

**MARINE FOOD FISHES  
AND FISHERIES  
OF SABAH**

Chin Phui Kong

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Natural History Publications

# MARINE FOOD FISHES AND FISHERIES OF SABAH

**Chin Phui Kong**

*Foreword by*

**Dr Mahathir Bin Mohamad**

*Photographs by*

Tomoyoshi Kajiwara



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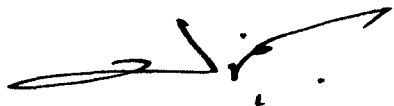
# Preface

Sabah, at the northern tip of the island of Borneo—the world's third largest—has a population of nearly two million people. With an area of 73,711 sq. km and a greatly indented coastline that extends for some 1500 km, there are indeed many good fishing ports and sites for coastal aquaculture.

Fishing and, more recently, aquaculture are two major aspects of the livelihood of Sabah's coastal inhabitants. Fish has long been the major source of protein for the people of Sabah irrespective of whether they live in coastal or inland areas. The per capita consumption of fish is estimated at 39.5 kg per year.

The marine fishing industry of Sabah involves some 8500 fishing boats of various kinds and sizes. In 1993, the total export of fishery commodities was 31,217 tonnes and total landings of marine fishes in the same year amounted to 173,800 tonnes. Major commodities in the fishery export trade include fish (live, fresh-chilled, frozen or salt-dried), crabs, lobsters and prawns (live, fresh-chilled, frozen or cooked-dried), cuttle-fish and squids (fresh-chilled or frozen), dried seaweed (mainly *Eucheuma* spp.), fish meal and cultured pearl. These fishery products earned RM 154.5 million for Sabah in 1993. Also rather notably, the yellowfin tuna has of late become a significant export item. As such, Sabah has a fair number of high-value, export-quality fishery products. The basis for this is, of course, the wonderful diversity of the fisheries in the South China, Sulu and Celebes seas which enclose Sabah to the west, north, and east sides, respectively.

The marine fishing industry in Sabah is highly significant in that it provides thousands of jobs and the invaluable protein component of the diet for people. The industry has, for centuries, depended on the unprotected natural fish resources which have shown visible signs of decline in recent years after heavy exploitation. This well-researched account tells us how useful is the wealth of the seas around Sabah, which has to be utilised wisely and without compromising the sustainability of the resource.



**Tham Nyip Shen**  
Deputy Chief Minister,  
Sabah

Kota Kinabalu  
15 April 1998