

A Field Guide to Tawau Hills Park

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Tawau Hills Park lies 24km NW of the town of Tawau and to an approaching visitor appears as an 'island in the midst of palm oil'. It contains the source of at least 7 rivers that rise in its mountains and has been protected from further encroachment since 1979. Until recently, it was little publicised as a 'wildlife destination' in Sabah and this well-illustrated guide aims to remedy this.

Two of the authors, Cheema and Wong, currently work there extensively and so have intimate knowledge of its flora and fauna. Their enthusiasm for Tawau Hills Park (THP) has inspired this book and the running totals of species listed in the orange stripe on the back cover come from their surveys in THP. The guide concentrates mainly on the Park's fauna, which are grouped into 4 sections: Birds, Mammals, Reptiles & Amphibians and Arthropods. Each section includes text and photographs to illustrate only a selection of species to be seen but many more could have been included. As John Payne says (P51-52) there is a good chance of encountering the Red langur and North Borneo gibbon in THP whilst 11 pages (P40-50) are devoted to the 5 wild cats of Borneo, all of which may be present in the Park. Snakes and frogs are especially well illustrated, indicating how rich the Park is in these animals. This guide will also help you to identify the remarkable range of insects and spiders, again nicely illustrated here, that are best seen (or heard) at dusk or on a night walk.

The authors are to be congratulated on their 'labour of love'. In pictures and text they have captured the spectacular nature of THP and its fauna. However, their work isn't over: the short sections on Begonias, Figs and Fungi at the end of this guide cry out for expansion: a second edition, with more details of the Park's flora and its ecology is eagerly awaited.