

PENCINTAALAM

NEWSLETTER OF THE MALAYSIAN NATURE SOCIETY



www.mns.my March 2018

A Water-Bird Sanctuary - Tonle Sap, Cambodia

Written by Vuthy Taing, a member of MNS NS/Melaka www.thegreenhome.org Facebook: thegreenhomecommunity

Email: thegreenhomecommunity@gmail.com

I heard about the Tonle Sap Biosphere Reserve (TSBR) in Cambodia and its great importance to fishing and birds. It was only after visiting the place several times in the last few months that I have realised its importance to the survival of an amazing array of water birds.

The lake's water level peaks to a maximum of about 10 meters in October and drops to a mere 1 to 2 meters in April. This spectacle can be witnessed when you take a boat from October to December. The unending shoreline makes you feel like you are in an open sea. In April, most likely the boatmen, or boys, have to jump into the mud and push the boat.

The effect on bird life is the opposite. Darters and Cormorants start to nest in October, followed by Asian Openbill, Painted Stork and Pelicans in December. The largest number of birds is reached in March to May as this is when only pockets of water are left and there is plenty of fish to feed on.

It is a breathtaking sight to behold when you enter TSBR in the months from October.



You will be able to see Darters & Cormorants diving back and forth, Pelicans, Asian Openbill and Adjutants swirling up with the column of warm air, and the formation of lines of ducks, Black-headed Ibis & Painted Stork going about their routine.

Keep in touch with me for the latest update of birding activities in this important TSBR and in Cambodia in general.





ARE **OXO-DEGRADABLE PLASTIC BAGS** BETTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT?

Letter to Editor

While I applaud Sibu Municipal Council's efforts to reduce plastic pollution by banning non-biodegradable plastic bags ('Sibu's Tough Stand Against Plastic', 22 Jan 2018), its proposal to replace conventional plastic bags with purportedly 'biodegradable' plastic bags poses fresh environmental problems.

The plastic pollution reduction regulations and policies currently in place in Malaysia seem to mostly encourage the replacement of conventional plastic bags with paper bags, purportedly 'biodegradable' plastic bags and cheap non-woven shopping bags. In addition, styrofoam food packaging is merely replaced with other types of non-foam plastic food packaging, and so far there does not appear to be any organised or official effort to recover, collect and clean these types of plastic packaging for recycling. None of these items introduced to replace conventional plastic and styrofoam products are actual alternatives, as they are unsustainable and do not reduce waste.

Most commercially-available and inexpensive 'biodegradable' plastic bags are still plastic and fossil fuel-based. Only bags that conform to compostability standards ASTM D6400 or EN 13432 are truly biodegradable.

Oxo-degradable, oxo-biodegradable, oxy-degradable, oxy-biodegradable and degradable plastic bags are all merely names for plastic bags with a chemical additive. This chemical additive, usually metal salts (which may include cobalt depending on the manufacturer), breaks the plastic molecular ties and catalyses the disintegration of the plastic. Over time, these bags break down into smaller, more toxic petro-polymers, which eventually contaminate our soil and water, and enter the animal and human food chain. Therefore, although these purportedly 'greener' plastic bags break down into fragments in landfills and waterways, they contribute to microplastic pollution, posing a risk to marine and other ecosystems.

Compostable?

YES ___

NO



In fact, over 150 environmental organisations, non-profit organisations, research and scientific institutions and public bodies have recently called for a ban on oxo-degradable plastics

(Source: https://newplasticseconomy.org/assets/doc/oxostatement.pdf).

Oxo-degradable plastics are also increasingly facing opposition in Europe, and the United Nations Environment Programme's chief scientist Prof. Jacqueline McGlade confirmed that a lot of plastics labelled biodegradable never fully break down and thus contribute to plastic pollution. Further, because these oxo-degradable plastics have a chemical additive, they cannot be safely recycled and can end up contaminating other types of plastics in recycling facilities.

