

# Bird Watching



Welcome to the world of bird watching. It's very simple, cheap and easy to start. All you really need to begin birding are three things:

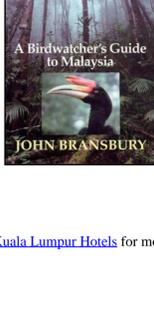
- a pair of binoculars and/or camera with telephoto lens
- a field guide (to help you identify the species you come across)
- a field notebook (to write down your observations)

In Malaysia, there are over 600 species of birds (many endemic to Malaysia) in the tropic's most pristine forests. Some of the better-known bird watching sites attract Malaysians and foreign visitors who all talk about the rich birdlife. In a three-week trip, birders can expect to capture 350 species of birds

The field guide for West Malaysia is :-

A Field Guide to the Birds of West Malaysia and Singapore (Paperback)  
by Allen Jeyarajasingam (Author), Alan Pearson (Author)

A Birdwatcher's Guide to Malaysia (Paperback)  
by John Bransbury (Author)



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## Bird Watching Havens

### Bukit Larut, Perak

Previously known as Maxwell Hill, it is the oldest hill station in Malaysia. Formerly a tea estate, this cool and peaceful place, 1019m in altitude, is a haven for bird watching. The place also provides fine views over Taiping and the Lake Gardens below. Take a 4 wheel drive up and walk down the road through the jungle is a long but pleasant activity. 4 wheel drive travels are hourly and no private cars are allowed.

#### Getting There

**By car** :- get to Taiping from the North-South Expressway, exit at Taiping interchange. It is 291km north of KL. Follow the signs to Taiping after the toll.

**By Bus** :- from KL, take the Transnational Coach from the Hentian Duta Bus Terminal. The express bus station is located in Kemunting, 7km north of Taiping. It connects to major towns outside Taiping. The local Taiping bus station is located in centre of Taiping, near the central market. It covers surrounding villages and Kuala Kangsar.

**By Train** :- the train station is 1km west of Taiping town. It is on the Singapore-Butterworth line.

[Your Comments](#)

### Cameron Highlands, Pahang

Cameron Highlands is perched on the mountain top surrounded by dense jungles. This invites birds to fly in from the jungles to the open. Walking the numerous jungle trails, you will also be able to spot the many varieties of birds.

#### Getting There

The gateway to Cameron Highlands is Tapah, which is easily reached by bus, taxi or train from Kuala Lumpur. From Tapah, you can take a bus or taxi to Tanah Rata, Cameron Highlands' main town. There are daily buses from Tapah to Tanah Rata, between 8am and 6pm. It takes 2 hours to reach the top and the 653 bends can be nauseating for some.

[Your Comments](#)

### Fraser's Hill, Pahang

This place is one of Malaysia's top destinations for bird watching. There are some 265 species of birds recorded here. Bukit Fraser or Fraser's Hill, is named after Louis James Fraser, an ore-trader and mule-train operator who built himself a shack and lived here at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He somehow disappeared and was never found in this hill station. In 1910 Bishop Ferguson-Davie of Singapore came looking for Fraser and recognised the area's potential as a hill station. Fraser's Hill has seen some but little development when compared to the hill station of Cameron Highlands. Set at a cool 1524m altitude, this small hill town is great for a day or two trip. The colonial buildings are indeed charming and blend well with the abundant local flora and fauna.

#### Places to stay

Puncak Inn, Tel : 609-362 2201, Price RM39-61

Rumah Selangor Seri Berkat, Price RM40-60

Rumah Rehat Gap, Price RM41 (This is located 8km south of Bukit Fraser)

Quest Resort, Tel : 609-362 2300, Price RM99-180

Jelai Highland Resort, Tel 609-3622600, Price RM80-180

Fraser's Pine Resort, Tel 609-362 2122, Price RM288

Ye Olde Smokehouse, Tel 609-362 2226, Price RM280-400

#### Getting there

**By Car** :-From Highway 1, or the north south highway, get off at Rawang and head towards Kuala Kubu Baru town. From Kuala Kubu Bharu, you need to drive to the foothill where the Rumah Rehat Gap is located. The eight-kilometre drive up the hill is a winding one way road. Cars coming up and down between 6.30am to 7pm have to take their hourly turns.

