



SEKAR IMEJ CONSERVATION AREA (SICA)

# NEWSLETTER

Vol 07 2024

## In Focus

The Sekar Imej Conservation Area (SICA) team wrapped up 2023 with fruitful community mapping activities and a rapid community livelihood survey in the three key villages surrounding SICA. It was inspiring and heartening to witness the detailed knowledge possessed by the local communities about every corner of their villages and surroundings. The strong bond shared between the SICA team and local communities has set us off to a good start to 2024.

As part of our effort to build capacity, one of our first activities in 2024 was a technical visit to the Danum Valley Conservation Area and Tropical Rainforest Living Collection (TRLIC) Merisuli. The inspiring visit helped the SICA rangers and local communities envision how SICA could look like in 100 years' time if it continues to be protected and managed effectively.

In this volume, we feature one of the most beautiful creatures on earth - butterflies in SICA. Butterflies are good bioindicators for environmental health and play a crucial role in pollination. We also highlight Kampung (Kg.) Matanggal Baru, a subdivision of Kg. Kinadaan/Matanggal Lama (featured in Vol. 6), capacity-building activities for SICA rangers, community-related activities such as community mapping, the Seedling Buyback Programme, and our first Wildlife Awareness and Outreach Programme in 2024 at SK Sungai-Sungai in the Sugut region.

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# Butterflies

## Scientific Expedition - Series 3

In this third series of SICA Scientific Expedition, we focus on one of the most visually appealing insects - butterflies.

Butterflies (Order Lepidoptera) are valued as bioindicators for assessing environmental health and ecosystem function due to their sensitivity to fine-scale environmental changes. In addition, they are appreciated for their aesthetic nature and pollination services.

Through the rapid assessment in Monjuk and Tobobon trails, 22 butterfly species from three families (Nymphalidae, Papilionidae and Lycaenidae) were recorded. Among these, *Trogonoptera brookiana*, commonly known as Rajah Brooke's birdwing, stood out. The impressive *T. brookiana*, with its large and striking electric green-marked wings, is a fitting Malaysian national butterfly.



Regarding conservation status, most of the butterflies are not assessed on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species except *T. helena* and *T. brookiana*, which are both categorised as 'Least Concern'. Interestingly, all recorded butterfly species are listed in the Sabah Wildlife Conservation Enactment 1997 under Schedule II, designating them as protected species with limited hunting and collection under license.

Species	Monjuk trail	Tobobon trail	Total
Family: Nymphalidae			
<i>Amathusia phidippus</i>	1	0	1
<i>Coelites euptychioides</i>	1	0	1
<i>Lexias pardalis</i>	1	2	3
<i>Neorina lowii</i>	2	1	3
<i>Zeuxidia doubledayi</i>	1	0	1
<i>Idea stolli</i>	1	0	1
<i>Vindula erota</i>	0	1	1
<i>Zeuxidia amethystus</i>	0	1	1
<i>Zeuxidia aurelius</i>	0	1	1
<i>Prothoe franckii borneensis</i>	0	1	1
<i>Lexias dirtea</i>	0	1	1
<i>Charaxes bernardus</i>	0	2	2
<i>Bassarona teuta</i>	0	2	2
<i>Ideopsis vulgaris</i>	0	1	1
<i>Mycalesis orseis</i>	0	2	2
<i>Ragadia makuta</i>	0	1	1
<i>Parthenos sylvia</i>	Flying along stream 2 near campsite (1 individual spotted)		1
Family: Papilionidae			
<i>Troides helena</i>	1	0	1
<i>Graphium evemon</i>	Flying along stream 2 near campsite (1 individual spotted)		1
<i>Trogonoptera brookiana</i>	Flying along stream 2 near campsite (1 individual spotted)		1
<i>Papilio karna</i>	Flying along Monjuk trail (1 individual spotted)		1
Family: Lycaenidae			
<i>Curetis tagalica</i>	0	1	1
Total	8	17	29

Table 1: Total species and number of butterflies identified in Parcel 5 of SICA

Sources: Slade E. and Chiew L. Y. 2022. SICA Expedition Report- Rapid Assessment of Invertebrates, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore and SEARPP.





