

MALIAU BASIN

SABAH'S LOST WORLD

Hans P. Hazebroek, Tengku Zainal Adlin
and Waidi Sinun

Foreword by
Datuk Musa Haji Aman
Chief Minister of Sabah

About the book

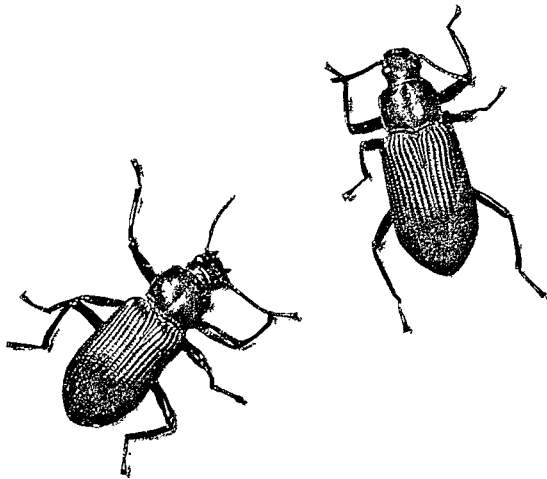
The Maliau Basin, Sabah's Lost World celebrates the many natural wonders in one of the most captivating and mysteriously beautiful protected areas in the World. The Basin has a spectacular crater-like form with a mountainous rim and includes magnificent rain forests, wild rivers, splendid waterfalls and a cool highland plateau. These rain forests inspire awe by their immense richness in plant and animal life, and a sense of history spanning millions of years. Exceptionally rare, possibly even unique, plant communities occur in Maliau's montane forests. Although scientific exploration has only recently begun, Maliau's importance in terms of protecting a tremendous range of ecosystems with innumerable species of plants and animals, many of which are rare and endangered elsewhere, has already become evident. Through spectacular photographs and an excellent accompanying text, this beautiful and informative book fosters a deeper understanding of many of nature's splendid wonders. The book is an important guide to Maliau's plant and animal life, natural communities and geology and will greatly enhance the experience of both explorers-to-be and nature lovers at large.

Front cover: The Giluk Falls forms one of the many highlights of a visit to the southern plateau around the Camel Trophy camp in the Maliau Basin

Back cover: Set in magnificent mixed dipterocarp forest, the seven-tiered Maliau Falls characterises the splendour of Sabah's Lost World. (Photos: Hans P. Hazebroek)







MALIAU BASIN

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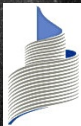




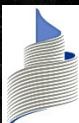




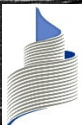




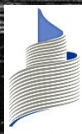








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Hans P. Hazebroek, Tengku Zainal Adlin and Waidi Sinun

Photographs by Hans P. Hazebroek

Foreword by

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Chief Minister of Sabah

Edited by

K.M. Wong

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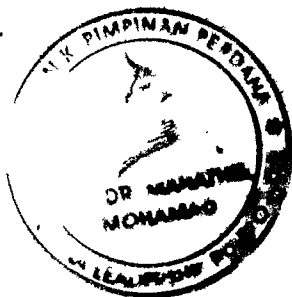
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To God Almighty, who created all this.

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by Hans P. Hazebroek, Tengku Zainal Adlin and Waidi Sinun

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Design and layout by Hans P. Hazebroek

Endpapers: Splendour of the Maliau Falls and River.

Frontispiece 1 (double page): The Maliau Falls consists of seven steps; the tallest, with a height of 28 m, at the bottom.

Frontispiece 2 (double page): The Maliau Basin rim, with one of its highest points in the foreground, stretches to the horizon. Sandstone beds are partly exposed near the top of the escarpment. Small-crowned upper montane (or mossy) forest is developed over the summit area and upper slopes.

Frontispiece 3 (double page): Late afternoon light over the Maliau River.

Frontispiece 4 (double page): The Giluk Falls marks the edge of the southern plateau.

Frontispiece 5 (double page): Porters traverse an unnamed tributary of the Maliau River.

Frontispiece 6: Before taking flight, this Rhinoceros hornbill (*Buceros rhinoceros*) has feasted on figs.

Facing Preface. An aerial perspective of the Takob-Akob Fall.

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The photographs in this book were recorded on Fujifilm.

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MUSA



KETUA MENTERI SABAH

FOREWORD

I am privileged and honoured to write the foreword for this singularly remarkable account of the Maliau Basin, possibly Sabah's most enthralling and mysterious treasure-house of nature. Maliau remained unknown to the world up to the last quarter of the twentieth century. Taking a line from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's novel about a mysterious and unknown forested world of strange plants and animals never before visited by man, Maliau fits that description almost to the letter. This undisturbed natural wonder of biodiversity and tropical ecosystems remains so even today, a unique and little-explored wilderness hemmed in by an imposing rim of forested mountains that no doubt deterred human intrusion and helped keep it in its present state of splendid pristine isolation.