**By Bus** :-Take the bus from Puduraya bus terminal in Kuala Lumpur to Kuala Kubu Bharu. You then need to board another bus from Kuala Kubu Bharu which departs to Fraser's Hill at 8am and 2pm daily. Taxis also available from Kuala Lumpur.

[Your Comments](#)

### Kuala Gula, Perak

The **Kuala Gula Bird Sanctuary** is located north of the Mangrove forest reserve. During the migration season between August and April every year, more than 200,000 migratory birds representing some 50 species stop over here. You will also get a chance to see the highly endangered [milky stork](#) here. There is a visitor centre with detailed educational programmes and displays of photos which highlight the local flora and fauna and the importance of preserving them.

#### Getting There

From Kuala Lumpur, get onto the North South Highway, heading North. Once you reach Perak state, take the Taiping Utara exit and head towards Simpang Empat. From Taiping, you can get to Kuala Gula via Simpang Empat or Selinsing. From the North, take the Parit Buntar exit through Kuala Kurau.

[Your Comments](#)

### Taman Alam Kuala Selangor (Kuala Selangor Nature Park)

Just below and next to Bukit Malawati is the **Taman Alam Kuala Selangor**, a 240-hectare nature park on the estuary of Sungai Selangor. This Park is noted for its birdlife, with around 150 species of birds sighted. There is an estimated 100,000 wading birds, comprising some 30 species, passing through here on their annual migration. An enclosure in the park houses a number of the endangered [milky stork](#). This is a active breeding programme run in conjunction with Zoo Negara, or the National Zoo. There are numerous trails, watchtowers and several hides for better bird-watching. There are chalets in the park for those wanting to spend a night in the wilderness. Entry to the park costs RM5.

#### Places to stay

Hotel Kuala Selangor, Tel : 603-3289 2709, Price : RM40-90

Melawati Ria Hotel, Tel : 603- 3289 1268, Price : RM40

Firefly Park Resort, Tel : 603-3289 1208, Price : RM120-160

#### Getting there

From Kuala Lumpur's Puduraya bus station, the bus 141 run roughly hourly and it cost you RM4.90. Take a taxi when you arrived at Kuala Selangor to your desired destination. If driving, you may follow the LDP Highway (Lebuhraya Damansara-Puchong) heading to Sungai Buloh. From there, you can easily find the signboard of Kuala Selangor. Otherwise, if you are coming from Kuala Lumpur via North-South PLUS Highway, you still have to exit at Sungai Buloh and follow the signs to Kuala Selangor.

[Your Comments](#)

### Kuala Koh, Taman Negara, Kelantan

Some of the rarer dense Jungle birds are seen here. Experienced bird watchers have been known to spot more than 150 species within a few days. A two hour Journey from Gua Musang will bring you to Kuala Koh, the northern gateway to Taman Negara and its Kelantan headquarters. There are chalets and a restaurant at affordable prices. Experienced tour guides are available from travel companies located at Gua Musang. You can also rent a car for your trip to Kuala Koh. Park permit cost RM1 and camera license RM5. For more information, do contact the local travel agents or the Wildlife Department office in Gua Musang. Tel/fax no: (+609) 912 2940

#### Getting there

**By Car** :-From Kuala Lumpur to the inland route turns off from Karak Highway at Bentong and proceeds northwards to Raub and then to Gua Musang. An alternative route exits the Karak Highway at Temerloh and passes through Jerantut, Benta and Gua Musang. From Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia's capital, the overland route takes visitors eastward along the Karak Highway to Kuantan in Pahang, a Journey of about 3 hours. The rest of the Journey from Kuantan to Kota Bharu takes about 4 hours. The route heads northwards along the coast From Kota Bharu, to turn inland towards Gua Musang.

