

Headline **Park to focus on education and research**
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Park to focus on education and research

Department aims to conserve Paya Indah Wetlands

PAYA Indah Wetlands (PIW) under the management of Wildlife and National Parks Department, Peninsular Malaysia focuses on wetland education and research activities as its thrust.

This is in line with the objective of Paya Indah Wetlands to enhance public awareness on wetlands, education and research and ultimately, the conservation of Paya Indah Wetlands itself. The department also protects the peat swamp in the vicinity of Paya Indah Wetlands from peatswamp forest fire.

Various educational activities are conducted especially for schools in Selangor and local universities during weekends and school holidays.

To-date, 1,705 students from 27 schools have attended the awareness programmes and the biodiversity educational programmes conducted by Paya Indah Wetlands since early this year.

Among the activities conducted are bird-watching, jungle trekking, orienteering, kayaking, interpretive trails, conservation talks and wildlife

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watching.

Habitat enrichment activities are being carried out by the department with the co-operation of agencies such as Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM), Drainage and Irrigation Department (DID), National Hydraulic Research Institute of Malaysia (NAHRIM) and several local universities to provide more habitats for wildlife in the area.

These include planting of selected tree species in the various parts of Paya Indah Wetlands to provide habitat and food for wildlife, especially birds.

The wetland habitats are also being enriched by planting food plants for the waterbirds.

The private sector also contributes to the habitat enrichment here. AEON, for example, has been planting trees in the area as part of their anniversary celebration.

There are plans to plant another 25,000 trees in the park this October.

The department is doing its best to transform the degraded areas into a healthy habitat for wildlife and will

continue to do so in the future.

The department has also introduced various wildlife species into PIW as part of its efforts to enrich the diversity and population in the area. These include waterbirds and small to medium size mammals.

Various research activities have also been undertaken in Paya Indah Wetlands.

Carried out by local universities and research institutions, they focus on hydrology, botany, wetland rehabilitation, limnology, avifauna, entomology, wetland biodiversity and ecology. Paya Indah Wetlands will continue to provide an avenue for wetlands research to local researchers.

The department has implemented several projects to upgrade existing facilities since it took over the management of PIW. These include upgrading the road leading to the wetlands, chalets, seminar hall, restaurant, public toilets, jetty, rest shelters, animal enclosures and landscaping works.

The facilities in Paya Indah

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Wetlands are also being utilised by the department, various other agencies and organisations for in-house training, meetings and workshops.

The department also supports local universities to make use of this wetlands as their outdoor classroom for topics such as wetland ecosystem and conservation, recreation and biodiversity conservation.

Students from local universities also undergo their industrial training at Paya Indah Wetlands during their semester break, and they use the lodging facility.

As for visitors, most will come during weekends and public holidays. The park is also a venue for family day celebration by organisations and agencies.

The park has also opened several lakes to the public for angling since May this year. A total of 1,899 anglers visited Paya Indah Wetlands in May and June to fish.

PIW is also a venue for equestrian activity. The equestrian trail was upgraded and maintained to provide a safe ride.

The interpretive trails in the park are also being upgraded for visitors' use.

More than 14,000 people have visited PIW between January and June despite no tourism promotion being made to highlight Paya Indah Wetlands. The ministry is in the process of outsourcing the various visitor services in the park.

Finally, the department is committed to ensuring that Paya Indah Wetlands is rehabilitated, enriched and sustainably managed for the various uses as outlined in its objectives.

Education, awareness and research remain as the important activities. Recreation opportunities are also developed for the benefit of all.

Dr AMERJIT SINGH,
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ment Ministry
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