GREEN LIVING

.....continued from previous page

As for paper bags, although they are truly biodegradable as long as they do not have a plastic coating, plastic-based glue or laminate, they do have a high environmental cost, as they require more water and energy to produce compared to plastic bags. However, as they are less harmful to wildlife and less toxic to human health once discarded, they can be safely used as food packaging. Still, replacing plastic bags with paper bags does not reduce waste, as paper bags are typically single-use due to their low durability, and cannot be recycled once wet or contaminated with food, grease and dirt. Considering the high water and energy use and low durability of paper packaging, the use of paper bags should be restricted to the sale and serving of food, and not as grocery bags and shopping carrier bags, and consumers should still be charged a fee for paper bags and paper-based food packaging to reduce reliance on singleuse packaging and to encourage behavioural change, in that consumers would be more motivated to save money by bringing their own reusable food and beverage containers and shopping bags.

The other unsustainable item frequently marketed as a sustainable alternative to plastic bags are non-woven shopping bags, referred to erroneously as 'recycle bags' although this is grammatically and factually inaccurate, since they are neither made of recycled material, nor are they recyclable. Non-woven shopping bags are those inexpensive lightweight bags that look and feel like fabric and are usually given out as goodie bags at events or sold at supermarket checkout lanes. They are made of polypropylene and are therefore also plastic despite their resemblance to cotton or fabric. These should be avoided as they are not durable, typically contain lead, break down into plastic fibres easily thus contributing to microplastic pollution, and cannot be repaired, recycled or composted.

Malaysia is one of the 193 countries which signed a UN resolution in December 2017 to eliminate marine plastic pollution. There is no way we can fulfill this pledge if we continue to replace one type of

plastic with another type of plastic or with other single-use packaging with a high carbon and water footprint, or increase microplastics in our oceans by increasing the demand for and use of oxo-degradable plastic.

To truly reduce plastic pollution, we need to reduce waste and change our mindset in relation to disposable and single-use items, which may be convenient for us but not convenient for the environment. The solution to the problem of plastic pollution and waste should incorporate the banning of small, lightweight plastic bags, the distribution only of larger, thicker plastic bags for a small fee for rubbish disposal and the subsequent proper collection and disposal of such rubbish in sanitary landfills, the elimination of 'greenwashing' alternatives such as non-woven polypropylene bags and oxodegradable plastic bags, and the implementation of incentives such as rebates, shopping reward points and express checkout counters.

Long-term solutions can subsequently be introduced to include practical initiatives to encourage and increase recycling and composting to reduce household and industrial waste and correspondingly reduce the need for rubbish bags. There must be incentives and laws in place to make it easier for homes and businesses to dispose of waste without the need for rubbish bags, and for food and consumer goods to be sold without the need for plastic wrap and other packaging.

Scientific and technological solutions to reduce waste and replace conventional plastic packaging are being developed every day, and we have a choice between the most cutting-edge solutions such as plant-based, edible packaging, and traditional zero-cost, zero-waste options such as bringing our own baskets, cloth bags and food containers with us to the shops. It is not choices or solutions that we lack, but the political and individual will to do the right and responsible thing.

WONG EE LYNN
COORDINATOR,
GREEN LIVING SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP,
MALAYSIAN NATURE SOCIETY



idreamofeden.wordpress.com



5 Ways to reduce wastage after Chinese New Year

Contributed by Ng Zhang En

Did you know that Chinese New Year is one of the least environmental friendly Festivals! The festive season is over! If you have forgotten to go green this Chinese New Year, you will still have a chance to do so.



Reuse the angpow packets that you received

If you have tons of angpow packets that you received, don't chuck them into the recycle bin. If your angpow packets are still in good condition, give them to your parents to reuse them next year! Did you know that more than 16,300 trees are cut down every year to make angpow packets?

Keep your Chinese New Year decorations for next year

Don't throw your Chinese New Year decorations away. If you reuse them next year, it will save money. Did you know that more than 300 tonnes of trash from Chinese New Year are being dumped on the landfill every year?

