

PART 12

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS AND EDUCATION

SUMMARY

- An education programme was established under the Semporna Islands Project and should be built on and maintained.
- The environmental awareness and education programme will underpin the implementation of the management plan. The objective will be to inform and entertain, and to ensure that people are familiar with the park regulations.
- The education team would include full-time staff employed by Sabah Parks, but should also draw on the expertise of others involved in education and interpretation.
- The team should put together an Environmental Awareness plan of action as soon as possible, with short and long-term targets and a budget estimate.
- A brief review of target audiences, possible materials, topics and events is presented.



Figure 93. The Science Block at the school on Selakan where the teachers and pupils decided to make a mural in support of the Semporna Islands Project.



Figure 94. Community involvement during the making of one of the SIP videos.

12.1. INTRODUCTION

12.1.1. Educational Activities under the Semporna Islands Project

An education and awareness programme was launched at the beginning of the Semporna Islands Project and played a large part in changing attitudes towards the proposed park. It was aimed at all sectors, including local communities, general public, schools and decision-makers at local and state-level.

The aim of the programme was to provide information about the project and its aims, raise the profile of the Semporna Islands and reefs, explain the need for conservation action and present management options for discussion.



Figure 95. A planning exercise during one of the SIP workshops.



Figure 96. Semporna schoolchildren taking part in the painting competition



Figure 97. Poster and badges produced for the Semporna Islands Project.



Figure 98. The environmental education programme should benefit children living on the islands.

Semporna Islands Project Educational and information materials

produced in Bahasa Malaysia and English

- Project brief
- Project leaflet – concise and longer version
- Posters – set of two for widespread distribution (Figure 97)
- Badge with SIP logo, mainly for local schools (Figure 97)
- T-shirts with environmental messages
- Display at Sabah Parks, Semporna
- Video (5 min): *Semporna Islands Project*
- Video (24 min): *Coral Challenge*
- Video (21 min): *Call of the Islands*

Workshops

- Teacher Workshop I
- Teacher Workshop II
- Local Community Workshop
- Local Government Workshop
- SIP Consultative Workshop
- Tour Operator Workshop

Other activities

- Talks at local schools
- Painting competition for local schools
- Mural painting at Pulau Selakan school
- Quiz competition for local secondary schools
- Radio interviews
- Articles in local, national & regional newspapers



Figure 99. Local Community Workshop for the Semporna Islands Project, 1999. It will be important to continue to hold events such as this as the park develops

12.1.2. Sabah Parks Educational Programme

Sabah Parks already has an obligation and commitment to promote education and interpretation. One of their objectives is to 'promulgate information pertaining to Parks and the natural environment to the park visitors and the general public in order to educate them of the importance of the natural environment'. A research unit was set up in 1994, of which 'Education and Interpretation' is a part. The function of this unit is to:

- a) Disseminate information regarding the general ecology, the flora and fauna especially those related to native, endemic and endangered species.
- b) Provide environmental education to the general public, especially to students.
- c) Distribute information regarding existing facilities and recreational opportunities on the natural environment.
- d) Present the rationale and purpose of the establishment of the Parks to the general public.
- e) Present and explain the Park Policy and Enactment/Regulations, and the conservation approach undertaken by Sabah Parks to the general public.
- f) Disseminate the results of research undertaken in Parks to the general public in simple language.
- g) Manage the research library for use by the Research and Education Division, as well as visiting researchers.

12.2. OBJECTIVES AND PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

12.2.1 Aims and objectives

The overall aim of the environmental awareness and education programme will be to provide people with information about all aspects of the park and its management.

The objectives will be to help promote a better understanding of natural features, ecology, resources, human interactions, culture and history of the area. Visitors will have a more rewarding visit to the park if they are given access to interesting information.

Another important objective of the education programme is to ensure that all those who use or visit the park are aware of the regulations and the reasons why they are necessary. People are more likely to comply with regulations if an effort has been made to explain these beforehand and the reason(s) why they have been introduced. For example, it has been shown that divers are much less likely to touch the reef or try and take souvenirs if they are given an 'environmental briefing' before they enter the water.

12.2.2. The education team

It will be important to have a dedicated team of excellent communicators who can take the environmental awareness and education programme forward. This would include full-time staff employed by Sabah Parks, but should also draw on the expertise of others involved in education and interpretation. It would be a good idea to try and involve trusted and respected local people as educators, especially for controversial topics (such as fishing restrictions), because they are more likely to be listened to.

