

## Topographical differences impacting wildlife dynamics at natural saltlicks in the Royal Belum rainforest

Bryan Andrew Lazarus<sup>1</sup>, Muhammad Muzammil Abdul Halim Shah<sup>1</sup>, Azwan Hamdan<sup>1</sup>, Ahmad Najmi Nik Hassan<sup>2</sup>, Mohd Syaiful Mohammad<sup>2</sup>, Hasliza Abu Hassim<sup>1</sup>, Mohd Hezmee Mohd Noor<sup>1</sup>, Tengku Rinalfi Putra Tengku Azizan<sup>1</sup> and Hafandi Ahmad<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Veterinary Preclinical Sciences, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University Putra Malaysia, 43400 UPM Serdang Selangor Darul Ehsan Malaysia

<sup>2</sup>Pulau Banding Research Centre, Gerik Perak, Malaysia

\*Corresponding Author's E-mail: hafandi@upm.edu.my

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### ABSTRACT

Natural saltlicks play an important role in the diet of a wild herbivore to supplement their nutritional deficiencies. Saltlicks also serve as rally points for wildlife species, as they determine the distribution and density of prey species which in turn affects predator population. The objective of this study is to determine the relationship between saltlicks of different topography (e.g., *Kuak*, *Batu* and *Tanah*) and the wildlife diversity at the Royal Belum rainforest, Malaysia. Results showed that *Kuak* is near the main river and surrounded by dense shrubbery which provides ample camouflage for solitary herbivores such as muntjacs. *Batu* is surrounded by rocky architecture and sub-canopy trees, hosting larger mammals such as elephants and tapirs whereas *Tanah* is surrounded by a wide plain area with a small stream making it a suitable environment for herd animals such as sambar deer. This could indicate that topography is a crucial factor for wildlife in frequenting saltlicks for important physiological and sociological interactions. Indeed, information on saltlick topography and animal diversity is beneficial for the study of wildlife population and conservation of the ecosystem.

**Key words:** Topography, saltlick, wildlife, ecosystem, Royal Belum rainforest