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BIRDS OF THE MANGROVES, NYPA SWAMPS AND PEAT SWAMP FORESTS OF SARAWAK**Richard Gregory-Smith****ABSTRACT**

Mangroves, Nypa swamps and peat swamp forests in Sarawak were surveyed over the period 1994-96 to determine the species of birds present. This paper records the species identified in each habitat and discusses their distribution.

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by

Richard Gregory-Smith

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INTRODUCTION

Mangroves are found on coasts mainly in the south-west of Sarawak, at the broad estuaries of the Rajang, Lupar, Sadong and Samarahan rivers, and to a lesser extent at estuaries in the north-east. Mangrove forest or mangals consists of over 50 species of trees and shrubs adapted to a saline environment. Mangroves are harvested for firewood, cutch for tanning, poles for piling and scaffolding, hopefully on a cycle of not less than 25 years. Behind the mangroves is brackish swamp comprising almost exclusively Nypa *Nypa fruticans*, with sometimes a belt of Nibong *Oncosperma filamentosa* on the landward side.

These give way to the peat swamp forests. Peat swamp forest occupies most low-lying areas throughout Sarawak and covers 15,000 square kilometres. It produced much of Sarawak's commercial timber, but is now almost totally depleted of timber trees. It was dominated by trees such as Alan *Shorea albida* up to 60m tall and also included Jongkong *Dactylocladus stenostachys*, Ramin *Gonystylus bancanus*, Sepetir *Copaifera palustris*, Kapur *Dryobalanops rappa* and Meranti *Shorea spp.* Although the peat swamp forests have long been logged, there has been strong secondary growth where the land has not been drained for cultivation.

SURVEY METHODS

Mangrove, Nypa swamp and peat swamp forest habitats were surveyed along the coast and hinterland of Sarawak from Samunsam to Miri, mainly by visual observation, at all seasons over the period July 1994 to April 1996.