



Biddle (fourth from left) exchanging the MOU documents with Zolkipli. With them are SFC employees.

Star Metro 1/2/2021 m/b 7

Conservation tie-up renewed

Collaboration between forestry corp and wildlife body enters 15th year

By SHARON LING
sharonling@thestar.com.my

SARAWAK Forestry Corporation (SFC) and Orangutan Project Sdn Bhd (OPSB) have renewed their long-term collaboration to promote conservation, ecotourism and an orang utan volunteer programme at the Matang Wildlife Centre in Kuching.

Both parties signed a memorandum of understanding on the renewal, with SFC chief executive officer Zolkipli Mohamad Aton and OPSB chief executive officer Leo Biddle as the signatories.

SFC's collaboration with OPSB is now entering its 15th year.

Thanking OPSB for its work and support over the years, Zolkipli said Matang Wildlife Centre would continue to be the working platform for the relationship.

"SFC will actively engage with OPSB and specialists in their network to enhance conservation and wildlife protection," he said, adding that Sarawak aimed to improve its wildlife conservation programmes.

Biddle welcomed the MOU signing as it enabled OPSB to plan ahead with its work at Matang Wildlife Centre despite the Covid-19 pandemic.

"It is heartening to know of

SFC's plans to conserve wildlife and their habitats, as well as its concern for the welfare of captive wildlife," he said.

SFC and OPSB have conducted several projects over the years.

These include the release of over 100 slow lorises, a protected species in Sarawak, which were seized from illegal traders, collectors and hunters or surrendered by the public.

About 20% of the released animals were monitored for six months via radio collars and data showed that 80% of them had survived.

Both parties also collaborated

on releasing and monitoring five pangolins, as well as collecting data on hand-rearing baby silvered langur to adulthood.

In addition, SFC and OPSB have engaged about 2,000 volunteers in an orang utan programme since 2005 to work on construction and maintenance of the mammal's facilities at Matang Wildlife Centre.

SFC will continue to work with OPSB on animal welfare training and welfare issues.

In the long term, SFC intends to improve the welfare of licensed captive wildlife, especially those that cannot be released due to various circumstances.