*Zeuxidia aurelius*



*Papilio karna*



*Charaxes bernardus*



*Ragadia makuta*



*Neorina lowii*



*Bassarona teuta*



*Mycalesis orseis*



*Lexias pardalis*



*Coelites euptychioides*



*Lexias dirtea*



*Curetis tagalica*



*Prothoe franckii borneensis*



*Graphium evemon*



*Ideopsis vulgaris*



*Vindula erota*



*Trogonoptera brookiana*



*Zeuxidia amethystus*



*Parthenos sylvia*



*Amathusia phidippus*



*Zeuxidia doubledayi*



# Kampung Matanggal Baru

Local community involvement is crucial in natural resource management. In every newsletter, we feature a key village near SICA to highlight its history, the culture of its people and its socioeconomic status to foster a better understanding and a closer collaboration with stakeholders.



Langsat (*Lansium* spp.) and bambangan (*Mangifera* spp.) tree - proof of early settlement in Matanggal Baru

Kg. Matanggal Baru, initially known as Batu Sembilan, was first explored in 1984 due to logging activities. The name Batu Sembilan or 9th mile refers to the distance of the log road from "Kg. Puru Batu" which was the main base for collecting logs before rafting them to Sandakan. "Puru Batu" is one of the villages belonging to the Sungai people of the Tombonuo Tribe along the Paitan River. Without land roads, water transport was the primary mode of transportation.

In 1988, the late Dato' Jublee K K Zen, who was the Sugut Representative, recognised and named Batu Sembilan as Kg. Matanggal Baru, as most settlers (timber workers) were from Kg. Matanggal Lama (now Kg. Kinadaan). Many timber workers chose to settle permanently in Batu Sembilan (Kg. Matanggal Baru).



Mr. Sapri bin Timbai  
Headman of Kg. Matanggal Baru

Orang Tua Apung, an elder estimated to be over 80 years old, was a village leader when Kg. Matanggal Baru was recognised. The current village head is Mr. Sapri bin Timbai. The village has a population of 398 people, according to Mr. Palak Tangkoi who is the head of the Village Development and Security Committees.



## Religion

The residents of Kg. Matanggal Baru were once followers of Paganism, including the belief in "mugagu" ceremonies to cure diseases. These ancient practices involved sacrificing pigs as offerings during sacred rituals. Today, 98% of the villagers have embraced Catholicism, while a small fraction have converted to Islam through intermarriage, reflecting an openness to diverse beliefs.

## Education

Early education is managed by the local church. Primary schools SK Binsulung and SK Sungai-Sungai are 45 minutes away, with the latter offering dormitory services. Secondary education is pursued at SMK Simpangan, 42 km away, which also provides dormitory facilities. For higher education, students move to cities like Sandakan and Kota Kinabalu. Despite the far distance to government schools, the initiatives and efforts by the local church and government schools demonstrate the enthusiasm of both educators and community members in providing children with a strong educational foundation.



# Kampung Matanggal Baru



## Jobs and Daily Activities

Initially focused on collecting forest products like resin and Saga rattan and working with logging companies that operated around the Paitan Forest Reserve Class II, villagers have shifted to agriculture as logging activities declined. Shifting cultivation and subsistence farming such as planting paddy, corn, sweet potato, cassava, yam, taro and vegetables for self-subsistence were common at one point. Since 2000s, they primarily cultivate oil palm and rubber which have become the main sources of income.



Many young people migrate to cities such as Kota Kinabalu and Kuala Lumpur or abroad for better job opportunities. Some villagers work with oil palm companies or harvest bird nests. Despite changes, hunting, fishing, and collecting forest products for handicrafts and traditional medicine remain part of their lifestyle.



Traditional rice miller



**Bukit Pirawan** (female ghost or spirit) - origin of Kg. Matanggal Baru name

Interestingly, this village is also known as Kg. Pirawan, where the word "pirawan" is associated with a hill considered sacred and mystical by locals. They believe the hill is the path of spirits due to reported encounters with a mysterious beautiful woman with long hair.





# Mr. Barudin Pae

Mr. Barudin bin Pae is the newly appointed person-in-charge of Wilmar's estates in Sugut region. Born and raised in the colonial-era established estate, Borneo Abaca Limited (BAL Plantations Sdn Bhd) in Kunak, he has 20 years of extensive experience in managing various plantations across Sabah, Malaysia. He holds a Bachelor of Management with Honours from Open University Malaysia. Throughout his career, Mr. Barudin has overseen vast oil palm plantation operations, including planning, monitoring and organising. He is also actively involved in ensuring compliance with work standards, field operations, facilities, statutory standards and certifications covering harvesting, weeding, oil palm nurseries, replanting, workshops, clinics, risk management, safety and health regulations, Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil and Malaysian Sustainable Palm Oil.