Don't throw away the ribbons

I personally love ribbons but they have such a short life. Every year, the amounts of ribbons that are being used and thrown away are enough to tie a bow around the earth. If any of your hampers came with ribbons, stash them away to reuse for craft projects or future gift wrapping of your own.





Give any unwanted gifts to someone who will appreciate them

If you received a whole load of mandarin oranges or some hamper that you don't need, give it to someone who appreciates it. You don't have to find a charity association to donate them to (but if you have done so, high five!) . You can just give it to someone who hardly gets gifts such as foreign workers or share the gifts with your overseas friend who will get to experience CNY gifts.

Discard fireworks properly

Okay, this technically does not help reduce wastage but it is still good to know this. Discard fireworks properly so that they won't explode and kill tiny animals like birds or cost any bonfires. Soak them in water overnight and then discard them.



How green are you:

If you have done 0 = Keep trying.

If you have done 1-2 = Good Job, you have made it this far.

If you have done 3-4 = You are one of the most caring person for nature.

If you have done all 5 = Wow! You are the greenest person alive!!!

If you have done 6 = Hey, you cheated! You didn't even notice

there are only five points!:P

ALBINO AND LEUCISTIC ANIMALS

by Wong Ee Lynn (wongeelynn@yahoo.com / gl.mnselangor@yahoo.com)

Some of you may have recently seen a video clip of a snowy white peacock on Facebook or YouTube. Some people may have erroneously referred to it as an 'albino peacock'.

Albinism is a condition in which a vertebrate animal completely lacks melanin. Melanin is the pigment in our bodies which gives colour to the skin, hair, feathers, fur and eyes. An albino animal is not only white (or occasionally with pale pink or yellow patches) in colour, they also have very pale, pink or red eyes in which the blood vessels show through.

Leucism, on the other hand, is caused by a partial lack of pigmentation. An animal with leucism can have completely white skin, fur or feathers, or have patches of colour on mostly white fur, skin or feathers. However, the pigment cells in their eyes are not affected by their condition and their eyes are not pink.

ECO KIDS

Photo credits: Leucistic peacock - http://berkeleysciencereview.com/why-whites-not-so-white-after-all-the-story-of-leucism/

The famous peacock in the video clip therefore, is a leucistic peacock, as his eyes are dark coloured and not pink.

Albinism occurs throughout the animal kingdom. The condition is most commonly seen in birds, reptiles and amphibians, but more rarely seen in mammals. In mammals, albinism occurs once in every 10,000 births, but in birds, the rate is once in every 1,764 births.

Not all of the albinism and leucism in animals are natural occurrences. Very often, as in the case of white tigers, white mice, albino ferrets, albino hedgehogs and albino ball pythons, they are selectively bred by breeding facilities, wildlife parks, petting zoos and pet breeders. Many people find albino and leucistic animals very attractive and exotic-looking, and are willing to pay high prices for them as pets or as 'show' animals in parks and zoos.

Is this a good thing? After all, with dwindling wildlife populations, isn't it a good thing to have more pythons, peacocks, tigers and crocodiles, even if they are not of the usual colour?

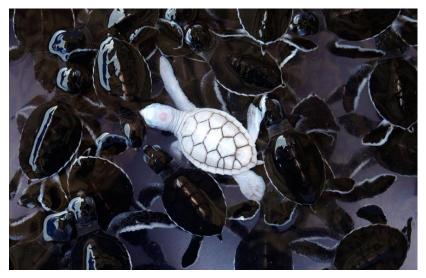
The answer to the above is a resounding NO.



Albino Python: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ball python#/media/File:Albino_ball_python.png







Albino Turtle: https://www.boredpanda.com/white-albino-animals/

Most albino and leucistic animals do not live long in their natural environments. An albino baby sea turtle would be spotted by birds and other predators immediately and eaten before it could survive long enough to breed. Albino birds and mammals would not be able to camouflage themselves in nature, and would not be able to find mates to breed with because of their very different appearance from other members of their own species. Albino animals are also more at risk of skin cancer and eyesight problems due to their lack of pigment. So where do petting zoos and parks find their albino and leucistic animal stars from?