The Maliau Basin is a domain of superlatives. Within its spectacular crater-like landform are to be found crystal-clear streams and rivers, splendid waterfalls, cool highland plateaus, and magnificent lowland and montane rainforests; among the oldest in the world. It is known to contain an amazing diversity of plant and animal life, much of it very rare, some yet to be scientifically studied, and much of which has vanished from the face of the earth elsewhere or stands on the verge of extinction.

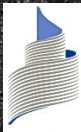
Maliau's natural history spans several million years, and scientists agree that the area is a biological gene-pool that must be preserved at all cost before it is lost to mankind forever. Its forests harbour a tremendous variety of wildlife such as the Clouded Leopard, Sumatran Rhinoceros, Pygmy Elephant, Banteng and sightings of Proboscis Monkey some 600 kilometres from their typical coastal range of mangroves. Maliau is also home to all eight species of Bornean hombills, all eight Bornean barbets, the rare Bulwer's Pheasant and Bornean Bristlehead.

Hans P. Hazebroek, Tengku Zainal Adlin and Waidi Sinun are to be highly commended for this well-researched and highly readable account of one of Sabah's priceless natural treasures and presenting it to the world's attention. It is an effort that I hope will bring us closer to the day when the Maliau Basin will become our state's second World Heritage Site.

I am of the view that *Maliau Basin: Sabah's Lost World* will serve as the standard work for years to come, and hold the hope that the Maliau Basin Conservation Area will remain a totally protected area not only for today's generation but for posterity as well.

Datuk Musa Haji Aman

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Preface

by

Y.B. Datuk Chong Kah Kiat, J.P.

Minister of Tourism, Culture and Environment, Sabah

I warmly welcome this important and very beautiful book on one of Sabah's finest wilderness areas, the Maliau Basin. This is a major contribution to the documentation of the State's protected areas, which will considerably encourage better appreciation and understanding of our flora, fauna and geology, as well as of the ecological relationships between them. The book gives an indication of the tremendous diversity of species that exists in Maliau's forests and of the significance of this highland Basin and its lowland buffer zones for biodiversity conservation.

The Maliau Basin has a great variation in elevation, soils, drainage and exposure. These wide-ranging physical conditions have provided the setting for a diverse, unbroken array of forest ecosystems. Although its lowland forests harbour a number of endemic species typical of the interior of Sabah, Maliau's principal biological assets are to be found at lower montane elevations. Here, several distinctive, very rare forest communities have been recognized, some possibly unique, with exceptional plant forms. Preliminary studies have shown that the Maliau Basin possesses a considerable number of rare species, including some that are first records for Sabah, or that are entirely new to science. These points may serve to illustrate that the Maliau Basin Conservation Area (MBCA) is of substantial importance for biodiversity conservation in Sabah.

The Basin forms a remarkable feature in the landscape of south-central Sabah. As explained in the book, this unique landform has retained its characteristics within the Basin for epochs, probably as long as several million years. All this time, Maliau's largely self-contained ecosystems have been kept in relative isolation within the steep outward-facing slopes and cliffs of the saucer-shaped Basin. The situation of natural confinement of entire rain forest ecosystems is unique in Borneo and natural confinement for such a long time may possibly have resulted in local endemics. This hypothesis warrants further study, directed to assess the biodiversity of the Basin.

Submission of a proposal by the State Government of Sabah to the United Nations to nominate Maliau as a World Heritage Site highlights the Government's dedication to safeguard the Maliau Basin Conservation Area for posterity and this book will, no doubt, complement the Government's efforts by presenting Maliau's wonders to the public. The authors, editor and publishers have made a remarkable effort to produce a captivating book that is in a class by itself and will probably remain without peer for a long time.

Chong Kah Kiat, J.P.



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Message

by

YBhg. Tan Sri Rozali Ismail

*Executive Chairman,
Puncak Niaga Holdings Berhad*

First and foremost, I would like to congratulate the Sabah State Government and the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Environment of Sabah for their commitment in preserving and projecting the Maliau Basin Conservation Area as a World Heritage site, through this great publication.

The book is undeniably the best ever written in highlighting Borneo's unique and most pristine natural treasures. I am truly impressed by the many wonders and gifts that the basin has to offer, the Maliau River, the Maliau Falls, the Maliau Gorge and the north rim escarpment are not only astonishing but, are essential in providing a sustainable bio-diversity for the people of Sabah and in preserving a natural heritage of the nation.

In our relentless pursuit towards the highest standards of excellence in corporate and operational activities, we, at Puncak Niaga believe that conserving the environment is essential in attaining a balanced eco-system. The environment management systems that discipline our conduct in terms of sustainable development, have now become an accepted part of our corporate philosophy, and are gradually becoming integrated with other quality systems. Topics such as the environment and quality are becoming strategic tools recognized by other corporate companies in Malaysia.

It is an honor to be a part of this book, as we have always believed in the conservation of the environment. Our role is merely a small portion created to complement the Government of Malaysia's call for the preservation of our natural resources. We will continue to educate and work for the betterment of our environment and we believe this publication plays a vital role in educating and promoting a more environmental conscious nation.

It gives me great pleasure and immeasurable pride in promoting and sharing with the world, this wondrous encapsulation of one of Malaysia's greatest natural wonders—our very own, Maliau Basin.