**Mr. Barudin Pae**

Acting Group Manager, Sugut Region

## How do you value the importance of sustainability management in the oil palm industry?

Sustainability management in the oil palm industry is crucial as it contributes to global food security, support affordable food prices and reduce poverty. It also protects the community and social interests of employees, as well as the environment and wildlife around us.

## What is your view on the SICA project?

In my view, the SICA project was initiated to support the effective management of High Conservation Value (HCV) area for long-term biodiversity conservation in the plantation landscape. It also aims to support and empower local communities in protecting SICA and its landscape.

## What is your hope, thought & ideas for the future of the SICA project?

My hope for the SICA project is for it to become an international resource for environmental interests. I wish to see SICA become a major resource and knowledge center for conservation outside protected areas, and promote best management practices (BMPs) within an estate landscape for a better future. This can only be achieved through knowledge sharing and cooperation among all involved parties.



# SICA Community 3D Mapping

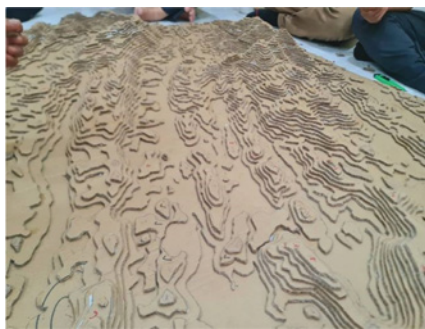
12-14 December 2023

Between 12 and 14 December 2023, the SICA team organised community mapping activities via 3D Model, with support from the Community Mapping Consultant & Conservation Services led by Mr. Nousi Guin. This is part of our efforts to enhance collaboration in the protection and monitoring of SICA between local communities and our team. It has encouraged knowledge exchange and experience sharing on the SICA landscape and helped to enhance collaboration with stakeholders in protecting SICA.



SICA stakeholders, especially the village Headman/Jawatankuasa Kemajuan dan Keselamatan Kampung (JKKK) and representatives of Kg. Mononood, Kg. Kaiboton and Kg. Kinadaan, SICA Rangers, HCV Team and Wilmar staff, have come together and created the community map of SICA.

It was a fruitful and meaningful process where many local names and untold stories of the places around the SICA landscape were revealed!



## UMS – SICA Community Livelihood Study

15-17 December 2023

From 15 to 17 December 2023, a rapid survey on the dependency of local communities on forest resources, including SICA, was conducted by Prof. Madya Dr. Fiffy Hasnidah Saikim, Director at the Institute for Tropical Biology and Conservation, Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) and her team comprising Dr. Norhuda binti Salleh and Mr. Farney Joseph Chong during their visit to the villages around SICA. The survey aims to better understand the views and perspectives of the community and assess whether our existing initiatives are aligned with community needs.





# Training for Rangers - Technical Visit to Danum Valley Conservation Area & Tropical Rainforest Living Collection Merisuli, Sabah

8-12 January 2024



The SICA team, joined by community leaders from Kg. Mononood, Kg. Kaiboton and Kg. Kinadaan participated in a five-day technical visit to learn from South East Asia Rainforest Research Partnership (SEARRP), INFRAPRO and Tropical Rainforest Living Collection (TRL) Merisuli.



The SICA team embarked on an exciting technical visit to the Danum Valley Conservation Area (DVCA), known for its rich biodiversity and home to the world's tallest tropical tree, the Yellow Meranti. Situated approximately 82km from Lahad Datu, Sabah, DVCA spans 43,800 hectares (430 square kilometers) and was designated a Class 1 Reserve Forest in 1995.

## 3-Day Technical visit to Danum Valley Conservation Area (DVCA) and INFRAPRO

The team engaged in various activities, including night walks, exploring research facilities such as herbariums and laboratories, and learning from the SEARRP team about carbon stock calculations in DVCA using circular and square methods. The SEARRP team also discussed the impact of climate change and the carbon markets under the Kyoto Protocol. The community representatives were intrigued to learn about carbon footprint and the benefits of carbon stock for the environment.



Other highlights included a briefing by Yayasan Sabah, interactions with wildlife such as Orang Utans and red monkeys as well as learning about the importance of long-term research and sustainable practices from SEARRP.



