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Natural resources are one of the pull factors that encourage eco-tourism activities in an area. The basic elements of natural resources, namely the climate, topography of a region, wildlife, and vegetation, have long been realized to be the potential supplies for eco-tourism.

Many development and management efforts have been undertaken on these natural elements by both the government and private sectors of a particular area.

Natural resources in Sarawak are one of the most important supply components for the state's tourism. In the 7th Malaysia Plan, Sarawak was considered one of the destinations targeted for intensive development of natural attractions.

One such ecological haven is the Bako National Park. It is one of the totally protected areas (TPAs) in Sarawak and the oldest national park in the state. Bako National Park is known for its extraordinary variety and contrast in its natural scenery, vegetation, and wildlife. Almost all plants and animals found in Sarawak can be found in the Bako National Park.

The Bako National Park covers 2,742 hectares of a rugged sandstone peninsula to the east of the Bako River near Kuching. It is located 37 kilometres from Kuching. Thus, Bako is easily visited in a day.

Nevertheless, you would miss much of Sarawak's oldest national park if you do not stay overnight in one of its comfortable huts. Millions of years of erosion have created a coastline of steep cliffs, rocky headlands and stretches of white, sandy bays. Wave erosion at the base of the cliffs has carved many of the rocks into fantastically shaped sea arches and sea stacks.

**HISTORY**

Bako National Park was initiated when the government identified a place to preserve the natural area. It found a place off Muara Tebas, which is a primary forest.

The people living around the area did not depend fully on the forest products for their living. Most of them are fishermen, so the forest had remained untouched. The government was thus inspired to conserve the area.

The forest is rich with vegetation and wildlife; almost all the flora and fauna in Sarawak can be found in the Muara Tebas forest. The forest was turned into a reserve park actually in 1927 and was officially constituted as the Bako National Park by the Sarawak Government in 1957.

Before the development of the Bako National Park, the government came to an agreement with the local people who agreed that the forest would be developed as Sarawak's natural resources are a boost for the state's tourism sector.
national park. Jobs were created for them to enhance their economic situation. They benefited through the creation of job opportunities and a better economic growth. Most of the local people are Muslim, and they do not hunt or take the forest produce.

The management of the conservation area is under full control of the government with some involvement of the local people. Certain policies allowed the pertinent government body to develop the area with minimum impact on the environment.

No environmental impact analyses were carried out because the park is small and the decision to develop it was taken way before the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) guidelines came into being in 1987. According to Sarawak Forest Department, there was not much development in the Bako National Park and, therefore, EIA was not necessary.

The government introduced native rights to ensure that the local people do not encroach on the park, and only those with permits are able to collect the jungle produce. This is to maintain sustainability.

The inhabitants of Kampung Bako may remove poles for their own domestic use and for constructing fish traps from a strip 200 fathoms (360m) wide along the coast between Tanjung Pandan and Tanjung Sibur. Native fishermen are permitted to come ashore in this zone, and to use poles from this strip to construct temporary structures and to dry their nets from Tanjung Pandan and Tanjung Sibur.

The privatisation of the Bako National Park boat service has contributed substantially to the economy of the Bako Village community. Rural people are also given the opportunity of managing the can-teen and selling their handicraft or farm produce either within or outside the national park. In addition, many of them are currently employed as guides, porters and general workers.

**A PLEASANT JOURNEY**

Bako is renowned as the best place in Sarawak to view wildlife. A bonus is the weird carnivorous pitcher plant that grows there. Among the other park vegetation are beach forest, loif forest, mangrove swamp, mixed dipterocarp, "kerangas" pole forest and "padang scrub".

Bako is home to the rare proboscis monkey, the silver leaf monkey and the long-tailed macaques.

Although Bako is one of Southeast Asia's smallest national parks, it contains almost every type of vegetation found in Borneo.

