

[REPORT] INSTALIVE INTERVIEW

BILA LARUT MALAM

BY PRISCILLIA MIARD FROM NIGHT SPOTTING PROJECT (NSP)
MODERATED BY SYUHADA SAPNO

10 MAY 2020, 2-3PM

Priscillia Miard is a French scientist who has been carrying out research in Southeast Asia for almost 10 years. Her research project is on small nocturnal mammals in Langkawi island, looking into various aspects of the animals like their ecology, distribution, and habitat. Her main research focus is on colugos (*Galeopterus variegatus*). Her study site ranges from Penang island to Langkawi, and even to the mainland where she has been to Merapoh (Pahang), Batu Caves (Selangor) and Ulu Muda (Kedah). Priscillia started a project known as Night Spotting Project (NSP) where she recruits interns and volunteers to help her in her research. 'Bila larut malam' directly translate to 'when it is late at night', depicting her research lifestyle of studying nocturnal mammals.

The session began with Priscillia sharing some backgrounds and facts on colugos. She stated that they are not related to squirrels, and that colugos are close to primates but are not primates themselves. Colugos are an old group of gliding mammals. They represent 1 of the 15 gliding animal species in Malaysia, though more species could exist in total as they are understudied - including colugos. Priscillia mentioned that there is a huge opportunity in the research field regarding behaviours and ecology of nocturnal mammals in Malaysia as not much information can be found on it at the current moment. Addressing a question on predators, Priscillia states that colugos might have less predators on islands as compared to on lands. 80% of colugo diets are comprised of leaves, with the rest being flowers, lichens on trees and soil from old termite nest. They can glide up to a distance of 150m and they are fast creatures. For many years, they were thought to be solitary animals but Priscillia has counted a total of 25 individuals in a stretch of 300m. This finding is considered that they live in a group. It was also recorded that the home range of male colugos overlaps with few females. In terms of interaction with other animals, she previously spotted a colugo and a red giant flying squirrel (*Petaurista petaurista*) chasing each other on a golf course, though she does not know why they did so.



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BILA LARUT MALAM



Syu once volunteered to help out on an excursion fieldwork to Merapoh with Priscillia and they both could not find any colugos in the forest, but managed to spot them living closely to human settlements in Langkawi. This situation happens because certain animal species live close to humans due to food availability. Food availability like fruit trees and even city lights that attract insects are reasons why these animals prefer to forage in urban settings.

In regard to public response towards colugos, the people of Langkawi are aware of them and there have been instances of people helping to put colugos back up on trees after they fall off. Priscillia stated that it is best to let colugos be when they fall on the ground as they are able to climb back up trees themselves. If they do seem lost or are found situated far from a tree however, we can help them but we must ensure to cover the colugos with blankets as they have sharp claws and sharp teeth.

Addressing a question for the audience, Priscillia states that the best time to observe nocturnal animals is usually during sunset as that is when most start becoming active, though it would largely depend on the behaviour of the specific animal of interest. Some animals prefer later times of the night, for example during midnight. When it comes to tools used for night observations, one can either use red light or use thermal vision which does not require light. Priscillia shared tips on getting red light by using a bright white light source and covering it with red gel paper. She states that at night, white light is useful for spotting amphibians and reptiles as researchers look out for their eye-shines but with mammals, this white light would hurt their sensitive eyes whereas red light would not. Thermal vision or thermal imaging on the other hand works by detecting heat from bodies. This method is practical to use in the forest as it makes it easy to spot animals even with layers of leaves and bushes blocking the view.

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BILA LARUT MALAM

Photographed by Priscillia Miard

Redlight shining on a colugo



A colugo spotted through thermal ▲
imaging

Apart from running her research, Priscillia and her NSP team are also active in doing other activities around the island including environmental education with the locals and beach-cleaning. Her environmental education activity includes bringing parents and their kids into the forest, and giving talks at places like schools and markets. The interview ended with her stating that there are lots of opportunities to study nocturnal animals. NSP themselves provide plenty of fieldwork opportunities for volunteers and interns, and even remote work too as they are currently coming up with more online materials.

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[REPORT] INSTALIVE INTERVIEW SERIES 2 8.05.2020 - 10.05.2020

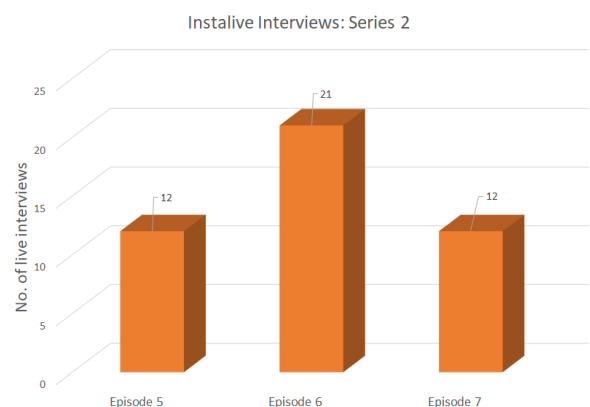


Instalive Interview is a conversation series discussing on various topics ranging from urban garden, environmental education, urban wildlife, volunteer enhancement/support and art. There are two series of these live streams. Here in the second series we had three invited guests, each of them has their own unique ways and experiences of conserving nature in the city.

Interaction with viewers where we addressed their questions in realtime allowed greater engagement as they became active participants that are directly involved in the discussion. The recorded Instalives were then uploaded to The Rimba Project's YouTube page. Time stamps with topic of discussion was added in the description for viewers to jump straight to their preferred topics of interest. The series was a success as this form of networking has increased the audience for The Rimba Project on the social media platforms, especially on Instagram.

('Bila Larut Malam' video is available on our YouTube page)

Bar graph shows the total highest number of viewers whom participated in the interactive interviews throughout all three sessions



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