The team also visited the Dipterocarp Nursery Site at INFRAPRO and learned about forest restoration, seedling preparation for dipterocarp trees as well as practical and successful planting techniques.





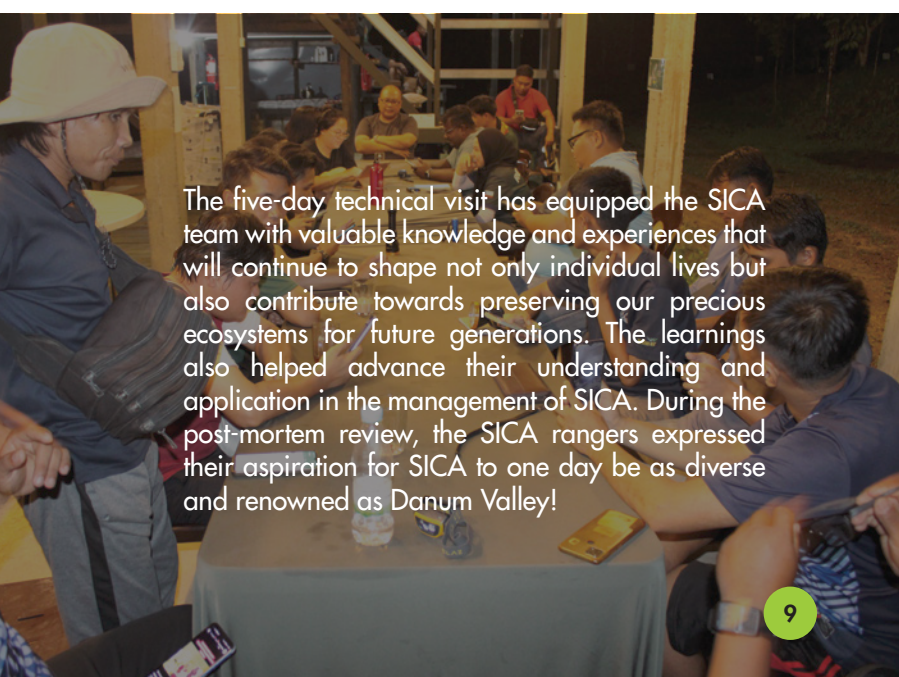
## 1- Day Technical Visit to Tropical Rainforest Living Collection (TRLC), Merisuli, Sabah



Mr. Benny Banus Tuzan, TRLC manager, explaining TRLC's objectives and functions.

Mr. Benny Banus Tuzan, the TRLC manager, welcomed the SICA team and explained TRLC's objectives and functions. Thereafter, the SICA Team witnessed successful planting techniques used to rejuvenate degraded areas including the role of pioneer species such as *Macaranga* in forest restoration. There were practical lessons on harvesting ripe fruits using catapults in pre-nursery stage to transplanting seedlings into field planting sites. The team learnt about the cluster planting method, which uses pioneer species like *Macaranga* to create a canopy layer to ensure sustainable forest growth.

TRLC Merisuli was established in 2012 and comprises 224 hectares of degraded forest. TRLC Merisuli collects tree seeds from across Sabah to promote forest regeneration. Managed by the Tropical Rainforest Conservation & Research Centre in collaboration with the Sabah Forestry Department, it operates under a 99-year memorandum of understanding.



The five-day technical visit has equipped the SICA team with valuable knowledge and experiences that will continue to shape not only individual lives but also contribute towards preserving our precious ecosystems for future generations. The learnings also helped advance their understanding and application in the management of SICA. During the post-mortem review, the SICA rangers expressed their aspiration for SICA to one day be as diverse and renowned as Danum Valley!

We would like to express our gratitude to SEARPP namely Dr. Glen Reynolds and Mr. Adrian Karolus for the training support and the ground team, led by Mr. Johnny Larenus and Mr. Alexander Karolus, for their dedication, passion and time in sharing their knowledge and experience with the SICA team. Additionally, we are grateful to the INFRAPRO and TRLC Merisuli teams for their technical input, sharing and support during our visit.



