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DO PEOPLE CARE? THE AWARENESS OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN MIRI TOWARDS HORNBILLS AT PIASAU NATURE RESERVE, SARAWAK

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ABSTRACT

Hornbills are a major attraction for ecotourism at the Piasau Nature Reserve, near Miri, Sarawak. Hornbills, in general, are believed to play important ecological roles in tropical forests, especially as agents of seed dispersal. At the Piasau Nature Reserve, the Oriental Pied Hornbill (*Anthracoceros albirostris*) is the most popular species and has caught the attention of some conservationists. This survey was conducted to investigate the perception of local communities in the Miri area about hornbills at this Park. Our survey suggests that the Miri residents are positive towards hornbill conservation at this park after the case of a Oriental Pied Hornbill called Faridah that was killed. More than half of our respondents are aware of the existence of this hornbill species at Piasau.

Keywords: Piasau Nature Reserve, hornbill, local communities, awareness



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INTRODUCTION

We believe awareness play an important role to conserve hornbill for a better future and to understand what locals think about hornbills at Piasau. Piasau is famous with the Oriental Pied Hornbill and has caught the attention of some conservationists. We think what makes this study interesting is that, obtaining more information from the non-conservationists, non-biologists, non-zoologists, or those who are not involved in taking care of wildlife. This is achieved by recording public opinion on this hornbill species at Piasau Nature Reserve.

OBJECTIVES

The main goal of the study was to collect information from local communities about their awareness, opinion and attitudes towards the conservation of this hornbill species at Piasau, and at the same time educate the local communities, on why this hornbill species is important. By doing this, it will help us to find a way through suggestions from them on formulating effective ways to conserve or build more awareness on this iconic species.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

We prepared a questionnaire as a guideline on questions related to the subject matter. At the same time, we also conducted a simple semi-structured interview because some of our respondents could not read and write. Our target is approximately 50 respondents on people who live in Miri for at least more than a year and aware on general issues in Miri. Sampling method involved random sampling technique. We interviewed the respondents at the malls, markets, houses, construction sites and schools; some of them happened to visit Piasau.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

We were able to interview 60 respondents around Miri. Our survey covered the Piasau area, Permyjaya, Tudan, Lutong and around the city centre. Figs. 1 and 2 show the gender and age group of our individual number of respondents.

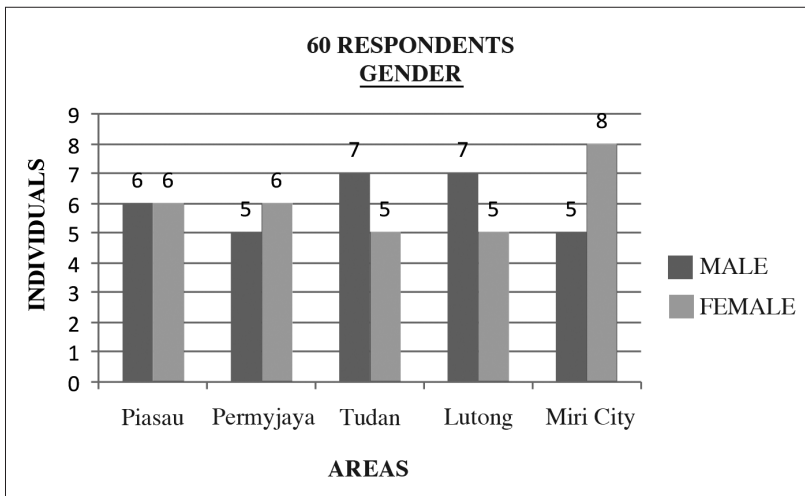


Fig. 1: Gender category of respondents.