Educational work should be considered a high priority, and staff appointed as soon as possible. Work can then begin on putting together an Environmental Awareness plan of action, with short and long-term targets and a budget estimate. Whatever the experience of the education team appointed, there will need to be close collaboration with park management staff to ensure that the educational messages reflect the needs and priorities of the management team.

12.2.3. Target audience

An important part of planning the educational activities for the Park will be to decide on the target audiences and the types of messages that need to be transmitted.

Groups to consider are:

- General public: local, regional, international
- Schools in the Semporna area
- Schools elsewhere in Sabah
- College and University students in Sabah
- State government departments and agencies
- Local government departments and agencies
- District office
- Visitors: local, regional, international
- Tour operators & hoteliers
- Women in the community
- Special interest groups
- Fishermen
- Seaweed farmers
- Local islanders
- Bajau Laut
- Local businesses
- Dive operators



Figure 100. Park staff discussing identification of marine life with people on Pulau Sibuan, during marine resources survey, 1999.

12.2.4. Themes and messages

Numerous topics can be explored, with the aim of informing, entertaining and educating people who live in or visit the park, as well as decision-makers who may do neither. The following list illustrates the wide range of subjects that could form the basis of the educational programme.

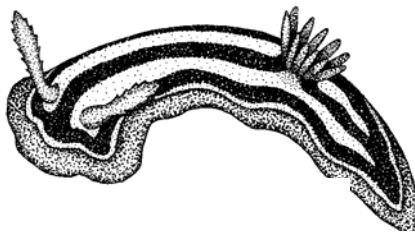


Figure 101. Nudibranch, *Chromodoris*
© Sue Daly

Management aspects

- Why the park has been established
- Potential benefits of management
- Park planning
- Boundaries and zoning
- Regulations and why they are needed
- Protected species
- What is being monitored, and why

Natural history, culture and conservation

- General guide to the park
- Legends
- Geology and how the islands were formed
- Importance of the Semporna Islands and reefs
- Biodiversity
- Wildlife of the Semporna Islands
- Forests and mangroves
- Plants as medicines
- Reef zones and their marine life
- The reef at night
- How the reef works
- Growth and reproduction on the reef
- Relationships and associations on the reef
- Human impacts
- How marine reserves can produce more fish
- Sustainable fishing practices
- Food webs and ecology

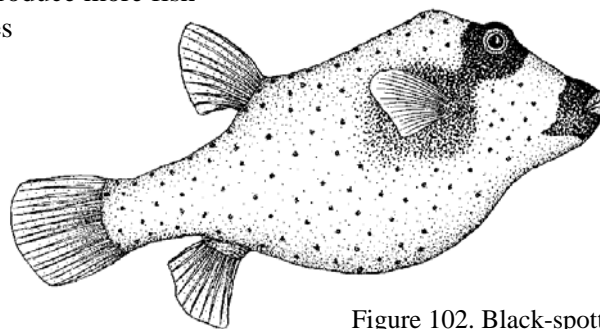


Figure 102. Black-spotted pufferfish
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12.2.5. Educational materials, techniques and activities

Information needs to be presented in various formats to ensure that it is relevant for the different target audiences. Useful materials include brochures, posters, maps, comic books, wildlife guides, videos, slide shows and interactive displays. These need to be produced in Bahasa Malaysia, Bajau, Chinese, English and possibly others in the longer term.

The materials can be used in many different ways, with the eventual decision depending on the audience and the messages that need to be transmitted, together with factors such as cost, time and practicality. Choices range from workshops, seminars and other 'formal' events to practical ones such as beach clean-ups and educational games. Taking people on guided walks or getting them involved in nature studies or wildlife recording schemes are further examples of educational but entertaining activities.

The education team need to be proactive, and to organise events such as:

- Travelling exhibitions e.g. to local islands and villages
- Visits to schools, involving slide shows, projects etc
- Visits to Government Offices with briefings, slide shows, workshops etc
- Video and film events
- Quizzes and other competitions
- Media publicity: newspapers, television
- Open discussion meetings and workshops
- Field trips; guided walks

One of the most important overall techniques to use is the 'multiplier-effect' in which people who are taught then transmit what they learn to others. This means that messages are spread further and faster. For example, educating children helps to get information to their friends, teachers, parents and others in the community. Similarly, environmental awareness programmes aimed at tour



operators should reach their clients, and involvement of local chiefs should help to spread messages to the local community. This is doubly useful because it is important to provide local people with the skills and information needed to contribute fully to the park planning processes.

Figure 103. Local teachers being taught to snorkel during one of the project workshops.

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