# Internal Carbon Study with Gaia

26-29 February 2024



From 26 to 29 February 2024, Gaia Consulting Company (Gaia) conducted a carbon stock counting project at SICA. Over four days, Gaia and SICA teams collected baseline carbon stock data using carbon and floristic survey methods from five plots across SICA and four plots from the Sapi Sugut estate. This is one of the approaches to quantify carbon stock and raise awareness of the role of forests in climate change mitigation. The same assessment also was conducted in Bukit Durang Conservation Area, Sarawak, from 20 to 24 February 2024.





# Wildlife Awareness Outreach Programme

17 April 2024

On 17 April 2024, in conjunction with Earth Day, SICA teamed up with Sekar Imej Estate and Hibumas 2/ Jebawang Estate to organise the Wildlife Awareness Outreach Programme (WAOP) at SK Sungai-Sungai in the Sugut region of Sabah. The event involved a total of 424 participants, including 378 students and 36 teachers and staff from SK Sungai-Sungai taking part in various activities aimed at raising awareness of wildlife conservation.



SK Sungai-Sungai holds great importance as it is one of the key primary schools in the Beluran district. It is ideal for the WAOP due to the Sugut region's substantial HCV areas within its plantation landscape. Many students are children of nearby plantation workers and staff, including those from Wilmar estates.



The programme provided students with opportunities to learn about nature in creative ways and contribute to the betterment of their environment. Key activities included an awareness talk and introduction to SICA, colouring and nature art with the theme of "Love Our Environment", tree planting and trash collection within the school compound. These activities aimed to impart knowledge about wildlife conservation, foster a sense of ownership and responsibility towards protecting forests and the environment surrounding them.

The collaboration between SICA, Sekar Imej Estate, Hibumas 2/ Jebawang Estate and SK Sungai-Sungai highlights the importance of community participation in preserving natural resources. Through such programmes, we can create a ripple effect beyond the programme and inspire individuals to make conscious choices that positively impact our planet.



*"The secret of change is to focus all of your energy not on fighting the old, but on building the new."*

~ Dan Millman



# SICA Nursery & Community Livelihood-Seedling Buyback Programme

SICA initiated the Seedling Buyback Programme to generate an alternative income for villagers by encouraging them to propagate tree seedlings of forest species. The project also aims to raise awareness among villagers of the importance of taking care of forests and to promote forest rehabilitation.



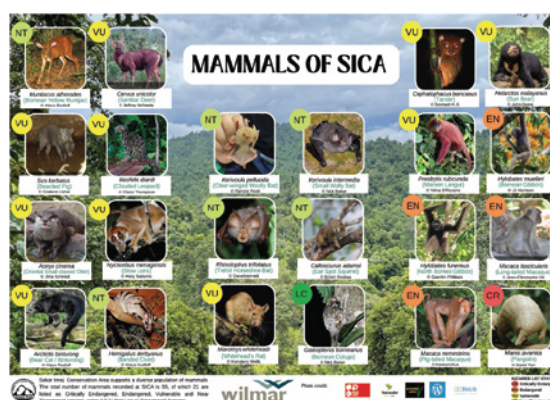
Some villagers have been planting trees for a long time. Villagers like Mr. Mukreng and Mr. Jamulan are participating in the programme by supplying Merbau, Durian and Kapur seedlings. We have communicated the programme to the village head and all interested village communities. All tree seedlings purchased from the villagers will be kept in the SICA nursery for upcoming forest restoration efforts.



Currently, the SICA nursery houses 4,657 seedlings, consisting of hardwood and softwood species propagated by rangers. We hope to secure more seedlings from the community while educating the local community on forest tree planting techniques and ensuring healthy seedling preparation through the Seedling Buyback Programme.



## SICA Publication – Birds and Mammals of SICA



With the support from interns from Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS), the team created two educational posters on birds and mammals of SICA. These posters will be shared with local communities and schools to raise awareness and promote conservation education.





**Juanan Jamulan**

In every newsletter, we invite a member of the SICA team to share his experience and aspirations.