**By Train** :- Leaving Kuala Lumpur, train travels to Seremban - Gemas - Jerantut - Kuala Lipis - Gua Musang.

[Your Comments](#)

### Kuala Tahan, Taman Negara, Pahang

Taman Negara's forest is reputed to be the oldest in the world, at 130 million years old. This makes it older than the Amazon and Congo. The park is also a premier bird watching site with over 300 species of birds recorded. Try to set out before 8am. With ample jetties to stay and restaurants, this is an ideal location to bird watch. Entrance to the park is RM1, a camera permit is RM5. These can be obtained at the office at the Kuala Tembeling jetty or at the Wildlife Department at the park. If you plan to climb Gunung Tahan, guides cost RM120 per day, plus a RM50 fee for each night spent out on the trail.

#### Getting There

**By Road & Boat** :- Drive, take a bus, taxi or train to Jerantut, a bus or taxi from Jerantut to Kuala Tembeling and then a boat from Kuala Tembeling to park headquarters at Kuala Tahan. The staging point for visits to the park is Kuala Tembeling from which a 3 hour boat ride upriver takes you to Kuala Tahan at 9am and 3pm daily, except for Fridays when the afternoon departure is at 2:30pm. The boat fare costs RM 19 for a one way trip. Mutiara Taman Negara Resort also operates a speedboat service that take only 45 minutes to reach Kuala Tahan. The speedboat leaves Kuala Tembeling at 10:30am and 1:30pm daily. Buses to Jerantut may be found at the Jalan Tun Razak Bus Station in Kuala Lumpur. From there, hop on a local bus or taxi to Kuala Tembeling, 16km north of Jerantut. Alternatively, Jerantut bound taxis are available at the Pudu Raya Bus Terminal in Kuala Lumpur.

**By Car** :-You can also drive all the way to Kampung Kuala Tahan, just across the river from the resort and park headquarters. But there is more to experience by taking the boat trip from Kuala Tembeling.

**By Train** :- Kuala Tembeling is also accessible from Kuala Lumpur, Singapore or Kota Bharu (via Tumpat) by rail. Trains from these stations stop at Tembeling Halt, about half an hour's drive to the jetty at Kuala Tembeling. From Kuala Tembeling take the boat to Kuala Tahan. Please contact Keretapi Tanah Melayu Bhd for details on train schedules and fares. The contact number are 03-2267 1200.

[Your Comments](#)

### Tanjung Piai, Johor

Dubbed the southernmost tip of mainland Asia, Tanjung Piai is a haven for a diverse species of flora and fauna, including those unique to mangrove areas such as mangrove crabs, beady-eyed mudskippers and crab-eating macaques. Tanjung Piai is also famous for being a hot spot for birdwatchers to visit during the migratory season which falls around September and March. Located within the district of Pontian, Johor, Tanjung Piai is a place where the earth and sea, plant and animal life, live in blissful harmony. Tanjung Piai Johor National Park covers an area of over 926ha -- 526ha of which comprise of coastal mangroves. There are two entry points to Tanjung Piai - the one at Sungai Belukang and the other at Desa Sri Piai. Entry into the Tanjung Piai park requires a minimal fee of just RM3 for adults (Malaysians) and RM5 for foreign visitors, payable at Tanjung Piai's visitor's complex

#### Getting there

Tanjung Piai is located about 75km from Johor Bahru. Currently there is no direct bus service to the Tanjung Piai Johor National Park. Taxi service is available from Pontian bus station, in the town centre, to Tanjung Piai's entry point in Sungai Belukang. Be sure to book your return passage back to town in advance with your cab driver. A full taxi of four passengers should cost around RM15.

From Kuala Lumpur, take the North-South Expressway (NSE) south past Machap, then take the Simpang Rengam exit (Interchange 247) onto the highway headed for Tanjung Piai, via the Benut - Pontian - Kukup highways (Highway 96, Highway 5 and Highway 95). Once near Kukup, follow the sign boards leading you to Tanjung Piai.

[Your Comments](#)

### Tasik Chini, Pahang

Those interested in bird watching will enjoy exploring Tasik Chini. Over 200 bird species have been recorded here. The best timing is along the fringes of the lakes or smaller tributaries. There are also forested trails for birding in lowland forests. Between October and March, many migratory birds descend upon Tasik Chini. These birds have migrated south from the northern regions of Asia to escape the cold winters. It is an exciting period, as one never knows what feathered-visitor may appear on our soils.