They inbreed them. White tigers, for example, do not exist in nature. The only way to produce a tiger with a white coat is through inbreeding a brother to a sister or father to a daughter. This is very unnatural and unhealthy. The kind of severe inbreeding that is required to produce the mutation of a white coat also causes a number of health problems and genetic defects in the animals.

According to the non-profit organisation, Big Cats Rescue (https://bigcatrescue.org), the same gene that causes the white coat also causes the tigers' optic nerves to be wired to the wrong side of their brains, hence all white tigers are cross-eyed. White tigers also frequently suffer from club feet, cleft palates, spinal problems and defective organs.

Breeding albino and leucistic animals does not help conservation. Albino animals cannot safely be released into nature. Their lack of protective colouration and their health and genetic issues mean they cannot survive outside of the parks and petting zoos. They exist solely to entertain humans and make money for the people who breed them and keep them in captivity.

As long as people keep paying money to see albino and leucistic animals, and to buy albino pythons and hedgehogs as pets, people will keep inbreeding animals that are born unhealthy and with defects. Of course, some albino animals do occur in nature, and they are very vulnerable and must be protected, qualified but only wildlife biologists, veterinarians and sanctuaries have the knowledge and skills to know what is the best way to help them. Albino animals should not be put on parade in parks and zoos for wildlife selfies or kept in people's homes as pets.

If we stop paying money to buy, see or take photographs with albino and leucistic animals, we can make it harder for people to exploit animals.



Kenny the White Tiger, born with genetic defects: https://bigcatrescue.org/abuse-issues/issues/white-tigers/)

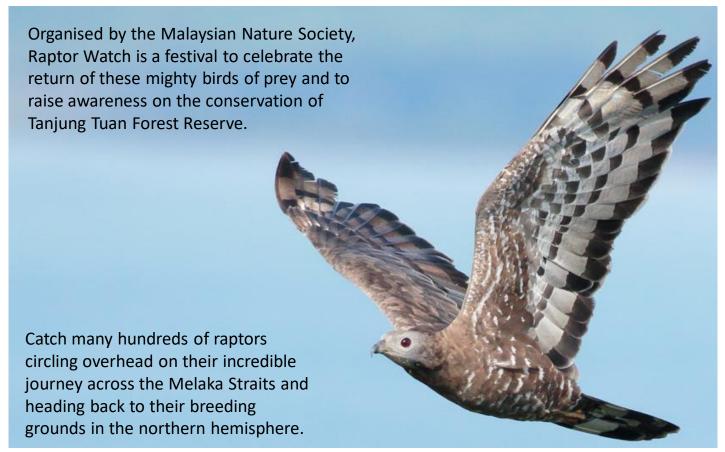




Calendar of Activities



INVITATION TO JOIN MNS AT RW2018



For further details, please see https://mnsraptorwatch.wordpress.com/

MNS SELANGOR PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP

Indoor Talk & Sharing

Date: 14 March 2018 (Wednesday)

Meeting Time: 8.00 pm

Location: MNS Auditorium, KL

"STARTING WITH YOUR BEST FOOT FORWARD" by GEORGE NG

This is a three part series on starting a journey into photography. Our objective is for beginners and avid photographers to have a better understanding and functions of a camera's capabilities.

Many people believe that when they buy an expensive camera would guarantee them good pictures. And I'm sure many of you know what I mean. Photography has been a long journey for most during the film era. In the new digital age, it has been somewhat reduced this journey a lot easier. However, one must know the limitation and capabilities to produce good pictures. To do this, our Photography 101 will begin with the hardware available in the market and their limitations and capabilities. Followed by the second module on exposure and composition. And the last module will touch on Landscape, Wildlife and Bird Photography.

" Take A Walk On The Wild Side" by Alan Ng

Most people have the notion that the rainforest is a dark, forbidding place.... with dangers lurking at every turn and bend. For some 30 years, I have done some hard trekking and camping in the wilderness; each time the experience was memorable and delightful.