Be enchanted by its wonder—again and again, as you discover its allure ensconced in the pages of this remarkable book.

Tan Sri Rozali Ismail



Introduction

The Experience

This book invites you to a superb wilderness experience in the Maliau Basin, Borneo's mysterious Lost World. One of the most pristine natural features remaining in Borneo, it has fired the imagination of all wanting to enjoy its natural treasures. The Maliau Basin is a remarkable saucer-shaped depression enclosed by a mountainous rim in the remote heartland of Sabah (Figs. 2 & 4). This is a wilderness of exceptional natural beauty and spectacular scenery. Highlights include the Maliau Falls, the Maliau River, the Maliau Gorge and the north rim escarpment (Figs. 1 & 6). These, combined with the undisturbed flora and fauna, which include many rare, endangered and endemic species, make the Basin unique. Beyond doubt, Maliau ranks as one of the most superb wilderness areas, not only in Malaysia but the world.

Spectacular large mammals, such as the Banteng (a species of wild cattle) and Bornean pygmy elephant, do not customarily venture into the Basin, but dwell in the lowland forests surrounding

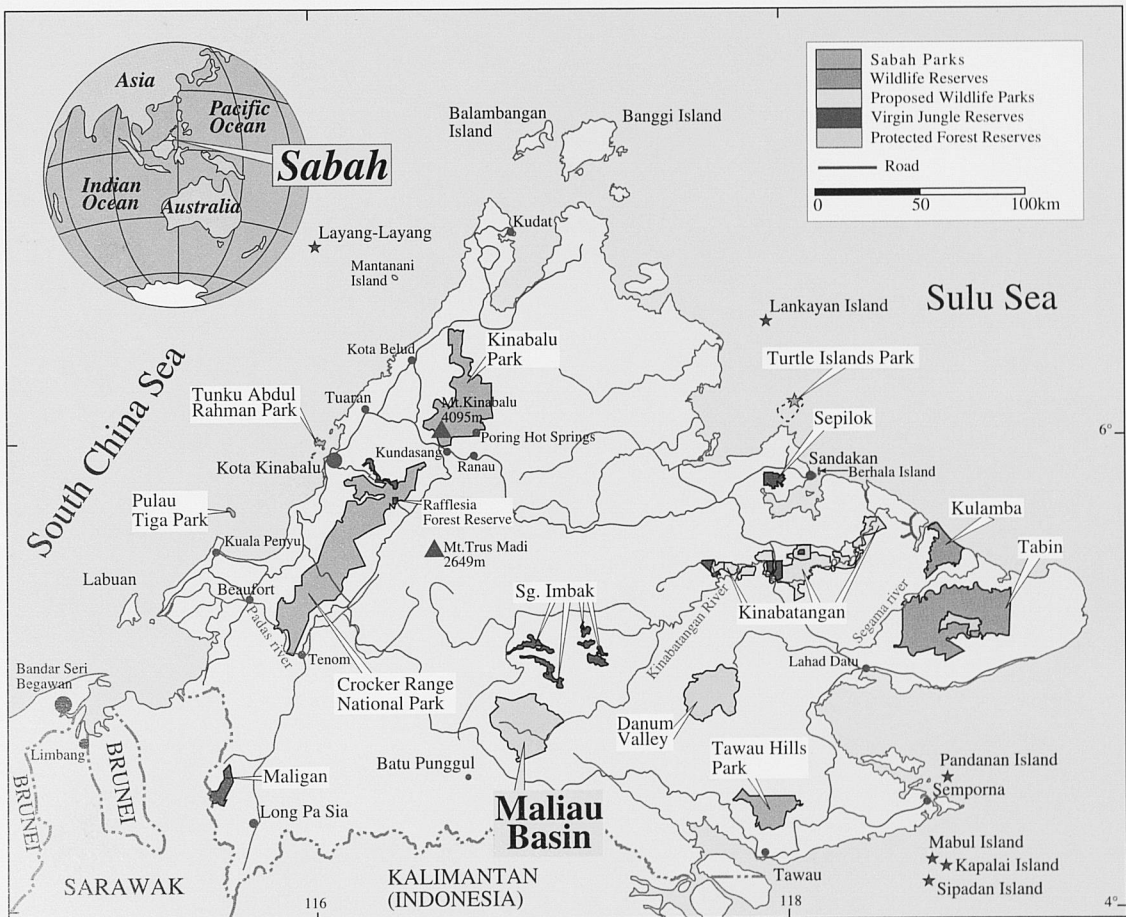


Fig. 1 (Opposite). Swollen with heavy rain and set in tall mixed dipterocarp forest, the Maliau Falls convey the sense of untouched wilderness that the Basin represents. Fig. 2 (Above). Maliau's position among Sabah's proposed and existing protected areas. Fig. 3 (Following pages). Morning mist shrouds the lower montane forest on the Maliau Basin's western rim.

This special edition is made possible through the interest and support of Puncak Niaga Holdings Berhad, a company dedicated to a culture of environmental sustainability in Malaysia.



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