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Wild orchid population faces three threats

By Patricia Hului

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KUCHING: Habitat destruction, high demand; the middleman wild. illegal collection and illegal trade complying to market demand, face, according to Ong Poh Teck, process. an orchid researcher from Forest Research Institute Malaysia collection of orchids as 'stealing', (FRIM).

in his talk 'Orchids of Peninsular Malaysia, Gems in the Forest' during SBC Biodiversity Day on wild even before it could be May 24.

"This is largely caused by logging and mining," he said.

in town, dams, roads are also wild died. detrimental to orchid habitats.

should be careful in managing wild orchid populations. them for fear of losing all precious flora and fauna in future, he

Orchids of Peninsular Malaysia' said orchid poaching and illegal countries besides Malaysia.

"You may still find people selling collected wild orchids in the market, with many people trading plants through social media like Facebook," said the researcher.

Ong, who has published multiple articles on orchid taxonomy and orchid pollination in national and international journals and magazines, said the problem was basically of supply and demand.

described Ong illegal highlighting an unfortunate case Of these, habitat destruction where the orchid Dendrobium posed the biggest threat, Ong said roslii was completely wiped out by illegal collectors.

"It had disappeared from the formally described."

To make matters worse, this human activities such as farming, species was not easy to cultivate so most illegally-exported plants Building new settlements that had been collected from the

said as responsible Although our country is rich individuals, we can do our part in natural resources, Malaysians to prevent further pressure on

Orchid lovers need to know how to differentiate between collected wild orchids and artificially Ong, the lead author of 'Wild propagated ones, and opt for the latter.

'Collected wild orchids are trading pose a threat to orchid usually of irregular sizes compared populations in many other to artificially propagated ones which are uniformly-sized.'

> Furthermore, collected wild whereas

Another tip he gave was to look at the roots. Roots spreading in all directions are often broken in collected wild orchids compared to those artificially propagated.

Asasolution, hesaidnurserymen Orchids known for their need to be shown how to make ornamental flowers are prone the shift to artificial propagation to illegal trade and are in instead of collecting from the

"The government - these are the threats orchids earning substantial money in the cannot solely conserve orchids. It also depends on responsible

> individuals such as ourselves to make it a success.'

> He said there are similarities in-orchid species between the Peninsula and Borneo Island. The peninsula has about 1,000 species for its size, so Sarawak could have double or triple that number although there is a lack of studies and orchid taxonomists in Sarawak.

> According to World Wildlife Fund (WWF) website, Borneo has approximately 3,000 species of orchids, more than anywhere else in the world.

> Under the Wildlife Protection Ordinance 1998, all orchids are

> listed as 'protected plants' in Sarawak.

> According to the law: "Any person who collects, cultivates, cuts, trims, removes, burns, poisons, in any way injures, sells, offers for sale, imports, exports or is in possession of any protected

plant or any recognizable part or plants usually show signs of derivative thereof, except under artificially and in accordance with the terms propagated ones look healthy if and conditions of a licence issued the nurserymen takes good care under this Ordinance, shall be guilty of an offence: Penalty, imprisonment for one year and a fine of RM10,000.'

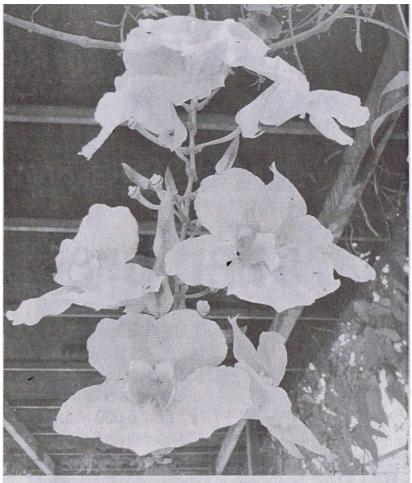
> This is largely caused by human activities such as farming, logging and mining.

> Ong Poh Teck, Forest Research Institute Malaysia orchid researcher

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Ong giving a talk during SBC Biodiversity Day on May 24.



All orchids are protected under the Wildlife Protection Ordinance 1998, which prohibits collecting or cultivating them by those without special permit.