Hiking cum photography - I cannot think of a better indulgence. For the folks who do not venture deep into the forest, you can experience it vicariously in this slideshow. It would be of interest, particularly to the younger generation, to note that actual analogue images will be projected, not the usual digital ones. For the oldtimers, the rhythmic "click-clack" sound of a slide projector could induce nostalgia.









Date: 25 March 2018 (Sunday)

Meeting Time: 7.00 am

Jeram Toi Waterfalls

Limited to 20 members; RM20 contribution to MNS Photo Group fund

Outing leader: KK-Tan Kwong Kiat

The Jeram Toi waterfalls are located about halfway between Seremban and Kuala Kelawang. The setting of the waterfalls is very romantic. The huge forest trees make this a cool place, even on a hot day. Altogether there are four major falls.

Waterfalls do present themselves as a wonderful and challenging subject matter to photographers. Firstly they're beautiful places, secondly they are often in tricky lighting situation and thirdly they're a dynamic subject as they're moving.

Are you up for the challenge? Pls whatsapp the info below to my mobile 017 330 6700. Thanks.

MNS SELANGOR PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP

Date : 29 May to 2 June 2018. (5Days / 4 Nights).

Kinabatangan, Sabah Photography trip

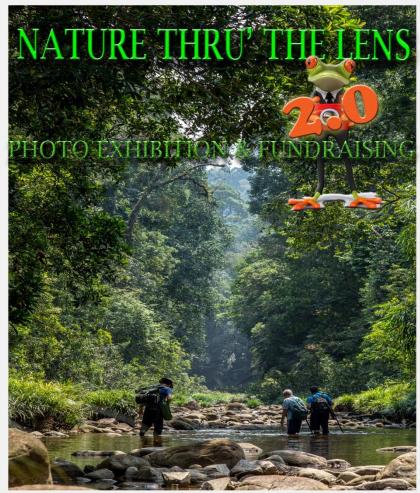
- •Trip Cost is RM1400.00 per pax (double sharing).
- * Trip cost includes accommodation, meals, guides, entrance fees and land transport.
- * Cost does not include air transportation, gratuities and personal expenditure.
- * A deposit of RM500 (non-refundable) is required to confirm your booking.

Call Salmah (+60126065919) to register your interest and receive a full itinerary and details of payments etc.

Join the MNS Selangor Branch Photo SIG as they visit Sabah in May 2018 to photograph wildlife in Sandakan and the Kinabatangan River. Orang Utans, Pigmy Elephants, Insects, and Reptiles, Proboscis Monkeys and lots more will be on our target list. Places are limited so reserve your place early







Brought to you by

MNS Selangor Branch Photo Group





Date: JULY, 2018 VENUE : WHITEBOX @ PUBLIKA

Fraser's Hill Biodiversity Day 2018

Date: 14th and 15th April 2018

Venue: Tourism Complex, Fraser's Hill, Pahang

Fraser's Hill Biodiversity Talk with Workshop
 Theme: "Towards a Sustainable Fraser's Hill"

Presented by: Benjamin Ong (Ecologist University of Malaya),
Balu Perumal (Conservationist MY Forest Watch) and
Jenn Chong (Ecology-sound Development Researcher)

- Fraser's Hill Bird Talk by Sanadure @ Durai Kartar Singh
- Fraser's Hill Herps Awareness Talk by Steven Wong (MNS-Selangor)
- Fraser's Hill Primates Talk by Bam (GPSM), Dr. Susan and Dr. Nadine (USM)
- Children's Biodiversity Talk by Adam Hogg (Young Nature Ambassador)
- Fraser's Hill Treasure Hunt (Family Game) *Registration and fee required
- Children's Coloring Contest (Child activity)*Registration and fee required
- Bishop Trail Birdwatching (Adult activity) *Registration and fee required
- Fraser's Hill Moth Demo (Family activity)
- FREE National Geographic Documentary Movie "Before The Flood"
- FREE Wellness Check-Up by Kementerian Kesihatan Raub For more infomation please contact: Event coordinator Jenn Chong (tel 0173062566)
 Email: fraserhill.my@gmail.com













MY Garden Birdwatch 2018 Survey

Date: 2nd or 3rd of June 2018

Location: Everywhere in

Malaysia

The annual bird survey returns for its 9th year with the theme 'Habitats matter to you and me!'

