

**MALAYSIA KEEN TO PROMOTE BIRDING DESTINATIONS**



Caption: Perbadanan Putrajaya led the participants for an early morning birdwatching activity at the Upper Bisa Wetland area in Precinct 16, an easily accessible birdwatching area perfect for beginners. Large colonies of purple herons, cinnamon bitterns, black crowned herons and cattle egrets were seen nesting on the small islands in the lake that lie just behind a row of houses near the Alamanda shopping mall.

**CYBERJAYA, 16 FEBRUARY 2015** – The “Malaysia, a Preferred Birding Destination” seminar concluded recently at Cyberjaya with tourism players and birding enthusiasts feeling excited about elevating the niche interest as one of the main tourism attractions in Malaysia.

The seminar, organized by Tourism Malaysia, had brought together some 100 participants comprising government officers from Ministry of Tourism and Culture, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Tourism Malaysia, Forestry Department, Department of Wildlife and National Parks, tourism promotions boards, researchers and academicians, nature and birding societies, nature guides, travel agents, and nature photographers.

YB Dato’ Sri Maznah Mazlan, who launched the seminar said, “This seminar is a great start to combine the efforts of all stakeholders and bird experts together to identify the strategies to make Malaysia a preferred birding destination. I look forward to seeing all parties working together to elevate Malaysia’s birding destinations into a world-class destination. This is an effort

that requires the combined effort of all, such as the private sector, the academicians, associations, volunteers and the community.”

Over the two days of the seminar, the mixed group got together to share experiences and best practices, impart knowledge on birding and propose specific ideas on how to develop and market the niche interest in terms of identifying marketable birding areas for tourists, documenting the inventory of birds in Malaysia, developing the human resource to support birding tourism, proposing an entity and blueprint to push the birding agenda forward, and marketing and promotional strategies.



Caption: En. Jefri Munir, Director of Tourism Malaysia Melaka (in yellow shirt), makes a point during a discussion on how to promote Malaysia’s birdwatching destinations.

## **MALAYSIA AS A BIRDWATCHING PARADISE**

Malaysia is blessed with an abundance of biodiversity. Its incredible natural assets -- virgin jungle, beautiful islands, cool highlands, and more -- come together to provide the perfect habitat and ecosystem for the animal kingdom, not least our feathered friends.

Malaysia also lies on the path of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Network Site, providing strategic and important resting sites for migratory birds flying between wintering sites in Southeast Asia and Australia and the breeding grounds in China, Japan, Korean, Mongolia and Siberia. Recently, Bako Buntal Bay in Sarawak became the first site in Malaysia to be officially recognized within the flyway network.

The Malaysian Nature Society has identified 55 Important Bird Areas in Malaysia, areas that are internationally recognized for biodiversity conservation. A total of 795 species of birds have been recorded in Malaysia with over 60 species considered as endemic birds. The diverse bird population combined with



the wonderful scenery and friendly people make any visit to Malaysia an unforgettable experience for the veteran or first timer birder.

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**MALAYSIA TOURISM PROMOTION BOARD OR TOURISM MALAYSIA** is an agency under the Ministry of Tourism & Culture, Malaysia. Tourism Malaysia focuses on the specific task of promoting Malaysia at all levels. Since its inception, Tourism Malaysia has grown by leaps and bounds and it has emerged as a major player in the international tourism scene. In 2013, Malaysia registered 25.7 million tourist arrivals and RM65.4 billion in receipts, making tourism its second largest foreign exchange earner and the sixth highest contributor to its Gross National Income (GNI).

Malaysia celebrated its fourth **VISIT MALAYSIA YEAR (VMY)** in 2014 with the theme "Celebrating 1Malaysia Truly Asia". The promotion of the country continues with the **MALAYSIA YEAR OF FESTIVALS (MyFEST)** campaign this year with the theme "Endless Celebrations" emphasising the various festivals celebrated by its multicultural society. Both campaigns are key drivers towards achieving the country's target of 36 million tourist arrivals and RM168 billion in receipts by 2020, as outlined in the Tourism NKEA (National Key Economic Area).

Through the Tourism NKEA, collaborative efforts between the Ministry of Tourism and Culture, other Government agencies and the private sector have been enhanced to help secure Malaysia's position as a leading tourist destination. The targets set under the Tourism NKEA will be achieved through the implementation of twelve Entry Point Projects (EPPs) clustered under five themes: Affordable Luxury; Nature Adventure; Family Fun; Events, Entertainment, Spa and Sports; and Business Tourism.

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