#### Getting there

Take a taxi from Kuantan directly to Kampung Gumum. Alternatively, take a bus from Kuantan or Pekan to Felda Chini. From here, hire a private car and drive to Kampung Gumum or the lake Chini Resort.

[Your Comments](#)

### Kinabalu National Park, Sabah

Designated a Unesco World Heritage Site in 2002, Kinabalu Park is a botanical paradise. The majority of Borneo's birds, mammals, amphibians and invertebrates (many threatened and vulnerable) occur in the Park. To spot birds, there are numerous jungle trails at the Park itself at the base of Mount Kinabalu or you can also climb to Laban Rata, 3300m. At high altitudes, birds like Kinabalu friendly warbler, mountain black-eye and mountain blackbird can be seen. Getting there

From KK, around express buses(7.30am) and minivans leave for Ranau or Sandakan. Tell them that you are going to the Kinabalu Park and they will drop you at the entrance road, 100m from the park headquarters. To go back to KK, just hail one of the buses and minivans coming from Sandakan or Ranau by 5pm.

#### Places to stay

You are advised to call Kinabalu Nature Resorts office Tel : (088-243629, [www.kinabalunatureresorts.com](#)) in KK, in advance for bookings.

**Mesilau Nature Resort** is 20km from the park headquarters and the second entry point to Mount Kinabalu. There are less crowds on the jungle trails here. Arrange your trip with Kinabalu Nature Resorts 088-243629, [www.kinabalunatureresorts.com](#). There are dormitory beds(RM30) and lodges costing RM350 for accommodation. A taxi or minivan can be hired to Mesilau from Kinabalu Park headquarters.

**Poring Hot Springs**, which is part of the lower altitude Kinabalu National Park, is a good place to bird-and-watch. There is a good variety of birds around the gardens, canopy walkway and along walking trails. The 2 hour trail to Langkan Waterfall is famous among bird-watchers as a place to see the rare blue-banded pitta. Common birds are Bornean treepies, fantails, laughing thrushes, bulbuls, and sunbirds.

#### Places to Stay

You are advised to call Kinabalu Nature Resorts office Tel : (088-243629, [www.kinabalunatureresorts.com](#)) in KK, in advance for bookings. It is possible to just show up, but the Hot Springs is a popular place and a space is not guaranteed.

Kelicap Hostel(24 beds), Serindit Hostel(44 beds), Price RM12

Tempua Cabin, Price RM92

Enggang Cabin, RM115

Ranjawilih Chalet, RM288

A camp Spot is available for RM6 per tent. Tents can be hired from hot springs park office for RM3.

#### Getting There

Poring is 19kkm north of Ranau. Minivans run from Ranau to Poring and also from the park headquarters at Mt Kinabalu to Poring three times daily. Leaving Poring, minivans depart from outside the park office. On weekends there are shared-taxis parked near the office.

### Kota Kinabalu City Bird Sanctuary, Sabah

The **Kota Kinabalu City Bird Sanctuary** was opened in 2000 and covers 24 hectares of mangrove swamp in Kota Kinabalu suburb of Likas northeast of the city centre. Some 80 species of resident and migratory birds have been recorded here. Here you can view the majestic purple herons from a blind in the northwest section of the reserve. A 1.78km-long boardwalk, interspersed with resting huts, observation towers, and an outdoor classroom have been built for the convenience of visitors. You can rent a pair of binoculars for RM5 or loan books on birds from the small library. It is best visited during morning or late afternoon from September to April.

[Your Comments](#)

### Pulau Layang Layang, Sabah

This island is located 300km northwest of KK. It is a tiny man made island surrounded by an atoll 14 sq. km. in diameter and jutting 2000 metres from the Ocean depths. In 1985, the Malaysian Federal Government began reclamation works and created a 50-acre island on one part of the reef. Situated on the Bird Island within the lagoon is a bird sanctuary where migratory swallow, egret, brown foot booby, crested terns and other feathered creatures find a resting place on a predator free breeding ground after a long journey. At any one time, one will be able to see hundreds of birds of different species on this untampered island. One can come face to face with the terns in courtship and see parenting boobies feeding its chicks with food between their beaks.

