

Rain keeps big birds away from Tanjung Tuan

2009/03/16

MALACCA: The Raptor Watch attracted many bird watchers from near and far, but not the big birds of prey. However, this did not disappoint visitors to Tanjung Tuan, known worldwide as a place to watch migrating raptors.

Malaysian Nature Society's Bird Conservation Council (Raptor Study) member Khoo Swee Seng attributed the lower number of birds to the rainy weather.

"Raptors migrate during hot weather as it generates thermals, or rising columns of hot air, on which the large birds glide.

"Without the thermals, the birds have to flap their wings and this is tiring for them during the migration," he said.

Bird watching enthusiasts gathered at Tanjung Tuan since Saturday to catch a glimpse of the powerful birds of prey making a stop on their annual northward migration to China, Mongolia and Siberia.

The birds fly down the Asian mainland and cross over to Indonesia from Tanjung Tuan on their way south during the winter migration, and in the opposite direction in spring.

The annual event attracts more than 2,000 visitors from as far as Finland, Japan, Singapore, the Philippines and Thailand.

Since Feb 14, when the counting of raptors started, 17,753 birds -- mostly the Oriental honey buzzard -- have been spotted.

"In the past, we did the counting for 16 days but this time we will count for 65 days, till April 14.

"This is because we not only want to get more information on the Oriental honey buzzard but also the migration patterns of the other species like the crested honey buzzard, Chinese goshawk, grey-faced buzzard, Japanese sparrowhawk and the black baza."

The IBA programme is aimed at identifying, monitoring and protecting a global network of areas for the conservation of the world's birds and other biodiversity.