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Sabah Travel & Leisure Guide

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Allure of the nature's finer habitants

By ANNA VIVIENNE

There are many and various fascinating sights that nature has for us. The greeneries are teeming with life...if only we know how to look. There could be little flowers popping out from the ground, hidden by small ferns and moss. There could be little animals hiding from your eyes; butterflies and moths, too.

Although nature tourism, that way, is not really popular, this could be promoted actively in Sabah especially among students; especially local students.

In the undergrowth of the jungles in Sabah, especially in the secondary jungles, are moths. Whenever you push cut or push away undergrowth they will fly off in profusion. Most of them are coloured light brown with darker spots; quite boring compared to the flashy butterflies. Some do have showy wings of glittering blue and yellow. There are however many species of moths found in this part of the world.

In the Kinabalu National Park vicinity, there are several types of moth that will buffet incessantly against your light bulbs. Not being an entomologist, I don't have that scientific know-how on them, but they never cease to fascinate me. I am sure there are many people out there who share the same sentiment.

As for butterflies, they are abundant in Sabah. There may be less of them in and around Kota Kinabalu, but travel into the interior a bit, where jungle and paddy fields abounds and you will see them fluttering by. I simply love the yellow ones. They just flitter by so nonchalantly near you that you can actually feel it. I heard there are about 1000 species in Sabah.

To look at them closer, there is a butterfly farm in Poring Hot Spring Ranau; so visiting that area may be a good idea too. The canopy walk there is also recommended for people who like to look at 'life in the canopy'.

Grasshoppers are also interesting little 'animals' that are worth looking at. There are 10,000 species of grasshopper under the Acrididae family.

They are usually found hopping around in grassy fields, on leaves and among thick undergrowth. They come in various shapes and sizes, coloured grey, spotted grey, green and brownish. Some species are edible.

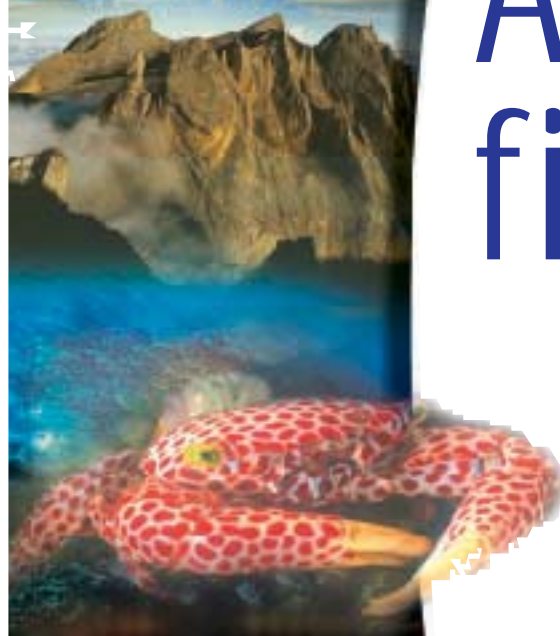
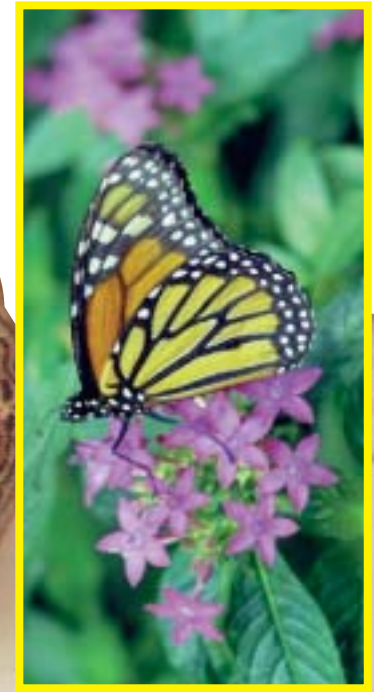
And ants. Ants are fascinating creatures. I am informed that about 116 species of ants live in the Crocker Range area. Ants from each species have its own identity. Some of ants move around very fast, as if they are lost and in a hurry to go home while others are sloggers. They just plod along to where they want to go.

Listen carefully when you are walking along a trail and you will hear bird calls that are both alien and magnificent. Sometimes there is a harsh grating cry that seems to resonate through the forest. That is the hornbill; he, of the hug horn crest and pert eyes. Then there are the warblers, the chirpers and the cheepers, as well as the callers. I have never bird-watched; what bird I have seen, are all by chance. Living in a village that is still surrounded by forests contributes to my miniscule knowledge of birds. Earlier in my life, I used to envy them for their ability to fly; nowadays I think of them as animals that should be protected. They should be allowed to survive for our next generation and their generation to come. They can also earn us some revenue as tourism product. There are about 600 species of birds in Sabah, with 39 being endemic or only found in the State

If you are in Kota Kinabalu, visit the KK Bird Sanctuary; there are several types of birds there, including the cattle egrets. More interesting birds like the Oriental Darter can be found in River Kinabatangan.. In Tabin Wildlife Sanctuary I saw a blue bird. It is really blue, like it has been splashed with blue paint. I also saw a black bird with a red crop of feathers on its head. I don't know what they are called but they sure looked pretty!

Actually if we are to talk about all the 'creatures big and small' that can be shown off to our guests, we can talk until the twelfth of never.

Be that as it may, those who show this part of nature to tourists deals in specialised tour. Not many people, especially domestic tourists, want to go on such tours. It should be promoted actively not only among foreign tourists but also among locals so that they can get're-in touch' with the 'finer' side of nature.



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