There is one resort on the island, the Layang Layang Island Resort. Tel : 603-2162 2877, [www.layanglayang.com](#). Some of the KK tour operators can be contacted to arrange tours.

[Your Comments](#)

### Sungai Kinabatangan, Sabah

This is Sabah's longest river at 560km and drains over 17,000sq km of land area. A narrow corridor of rainforest line the banks of the river after logging and land clearing for plantation has taken place since the 1950's. Most bird activity happens in the wet seasons of November until March. Hornbills, pigeons, swiftlets and numerous brilliant forest birds flit about, while the waters of the river itself feed oriental darters, egrets, storms storks, herons and kingfishers. All eight of Borneo's hornbill species can be seen regularly. In 1999, 27,000 hectares in the lower Kinabatangan were declared a protected area. In 2001, the World Wide Fund for Nature(WWF) succeeded in upgrading lower Kinabatangan to bird sanctuary status. The forests here teem with wildlife, including mammals like elephant, gaur, rhinoceros, deer, bearded gibbon, mouse deer, giant squirrel, proboscis monkey, macaque, gibbon and orang utan.

Tours to Kinabatangan can be arranged by the tour operators such as Borneo Eco Tours and others.

#### Places to stay

Tour operators operate lodges near Sukau, the main village on the lower Kinabatangan. On a twin sharing basis, each lodge cost RM250-300 per night, including transportation.

Jungle Camps. Jungle Sanctuary, 019-873 4289 & Uncle Tan's Wildlife Camp 089-31917, RM150-200, 2 nights with meals and transportation.

Alternatively, stay at Sukau and hire a local guide for the tours. Tomanggong B&B, 089-230275

#### Getting there

Minivans travel from Sandakan to Sukau and it takes 2 hours.

[Your Comments](#)

### Tabin Wildlife Reserve, Sabah

Out of the 600 bird species in Malaysia, 42 families representing 220 species have been recorded here. In 1998, the Government has privatised eco-tourism programmes for Tabin and over the last few years, increasing numbers of tourists have been coming to the reserve. Other activities here are jungle trekking, wildlife viewing and photography. Natural mud volcanoes are an important natural attraction for wildlife seeking salt, and these have become a bonus for visitors to see wild animals.

Tours can be arranged with Intra Travel Service in KK. Independent travelers need to contact the Wildlife Department Office 089-884416 in Lahad Datu.

#### Getting there

Bus leaves Lahad Datu for Tomanggong in the afternoon and passes the Reserve entrance on the way. Lahad Datu has an airport with daily flights from KK.

[Your Comments](#)

### Danum Valley, Sabah

Located 83km southeast of Lahad Datu in Sabah, the 438-sq. km. Danum Valley Conservation Area is one of the last remaining pockets of primary lowland rainforest in Asia. It is a rugged terrain bordered by the Danum and Segama Rivers, and in forests cover over 90 percent of the area. The 60-million-year-old rainforest preserves many plant and animal species found only in Borneo. It is home to over 275 bird species (many endemic to Borneo). Hornbills are relatively common but you need to spend considerable amount of time here to spot birds. A vantage point is the walkway suspended 25m above the rainforest floor. Also try the access road to the Borneo Rainforest Lodge in the late afternoons. There are short trails around the Borneo Rainforest Lodge and long trails which follow Sungai Segama. There are also 110 species of mammals including Orang Utans, clouded leopard, five species of deer, giant flying squirrels, gibbons, bearded wild boars, flying frogs, Bulwar pheasants, the Asian elephant and the Sumatran rhinoceros. Entry to the area is RM30 per person. Many of the tour companies located in KK can arrange tours. At Lahad Datu, tour operators like the Danum Valley Field Centre Office and Borneo Nature Tours, run trips to the Danum Valley. They have offices which are located at Fajar Centre.

