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Review: Wild Borneo: The Wildlife and Scenery of Sabah, Sarawak, Brunei and Kalimantan

By Nick Garbutt and J. Cede Prudente

Reviewed by Elery Hamilton-Smith
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Garbutt, Nick and Prudente, J. Cede. *Wild Borneo: The Wildlife and Scenery of Sabah, Sarawak, Brunei and Kalimantan*. MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass. 2006. 176pp. ISBN 0-262-07274-2. \$34.95.

This is a very lovely book with a great number of excellent photographs. It is easy and pleasant reading, and will hopefully help to build support for nature conservation and in particular, the Heart of Borneo project. In effect, it is a coffee table sized guidebook introducing much of the natural history of Borneo to a general audience. So, it is a great guide to the flora and fauna, and a great example of sound conservation advocacy.

But, this volume is not comparable with the other titles in the "Wild . . ." series. It is less comprehensive in both the selected areas and content on each. The text itself is relatively superficial. It fails to provide, as do the other volumes, a sound introduction for scientists, conservation managers or others who seek to make a contribution to our knowledge of Borneo. Even the very small bibliography fails to introduce the richness of the literature on Borneo.

Regrettably, it suffers from the "Fur, Feathers and Flowers" syndrome. Fauna and flora, especially the spectacular species, are well presented, but the holistic approach that would put this truly into its geological and hydrological context is almost totally absent. As an obvious example, the introduction refers to the centrality of river systems, yet there is no proper treatment of the remarkable cultural and natural values of the extremely beautiful river landscapes. Similarly, the unique geology and biodiversity of the Sangkulirang Plateau is one of several totally ignored wonders of the island.

This book can only be highly recommended to members of the public with a generalized interest in natural history. Readers of this journal probably seek more depth in their reading - if you are one of those, buy it as a gift to friends or children and grand-children. They will probably love it.

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