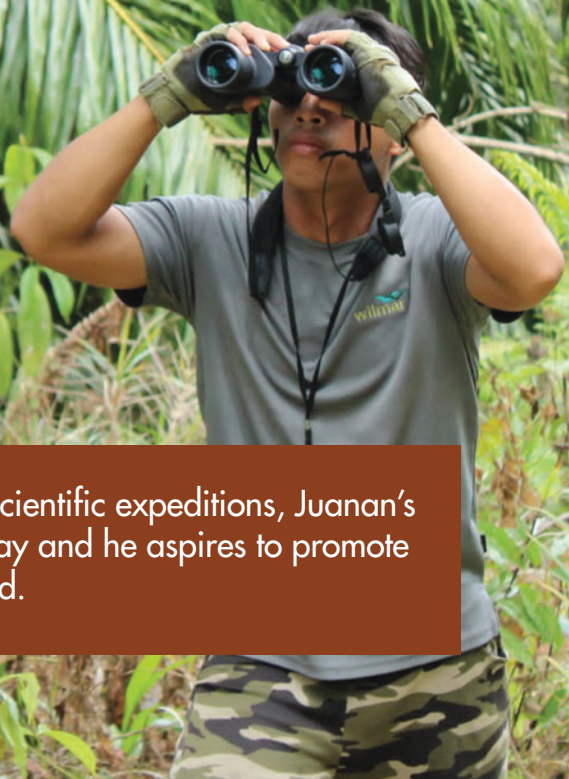
## Forest Stewards Who am I?

Juanan Jamulan, a 28-year-old from Kampung Kaiboton and the fifth of seven siblings, is from the Tombonuo tribe. He holds a Diploma in Applied Science from UiTM Sepanggar, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. His hobbies include playing football, jogging, singing and learning foreign languages. Juanan's dedication to his village and its surrounding environment marks him as a potential leader.

Juanan used to work as a student placement counsellor at Lincoln University College and as a bird nest cleaning staff at the Borneo Yin Who Factory. The Covid-19 pandemic brought him back to his hometown to work on his family's oil palm land. On 3 August 2022, he began working as a ranger for Wilmar which allowed him to further his interest in forests and their relationship with humans.



His fellow rangers often call him "Pastor" due to his volunteer work and role as an instructor for the youth at the United Pentecostal Church. They also nickname him "Doctor" because of his growing interest in flora and fauna, especially nocturnal animals, since joining the SICA scientific expedition in 2022. He invests his time and money in equipment for night-spotting activities, following tips that he learnt from his mentor, Dr. Prisilla.



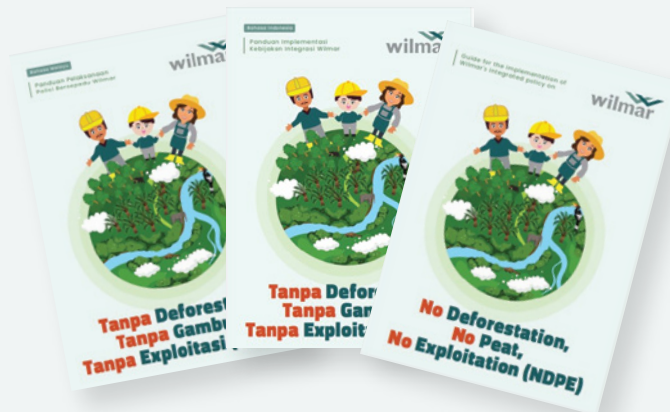
Through his ranger duties and exposure to scientific expeditions, Juanan's interest in nature continues to grow every day and he aspires to promote SICA to the world.



Apart from the SICCA project, the conservation team is actively promoting best conservation practices and supporting various sustainability initiatives in Wilmar's operations.

## NDPE Booklet for Smallholders

No Deforestation, No Peat, No Exploitation (NDPE) commitments are widely adopted by the palm industry to support sustainable practices. Nevertheless, small-scale land clearings outside of our concessions still happen occasionally in various regions. To increase the awareness of NDPE requirements among smallholders, we have published a simplified version of our NDPE Policy in [English](#), [Bahasa Indonesia](#) and [Bahasa Melayu](#). This effort aims to strengthen compliance with our NDPE Policy across our supply chain especially by the smallholders and local communities.



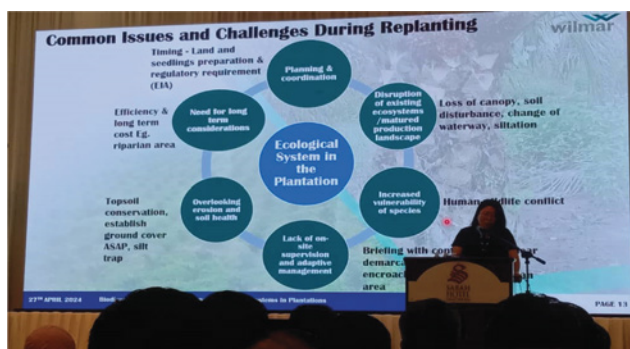
NDPE Policy in English, Bahasa Indonesia and Bahasa Melayu.