#### Places to Stay

Danum Valley Field Centre, Tel : 089-881092, Price : RM46-80

Borneo Rainforest Lodge, [www.borneorainforestlodge.com](#), Tel : 089 880207, Price : RM690-900

#### Getting there

The Danum Valley is 81km from Lahad Datu. Transport provided by Field Studies Centre leaves at 3.30pm. Lahad Datu has an airport with daily flights from KK.

[Your Comments](#)

### Bako National Park, Sarawak

Bako is Sarawak's oldest national park. Anyone can visit Bako National Park in a day as it covers 27sq km of unspoiled dipterocarp forest, scrub-like padang, swamp forest, mangroves and delicate cliff vegetation. Located 37 kilometres from Kuching, the park is rich with an abundance of flora and fauna. Bako is a good place for bird watching, particularly the hornbills. More than 150 species of birds have been recorded at Bako, including some rare varieties. Although it is one of Southeast Asia's smallest national parks it contains almost every type of vegetation found in Borneo. Jungle trekking is the best way to fully absorb the richness of the park's treasure. A system of 16 colour-coded walking trails offers full day jungle hikes to gentle strolls. There is also a good chance of seeing wildlife, like the proboscis monkey(only found in Borneo), long-tailed macaque monkeys, silvered Langurs, monitor lizards and squirrel.

#### Getting there

The park can only be reached by a 20-minute boat ride from Kampung Bako.(May not operate during monsoon season of November to February. First take a bus to Kampung Bako. Petra Jaya Bus No.6 leaves from near the market in Kuching every hour. Last bus to Kuching leaves Bako at 5pm.

[Your Comments](#)

### Gunung Mulu National Park, Sarawak

At 529 sq km, Gunung Mulu National Park is Sarawak's largest national park. Designated a Unesco World Heritage site, this park is an unspoilt wilderness offering caving, trekking and wildlife-viewing. A impressive 275 species of birds have been recorded at Mulu. Around the park headquarters you will see a few common species of birds, such as bulbuls and sunbirds. Try to spot the white-fronted falconet -- the world's smallest bird of prey. The walks to the Show Caves can be very good for spotting birds, particularly in the morning. Along the rivers you can see stork-billed kingfisher and the black-and-red broadbill. Mulu is known for many things. For one, there is the Mulu Caves, a series of caves and caverns with the largest called the Sarawak Chamber, which is large enough to park eight 747 Jumbo jets! As the sun sets, thousands of bats fly out of the caves, creating a dark and mysterious atmosphere as these nocturnal creatures cloud the sky before dispersing in their hunt for a night meal. There is also the 'Pinnacles' or stone forest towering 45m. Over the course of millions of years, heavy rain has eroded the limestone rocks, carving them into their razor-sharp form. Such a wonder nature offers to those adventurous and fit enough to hike the rough trails. Park fees of RM10 applies

#### Getting there

Miri is the jumping-off point. From Miri, visitors can take Malaysia Airlines flight (15 minutes) or take the express boat from Kuala Baram (three hours) to Marudi. From Marudi, take a commercial express boat to Kuala Apoh or Long Panai on the Tutoh River (a tributary of the Baram River). The express departs Marudi at noon daily and returns to the early morning of the Tutoh River (a tributary of the Baram River). The trip takes about three hours. Transport hassles are one reason many travellers resort to tours. Trekking on your own will seem expensive because guide fees and boat hire rates are based on groups.

[Your Comments](#)

### Similajau National Park, Sarawak

Located 45-minute drive northeast of Bintulu, this park has some nice beaches perfect for a relaxing visit. It is easy to spend some time walking in the coastal rainforest or lazing on the beach. The Park occupies a narrow coastal strip 30km long and only a few kilometres wide. It is surrounded by logged forests and is a haven for wildlife. A total of 230 bird species and 24 species of mammals were recorded her. Sungai Likau is part of the park and is inhabited by dangerous saltwater crocodiles. There has been incidents of people killed by crocodiles here and swimming is not recommended. A boat trip up the mangrove-lined Sungai Likau is a good way to see animals like the hornbills, some mammals and crocodiles. Permits can be obtained on arrival. Access to the park is by car or taxi only.

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