The survey monitors birds found around you - gardens, parks, housing estates, cities and kampung - and over the time, we will detect any changes in their number and population distribution. In order to ensure only the high quality data is collected, please adhere to the survey's protocols.

Please check our website, www.mygardenbirdwatch.com for further information about this project.

MY Garden Birdwatch is a nonprofit project run by the Bird Conservation Council of the <u>Malaysian Nature Society</u>, sustained by volunteers of various backgrounds who have a soft spot for birds.



Frolicking in Ulu Muda



A 3 Days/2 Nights trip to Ulu Muda beckons! Nature Guides Selangor Branch is organizing a trip to visit this wonderful place in hopes that you will be able to spread the word with photo evidence on how beautiful and important nature is while experiencing a little bit of life in the remote areas of Malaysia. The suggested itinerary is listed below. If we are lucky, we might come across elephants!

Trip Date: 22-24 June 2018

Limited to 15 pax.

13 years and above as it is an insurance requirement due to the remoteness of Earth Lodge.

Per Pax: RM600

Trip to be only for MNS Members. Non-members to top up RM70.

Dormitory accommodation with attached bathroom. Camp bed, sleeping bag and air pillow provided at Earth Lodge.

Excludes Transport to, lunch and parking at Muda Lake Jetty

Inclusive of boat transfers, accommodation, all meals, activities, guide and entry permits

Need 50 % deposit by 31st March 2018, remaining payment by 30th April 2018. Payment made are not refundable but transferable to another participant for this trip only.

Transport is by carpooling which costs are to be shared between drivers and passengers.

Meet up at N 6° 7.263', E 100° 51.619' at Muda Lake Jetty. Earth Lodge Location: N 6° 6.920', E 100° 57.810'

Below is the suggested itinerary:

Day One

Meet Lake Muda Jetty (at noon)

Lunch at the Jetty

Boat ride to Earth Lodge at Kuala Labua (approx. 1 1/2hrs)

Briefing & Introduction

Tea

Settle in

Wildlife boat cruise with visit to saltlick (Sira Bongor or Sira Keladi)

Free and easy

Dinner and lights out

Day Two

Breakfast

Trek to Bukit Labu (2 hours hike)

Visit caves at Bukit Labu

Lunch by the river

Trek back to camp

Tea

Wildlife boat cruise plus visit to saltlick (Hot Springs)

Free and easy

Dinner

Day Three

Breakfast

Free and easy

Pack

Leave Earth Lodge by Boat (11am)

Back at Lake Muda Jettv

End of trip

Frolicking in Ulu Muda

*This is a suggested program and is subject to change without prior notice.

Documents required* (to be emailed to Angeline)

- 1. Scanned or digital photo of IC (front only) for Malaysians or main information page of passport if non-Malaysian.
- 2. Digital colour passport size photo (if DIY, must be direct frontal shot of upper torso & head with plain colour background).
- * Please be aware that this is a requirement of the State Forestry Department.

Earth Lodge is also a research centre so there shall not be any human composed concerto except using earphones, karaoke sessions or fishing activities.

For more information on Earth Lodge itself, please visit: https://www.earthlodgemalaysia.com/

Please make payment to:

Malaysian Nature Society Selangor Branch

Maybank acc: 014150307352

Reference: NG10

If interested, please check with Angeline if there are still places available and make payment before registering yourself here: https://goo.gl/forms/vIIUCG7rSKX9MluG3 and remember to email Angeline the documents required!

Availability status will be updated in Selangor Branch's Event Page. More information will later be shared to registered participants.

