



KERATAN SURAT KHABAR

SURAT KHABAR	:	NST			
TARIKH	:	23/9/2021 (KHAMIS)	MUKA SURAT	:	15
JABATAN	:	PERHILITAN			

REHABILITATION

NST(Letters), 23
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Our wildlife deserves better

IT may be uncommon for celebrities to talk about conservation and our concerns for wildlife, but I believe it is high time we started using our voices to speak for the voiceless animals.

Over the past few years, I've had the honour to get involved with several non-governmental organisations, which opened my eyes to the challenges faced by wildlife and those protecting them.

One solution is wildlife rehabilitation, which is the process of helping a wild animal taken out of its natural world to readapt to the wild again (rewilding).

Each species needs its own expert to handle the process. Without proper rehabilitation, the majority of wildlife will die when they are released.

They do not know how to survive, find food, secure a territory, defend themselves or even know what a natural predator looks like. Their exposure to humans has caused them to lose their natural instincts.

But if rehabilitation is done properly, this can be overcome. Take gibbons, for example. Did you know that it can take between five and 15 years to rehabilitate a gibbon?

Gibbons are endangered mainly because of the booming illegal pet

trade. They are bought and sold (often on social media) because they are cute and human-like. But behind all that cuteness is a devastating story.

They are ripped from their mother's embrace when they are infants and endure watching their entire family killed, then transported in boxes by bus cargo and lorries.

As pets, they are made to participate in unnatural activities like wearing clothes and staying up late and scolded, if not abused, when they show their natural instincts like swinging around or play biting.

This traumatises them so much that they need intensive mental care to regain confidence.

Proper rehabilitation can ease their trauma and help them regain their natural instincts. When done correctly, each gibbon would need to pass seven tests or criteria to prove their readiness for the wild.

The last criterion is that gibbons have to be released as a mating pair with a child (gibbons mate for life). Getting them from traumatised ex-pets to being able to parent a young gibbon is a long journey.

Wildlife rehabilitation was started by compassionate individuals and become organised in 1939 with the



Let us create awareness about the wildlife so that they have a better future. FILE PIC

first rehabilitation centre founded in River Forest, Illinois, the United States.

Gibbon rehabilitation was started in 1992 in Thailand by the Gibbon Rehabilitation Project. They took about 10 years to release their first gibbon. For many years, Malaysia was without such a programme.

Sadly, we are not getting the support in Peninsular Malaysia. The Gibbon Conservation Society (GCS), founded by local-born Mariani Ramli

when she was in her early 20s, works hard to help Malaysian small apes.

Recently, they shared the complexities of rehabilitation on their social media pages, which I highly suggest you follow to know more.

I hope that we can support the efforts done by small NGOs like this in caring for our wildlife. Not many have the patience and dedication to do the job, but I think we can show our support in one way or another.

If you are financially able, you may

help as the pandemic has affected GCS's fundraising avenues. Every little bit makes a difference. For those

who have wildlife as pets, please send them for rehabilitation. If you have a gibbon, send it to GCS.

Lastly, and maybe the most important, lend your voice to the cause, create awareness about our wildlife so that they have a better future.

SHARIFAH SOFIA

Actress and activist, Kuala Lumpur