide a sustained yield of timber for generations to come. But alas, Malaysia's forests continue to be degraded, and destructive operations are now moving into steeper and even more vulnerable country. In few instances is there adequate follow-up to ensure the health and vigour of the forest after the loggers have left. The reality falls short on the policies on paper.'

In November and December 1987 I have been in Malaysia myself, and I could with my own eyes witness the devastating way of logging, of which I have taken photos. Often skidding tracks and logging roads occupy 25% or more of the area and erosion is heavy. Sometimes only isolated trees survive the logging operations, but die later because of exposure. No measures to favour natural regeneration were taken; as a matter of fact, the logged-over forest was regarded as waste land that in some cases later could be used for plantations. Wood plantations were all – that means without a single exception – with fast-growing softwood species, for instance at Sabah Soft Wood, which company had planted more than 25,000 hectares with *Eucalyptus deglupta*, *Acacia mangium*, *Gmelina arborea*, and *Albizia falcataria*. As nobody has any experience of the feasibility of those plantations in the long term, I consider planting only 'soft' hardwood and neglecting the endemic 'hard' hardwood species as a very risky business (This opinion I have in common with a spokesman from the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia, FRIM). Moreover, these practices are disastrous for future generations, who also need wood, and especially tropical hardwoods. Environmental degradation and lack of one of the most important commodities is what future generations will inherit from this one. — H. P. NOOTEBOOM.

Indonesia ablaze again. As was predicted forest fires occurred again in 1987 in Indonesia, but now after a shorter drought. In Bukit Suharto, where NOOTEBOOM observed burning coal layers two years after the fires of 1982/3, obviously the coal still burns as reported by A.J. WHITTEN and Ms. K. MACKINNON in *Wallaceana* 48 & 49, 1987. As a result forest fires were re-ignited. But also in the peat soils of South Sumatra and in plantations throughout the countries serious fires have occurred.

Australia. The Australians still go on with rain forest destruction in Queensland. Late 1986 a bulldozer pushed a 29 km pilot track through leasehold land under Forests Department control, from the Rex Highway Northwest of Cairns, passing South of Black Mountain to Wangetti Beach. One fourth of the road slices through rain forest, and this area is part of the land on the National Estate. See Australian Conservation Foundation Newsletter 19/5, p. 4. However, the Australian Federal Government 'has given a commitment to the Australian People that ... they will proceed with nomination of the wet tropics for World Heritage Listing. It will be up to the Federal Government to use their powers to bring about an end to all destructive activity in the forests, a move which could spark a high court challenge from the Queensland Government.' (ACF Newsletter 19/9, p. 4). The Federal Government has announced several new initiatives which should assist the processes involved

in nominating an area for World Heritage Listing, while ensuring that no jobs are lost as a result of the nomination. 'Sadly these positive employment initiatives seem to have fallen on deaf ears in North Queensland; ears plugged by the malignant State Government anti-conservation campaign.' (ACF Newsletter 19/10, p. 8). — H.P. NOOTEBOOM.