

## POWER OUTAGE GREETES BAT3 AT SIMILAJAU NATIONAL PARK

Posted on July 25, 2013, Thursday

**BINTULU:** Dinner last Tuesday at Similajau National Park had a rather rustic ambience to it, thanks to an unexpected power outage which plunged the park into total darkness.

Not less than five minutes after the BAT3 team



**DATA COLLECTION:** Awang Zainuddin releasing a mating pair of horseshoe crabs after measuring and recording their measurements. Specimens which have been caught are marked so the researchers know which ones have been caught previously.

.....  
had filed in  
our stories  
for the day,  
there was a  
loud bang  
and  
seconds  
later, the  
power went  
out.

Using our  
torchlights,  
we  
managed to  
find our  
way to the  
dimly lit  
cafeteria  
for a simple  
but filling  
dinner,  
together  
with other  
visitors



WATCH OUT: Among the animals at the park are crocodiles, hence signboards that warn visitors to beware of the toothy reptiles, like this one.

visitors

who were staying for the night.

All phone communications was dead, leaving the team wondering whether Bintulu was affected as well.

So after dinner, we got into our Isuzu D-max and headed to town to have a look. Coming out of the junction to the main road, we saw the bright, unblinking lights of the town ahead, confirming that the power outage was confined to the national park area.

After a brief drive around town to grab food supplies as well as mosquito nets for our sleeping accommodation, we headed back to the park. Thankfully, the power had been restored, leaving us the minor problem of figuring out how to assemble our mosquito nets.

Early the next morning, our team managed to wake up early to catch the sunrise before having a light breakfast to start the day.

This was followed by an informative hour-long trek and talk on the various attractions, animal and plant species which can be found at the park conducted by park staff Julaini Omar, 44.

Among those we had the opportunity to see up-close were horseshoe crabs or 'belangkas'.

The mating season for horseshoe crabs starts in June and normally lasts for a few months. During that period of time, they can be spotted coming close to shore to mate in pairs.



RESEARCH SUBJECT: Hafijah carrying a mating pair of horseshoe crabs she had just pulled from the ocean back to her research station.





BEAUTIFUL: The sandy beach facing Similajau National Park's main buildings and accommodation.

Corporation staff Awang Zainuddin Awang Abdullah were up bright and early yesterday morning to scour the beach for specimens for Hafijah's research.

She told the BAT3 team that based on the data they had collected so far, the population of horseshoe crabs in the national park seemed to be doing well.

Horseshoe crabs are highly valued in the medical industry for their blue blood which can be used to detect the presence of bacterial endotoxins. Its blood can be extracted without killing the living fossil.

Horseshoe crabs are prized locally for their meat and eggs. The BAT3 team spotted some being sold recently at the Mukah wet market for as low as RM4 per pair.

As much as the BAT3 would have liked to stay longer at the park to really explore all it has to offer, we had to pack up and head back to Bintulu to file our stories. We still have a long road ahead of us before seeing the lights of Kuching once again.

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