For more information about this trip, please contact Mary at marychan55@live.com or Angeline at angeline.siok@gmail.com



ADVENTURE CONSULTANT

MOUNTAIN GOAL ADVENTURE CONSULTANT (742912-V)

Website: http://www.mymountaingoal.com

Everest Base Camp via Gokyo lake trek from 29/04/2018 to 14/05/2018 (16D15N) and 26/09/2018 to 11/10/2018 (16D15N).

E-mail: goalus@mymountaingoal.com

Mount Siguniang Shan (Four Maiden's Mountain) Via Da Fan (5030m) from 14/09/18 to 24/09/18





Experience the culture of the Sherpas in route to Khumbu village.

Enjoy a climb to the scintillating Kalapattar 5,545m. /18190ft, one of the most spectacular vantage points in the Everest region . Explore enchanting views of Everest, Pumori, Ama Dablam, Nuptse, Lhotse, Makalu and many other towering peaks.

Two free training trips will be provided for the Everest Base Camp trip.
Further info please sign in:

www.mymountaingoal.com/everestkalapattar.htm

Mt. Siguniang shan consists of four adjacent mountain peaks. It got its unusual name from a local Tibetan legend that says the four peaks are the embodiments of four pretty girls. At 6,250 meters (about 20,500 feet), the highest peak, known as "the little girl" is also called the 'Queen Peak' of Mt. Shu Shan in the Hengduan range.

Two free training trips will be provided.
Further info please sign in:
http://www.mymountaingoal.com/backpackn-sichuan11.htm

Contact: Thong at H/P :+6016-6375622 WhatsApp, WeChat, and Line. Off: 0340248896

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PENCINTA ALAM is a monthly newsletter made possible by dedicated volunteers and contributors from the Malaysian Nature Society. Accuracy is the contributor's responsibility. The Editor reserves the right to edit for length and content.



Submissions: Articles including the author and photographers' names (max. 800 words), advertisements, digital images (100 dpi & no larger than 640 x 480 pixels & separately from the article), etc. must reach the Editor by the 13th of each month (unless noted otherwise) via the following e-mail address: tapir2005@gmail.com.

Advertising rates:

Classifieds : RM5 per column inch

Quarter page ad: RM30 Half page ad: RM60

Payments:

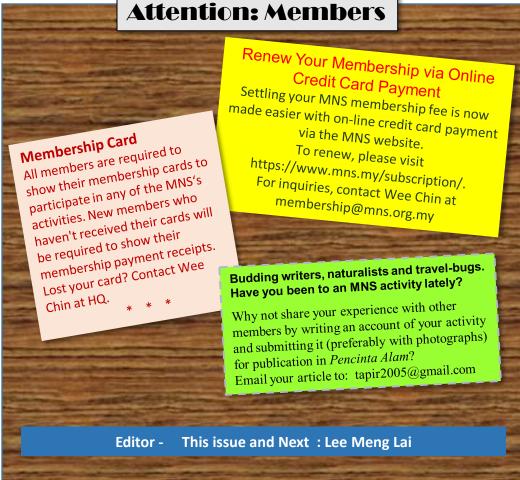
- -All payments must be made to 'Malaysian Nature Society Selangor Branch'.
- -Please bank in cash or cheque to Maybank MBB account no 014150307352.
- -After banking in, please scan the slip and e-mail it with your advertisement to tapir2005@gmail.com and berniechin118@yahoo.com.

Discount rate for ads paid in advance:

3 adverts paid in advance - 5% off published rate; 6 adverts paid in advance - 10% off published rate; 9 adverts paid in advance - 15% off published rate; 12 adverts paid in advance - 20% off published rate.

Naturalist

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Computer Recycling Collection Centre

The MNS Penang, Nature Information Centre (NIC) is a designated recycling collection centre for old computers and computer parts by the Penang City Council.

Please send your unwanted computers and parts to the NIC to be sent for recycling by DOE approved recycling establishment.

Contact Kanda at 013-4537992 for more information or check out Penang Branch web pages.