## MPOA Seminar 2024, Sandakan

24 April 2024



The MPOA Seminar 2024, titled "Oil Palm Replanting: Rediscovering Fundamentals and Advancing Best Practices" was held on 24 April 2024 at Sabah Hotel, Sandakan. The Seminar, attended by over 300 planters, focused on sharing best practices in oil palm replanting. Wilmar presented "Biodiversity Conservation: Balanced Ecological Systems in Plantations" emphasizing the basic principles of ecology, the importance of maintaining balance to support the industry, and best practices in the preparation for replanting.



Additionally, Mr. Gurcharan Singh, Plantation Head of Malaysia Operations, participated as a panelist in "Navigating Sustainable Long-term Oil Palm Replanting Strategies", sharing Wilmar's approach to workers retention and replanting.



# Supplier Reporting Tool Workshop

22 April - 11 June 2024

Wilmar's third-party suppliers represent the majority of our total supply base, making it essential to build long-term partnerships to strengthen our supply chain, mitigate risks, and promote responsible and sustainable practices. The Supplier Reporting Tool (SRT) is an online self-reporting tool used by our direct supplying mills (including Wilmar's own mills) and their associated estates.



We conduct SRT workshops annually as part of our proactive engagement initiative to guide suppliers towards compliance with our NDPE Policy and meeting the requirements of producers and consumer goods manufacturers.

In April, Wilmar initiated the SRT workshop for suppliers in Malaysia to increase awareness of the NDPE Policy, the importance of the SRT and to introduce the new SRT platform. The workshop also covered sustainability topics such as traceability, women and child protection, and conservation. The conservation session introduced the basics of managing conservation areas and promoted the [BMPs Manual for Growers on Forest Conservation and Community Collaboration](#). The focus was on BMPs for conservation, especially the concepts of High Conservation Value (HCV) and High Carbon Stock (HCS), the importance of conserving riparian zones and best practices for managing these areas.

The workshop series ran from 22 April to 30 May 2024 in Ipoh, Kuala Lumpur, Miri, Sibul, Sandakan, Tawau and Johor. In addition, Wilmar conducted a virtual workshop for our own mill and plantation operations in Malaysia on 11 June 2024, focusing primarily on a refresher of the NDPE Policy and introducing the new SRT platform. Both physical and virtual workshops were attended by a total of 293 participants representing over 240 supplying mills.





# Conservation & Recreational Landscape Project



In the first half of 2024, a total of 499 trees and 713 trees were planted by the Conservation & Recreational Landscape Project (CRLP) across Sabah and Sarawak operation units, respectively. This brings the total number of planted trees to 21,167 in Sabah and 12,801 trees in Sarawak, excluding riparian and conservation area, with a combined total of 33,968 trees in both Sabah and Sarawak operations as of April 2024. The slow planting in early 2024 was primarily due to the extreme heat in Sabah since February, which is expected to last until June.



On 6 April 2024, a tree planting event took place at the IPAS Training Centre during a visit by Mr. Kuok Khoo Hong, Wilmar's Chairman and Chief Executive Officer. A total of six *Agathis borneensis* trees were planted, supporting Wilmar's conservation effort by enhancing the landscape and planting of rare, threatened or endangered tree species, such as the *Agathis* which is categorised as "Endangered" in the IUCN Red List.



**"There is no power for  
change greater than a  
community discovering  
what it cares about."**

– Margaret J.

## **SICA SUPPORTERS**



SICA is the largest conservation area in Wilmar's operations in Malaysia, spanning a total of 2,469 hectares in the interiors of the Beluran District in Sabah. Located within our plantation's concession boundary, the SICA project is an ongoing joint effort between Wilmar and our stakeholders, including the surrounding local communities, to protect and preserve the largely Lowland Mixed Dipterocarp Forest. The initiative aims to develop SICA as a Biodiversity and Carbon Research Center by 2030. The key components include biodiversity conservation, capacity building and community-based conservation approach. SICA project is partially funded by Wilmar Europe from 2022 to 2024.

### **List of Contributors**

Barudin Bin Pae | Chin Sing Yun | Juanan Jamulan | Maichal Isthyben | Marliane Babit | Miwes Masital (Ewok)  
Nur Farahin & SICA Rangers