The bus to Kampung Bako from Kuching is often full of families and their overflowing baskets of market produce. At the jetty of this sleepy fishing village, the boat to Bako waits to ferry passengers across the open sea where they get their first glimpse of the high, sea eroded cliffs of the peninsula.

A short stroll from the Bako jetty, the park headquarters come into view. Outside the office is a large map which names each of the 17 trails, indicating their length and the time and distance from the headquarters.

Each track is colour-coded with rocks or trees. They are marked in the relevant colours along the way, making it almost impossible for anyone to get lost. The options range from a pleasant half-hour stroll to a 10.5 kilometre overnight camping expedition.

The 5.25 kilometre Lintang loop is popular because it passes through almost every type of vegetation found at Bako, including an area where the bizarre pitcher plants (Nepenthes) could be spot-
were abnormal if they had orgasms that weren’t caused by penis-vagina penetration?

What about a little more than a hundred years ago, when women were told they were normal only if they didn’t have orgasms at all? Hello! When it comes to women and sex, science is not always your friend.

And entrepreneurs are happy to exploit the problems medical science has always had with women, because the best way to market something is to make people think they are defective. Then you can introduce commodities that fix the “defect.”

Sure, we buy stuff to make us happy, but we are far more likely to blow a wad of cash on an item that will make us not sad, not hurt, not ugly, not fill-in-the-culturally-undesirable-state.

That’s why the marketplace loves a new disease, no matter what kinds of weird, screwed-up motivations are behind it.

Just remember, girls: things go better with sexual dysfunction.

(AN ECOLOGICAL HAVEN)

ren rocky terrain. Taking along ample water is essential.

The pitchers are right there beside the track. To spot them is a matter of slowing the pace and being observant. Some of the plants climb several metres high over other vegetation, allowing the elegant colourful pitchers to sit suspended between the shrubbery. Other pitchers, squat and small, are nestled among the leaves on the forest floor.

So beautiful is the colour of the pitcher that it is tempting to regard it as an exotic flower. In fact the pitchers are only specialised leaves. An extension of the rib of the leathery leaf forms a tendril, which wraps itself around supporting plants, and ultimately forms the pitcher.

These bizarre ‘containers’ attract insects with their colour and smell. Prey that land on the edge of the pitcher sometimes lose their grip on the slippery rim and fall into the watery contents, a concoction of enzymes which then digest the prey. The plant absorbs the nutrients through the wall of the pitcher, providing extra nourishment that compensates for the poor soil in which they grow.

UNIQUE FAUNA

Protected since 1957, the animals at the Bako National park have become used to human visitors and are less shy than their remote jungle cousins. This gives visitors a good chance of seeing wildlife and getting close enough to take photographs.

The proboscis monkeys, only found in Borneo, may be the stars of the wildlife show but they have a supporting cast of long-tailed macaques, usually patrolling the park headquarters, silver leaf monkeys, monitor lizards and squirrels.

Overnight visitors will see bearded pigs rooting around the chalets. Perhaps they are jealous of the facilities such as electricity, running water from a fresh mountain stream, a canteen serving snacks and cold drinks, education centre, visitors room and information centre. Bird watchers are spoiled for choice. More than 150 species have been recorded at Bako, including some rare varieties.

SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT?

Sustainable management is not something new in Sarawak. It has been long practised in the state. The conservation of natural resources is a practice of sustainable management.

The Sarawak Government undertakes conservation efforts through the establishment of totally protected areas (TPAs), which are then further developed as tourist attractions. A question can then arise whether an area is still considered sustainably managed if it supports tourism activities.

This is a challenge for the tourism industry and this is perhaps where the word ‘eco-tourism’ was derived. “Eco-tourism” has often been misinterpreted. Everything, which involves nature or is green, is called eco-tourism.

Eco-tourism is not only about natural or green attractions but also involves the educative element and conservative effort from both operators and visitors. Eco-tourism must have low impact and provide socio-economic benefits for the local people.

Eco-tourism is often seen as an economic activity rather than conservation.