

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY (IDB 2012)

Visiting My Little Wetland

Balik Pulau, Penang, Malaysia

20th May 2012



Background:

International Day for Biological Diversity or World Biodiversity Day (IDB) is celebrated globally on 22nd May each year. This special day was first created by the Second Committee of the United Nations General Assembly on 29th December 1993 (the date of entry into force of the Convention of Biological Diversity). In December 2000, the UN General Assembly designated 22nd May as IDB, to commemorate the adoption of the text of the Convention on 22nd May 1992 by the Nairobi Final Act of the Conference for the Adoption of the Agreed Text of the Convention on Biological Diversity. The purpose of celebrating IDB is to increase understanding and awareness of biodiversity issues around the world.

Every year, there is a special theme for the celebration of IDB. The themes from 2002 to 2011 are listed as below:

- 2011 - Forest Biodiversity
- 2010 - Biodiversity, Development and Poverty Alleviation
- 2009 - Invasive Alien Species
- 2008 - Biodiversity and Agriculture
- 2007 - Biodiversity and Climate Change
- 2006 - Protect Biodiversity in Drylands
- 2005 - Biodiversity: Life Insurance for our Changing World
- 2004 - Biodiversity: Food, Water and Health for All
- 2003 - Biodiversity and poverty alleviation - challenges for sustainable development
- 2002 - Dedicated to forest biodiversity

The theme of IDB 2012 is *Marine Biodiversity*. Apparently, it provides the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and all related government agencies, NGOs, local associations and private companies a good opportunity to raise awareness on the issue and increase practical action. This year, IDB is celebrated by at least 37 countries included Malaysia. The IDB celebration by the environmental based NGO, Water Watch Penang (WWP) is one of the only two registered events in Malaysia.

References:

- 1) <http://www.cbd.int/idb/>
- 2) <http://www.cbd.int/idb/2012/celebrations/>
- 3) <http://www.cbd.int/idb/2012/celebrations/my/>

Objective:

- 1) Create environmental awareness particularly the importance of coastal biodiversity among teachers and students.
- 2) Promote conservation of coastal forests through field learning of nature and wildlife
- 3) Response to the theme of International Day for Biological Diversity – *Marine Biodiversity*
- 4) Encourage field education which is an effective learning process that receives far less attention compare to classroom lecture.

Organizer: Water Watch Penang

- Wong Yun Yun (instructor)
- Ng Hong Jing (volunteer)

Co-Organizer: 1) Eco-Peace Leadership Centre

- 2) Yuhan-Kimberly

Participant: Penang Buddhist Association Dharma Sunday School (PBA DSS)

- Ooi Chee Khoon (group leader)

Supporting organisation: 1) Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity

- 2) Empowerment Media
- 3) Mangroves for the Future (MFF)
- 4) KDU College
- 5) INTI International College Penang

Programme Schedule:

7.30 am – registration and briefing

8.00 am – departure to Kuala Sg. Pulau Betong

8.30 am – visiting mangrove wetland

- introduction of mangroves

- exploration of flora and fauna

- beach cleanup

10.30 am – visiting fishing village

11.00 am – drawing session

11.45 am – closing ceremony

12.00 pm – group photo and dismiss

Flow of activity:

- 1) On 20th May 2012, a group of 22 teachers and students from Penang Buddhist Association Dharma Sunday School (PBS DSS) was joining the field learning programme of “Nature Classroom – Forest, Water and Us”. The “Nature Classroom” is an environmental education project which organized by the local NGO, Water Watch Penang (WWP) and supported by the international organisation, UNEP Eco-Peace Leadership Center (UNEP-EPLC). The event was a kids’ learning trip to mangrove wetland in Balik Pulau, Penang, and accordingly it was theme as “Visiting My Little Wetlands”. This field trip was specially conducted for the International Day for Biological Diversity (IDB 2012), which officially celebrated on 22nd May. Gratefully, a filming team from Empowerment Media was also following the trip to help document the activities.



