

Replanting fig trees to help feed the wildlife in Sabah



By [Roy Goh](#) - March 22, 2023 @ 3:18pm



The ripe figs of *Ficus benjamina*, known locally as beringin. Its leaves and fruits are eaten by a wide range of wildlife species, from orangutans to birds. - Pic courtesy of BORA

KOTA KINABALU: To mark the International Day of Forests, advocates for the cause in Sabah celebrated by planting 940 fig trees in various locations to help feed the wildlife, apart from revitalising degraded forests.

The fig (or ficus) seedlings were distributed and planted in several locations in Kinabatangan, Lahad Datu and Tawau districts in conjunction with the annual celebration, which falls on March 21

Organised by the WWF-Malaysia Sabah Landscapes Programme (SLP), in collaboration with Bringing Back Our Rare Animals (BORA), the initiative also involved local non-profit organisations and private companies. They included 1Stop Borneo Wildlife, HUTAN, APEL Malaysia, Tabin Wildlife Resort, Sabah Softwoods Berhad and Kuala Lumpur Kepong Berhad (KLK).

BORA executive director Dr John Payne said the initiative was a new approach to habitat restoration, whereby the focus was on species that provided food for rare wildlife, rather than the wood species that were typically planted to revitalise degraded land.



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"Not only are figs consumed by a wide range of wildlife, including orangutans, they also sustain wildlife during times of fruit scarcity as the majority of fig plants bear fruit all year round," he said.

BORA has planted more than 6,500 fig plants on 150ha of land. It has also set up the largest fig seed bank and living fig plant centre to sustain living examples of every fig species for future generations.

The Sabah Ficus Germplasm Centre is located at the Tabin Wildlife Reserve in Lahad Datu.

"There are more than 80 native fig species in the BORA nursery," said Payne.



Sawit Kinabalu Group's Bagahak 1 Estate Senior Manager, Osinton Magansal planting a fig tree at the Bagahak Ecological Corridor. - Pic courtesy WWF-Malaysia

"Different species bear fruits at different times throughout the year, and many can be propagated vegetatively, without having to wait for the fruiting time. They can grow fast – up to 4m tall in the first year if the soil is good and frequent weeding is done."

Also in Tabin, WWF-Malaysia, together with 14 employees of Sawit Kinabalu Group, planted 100 trees at the Bagahak Ecological Corridor in Lahad Datu recently.

The state-owned palm oil company has set aside land to establish a 4km-long wildlife corridor to reconnect the Tabin Wildlife Reserve to the isolated Silabukan Forest Reserve through forest restoration.

The wildlife corridor will help facilitate wildlife movement for their survival and climate change adaptation.

The project also aims to enhance riparian function through active restoration for erosion control and improve water quality to support sustainable production.

"We welcome this opportunity to work with Sawit Kinabalu Group and other palm oil companies in the Tabin and Tawau-Kunak landscapes to protect wildlife, produce sustainable palm oil and restore important natural habitats," said Dr Rebecca Jumin, WWF-Malaysia's head of Conservation Sabah.

"It's a step in the right direction towards stopping deforestation and protecting important forest areas."

Meanwhile, another 100 fig trees will be planted on Mount Wullersdorf in Tawau this week.