- 2) In the early morning, the teachers and students came to Balik Pulau and gathered at Kampung Ku Art Gallery & Home Stay. After registration, Ms. Wong Yun Yun, the project manager of “Nature Classroom” was giving a warm welcome to all participants. She was then giving a short briefing on the “Nature Classroom” programme as well as the wetland trip that was going to have for celebrating IDB 2012. The students with age of 11 and 12 years old were so excited after hearing about the mangrove adventure!



3) At 8.00am, the group arrived at Pulau Betong, which is located at the southern part of Balik Pulau. The participants were blessed with a beautiful sunny day and they could fully enjoy the nice weather and stunning greenie surroundings. With guidance, the group headed to the river mouth area of Pulau Betong. At the moment, the kids just couldn't wait to explore the mangrove forest!



4) During the guided walk along the forested shore, Ms. Wong introduced the coastal wetland ecosystem and its important functions to the people and environment. She also showed up various unique mangrove plants and other common coastal inhabitants. It was surprising that not only the curious kids, the accompanying adults were also

attracted by the fascinating wildlife. They were passionate in learning the flora and fauna but not forgetting to take lots of photos!



4) After the enjoyable wildlife observation, it was the time to do something back to the nature. It was truly upset to see tons of rubbish along the way and thus the participants were encouraged to collect the non-biodegradable rubbish for proper disposal. Both teachers and students work together to clean up the beach. They had collected plastic bags, glass bottles, polystyrene containers and many more! Finally, the collected rubbish weighed a total of 10kg. Great job, green rangers!



- 5) The participants had a fun time for their first visit to mangroves. The photo below marks the memorable moment when the young participants waved their hands before leaving to the next destination.



- 6) The participants slowly walked to the nearby fishing village and they had a short break there. It was followed by a leisure walk in the lovely village which surrounded by flourishing mangrove vegetation. They learned about the livelihood by the sea and how the local people benefited from the coastal resources. From the visit, they had realized that how important to care about our nature and environment.



- 7) The group was so lucky to eye-witnessed many different species living in the coastal wetland. These included the mammals (smooth otter), fishes (striped-nose halfbeak), crustaceans (hermit crab), plants (blooming sea hibiscus) and many more! What a great biodiversity day!



8) The participants were then brought to a coffee shop for upcoming activity. The kids were specially provided with exercise papers and colouring materials. They were asked to draw something based on their field experiences. They would have to draw their mangrove trees, their favourite wildlife, their unforgettable experiences etc.



9) Under the guidance of teachers and volunteers, the kids were able to make their own drawings with much creativity. Most of them have strong impression on the pencil-like aerial roots of mangroves and the huge size monitor lizards. Many like the beautiful sea hibiscus as well, but some were interested on the weird and thorny Bonduc a.k.a grey nickel bean plant.



10) Several students were being interviewed by the filming crews on the spot. This brave little boy was proudly showing his drawing and generously shared his mangrove adventure with the audience. All these students did it really well! Thank you!



- 12) The programme was pleasantly ended with a closing ceremony. A certificate was presented to Mr. Chan Sing Yu, the principal of PBA DSS. All teachers and students were given small souvenirs, which provided by KDU College and INTI International College Penang. Moreover, a copy of the children book “*Mangroves: Soldiers of Our Coasts*” which published by Mangroves for the Future (MFF), was donated to the library of PBA DSS. By this way, all the students of PBA DSS have the chance to borrow the book for fun learning of mangroves.



- 13) At 12.00pm, the teachers and students left happily with their awesome drawings and sweet memories. It was hoping that these successful graduates of “Nature Classroom” would spread the message of loving our wetland biodiversity to family, friends and people around them.

Acknowledgement:

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Prepared by:

Wong Yun Yun
Project Manager of “Nature Classroom – Forest, Water and Us”
Water Watch Penang, Malaysia