

## EDITORIAL:

# FILLING THE GAPS FOR BIODIVERSITY OF PULAU TINGGI, MERSING, JOHOR TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF JOHOR MARINE PARKS

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## Introduction

This special issue presents selected peer-reviewed full-text papers from Pulau Tinggi Expedition and long-term research conducted on the island coordinated by the Environmental Management and Conservation Research Unit (eNCORe), Faculty of Applied Sciences and Technology, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia. This research was conducted in collaboration with various institutions and agencies such as Shaz Resort Pulau Tinggi Sdn. Bhd., Department of Wildlife and National Park, Johor Marine Park, Department of Fisheries Malaysia, Zoology Branch (Forest Research Institute Malaysia), Copenhagen Zoo (Malaysia), Kolej GENIUS Insan (Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia), Centre for Pre-University Studies (Universiti Malaysia Sarawak), Faculty of Science and Technology (Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia), School of Fisheries and Aquaculture Sciences and Institute of Tropical Biodiversity and Sustainable Development (Universiti Malaysia Terengganu), Borneo Marine Research Institute (Universiti Malaysia Sabah), and Johor City and Nature Tour Guide Association (JCNTGA). More than 50 researchers are involved in this endeavor, including postgraduates, undergraduates, research assistants and field assistants that UTHM has appointed throughout 2019-2022.

Based on published works, minimal studies on biodiversity were conducted in Pulau Tinggi previously, which is gazetted as part of Johor Marine Park. Realizing this, as well as the urgent need to develop new sustainable organism-based tourism products on this island, Datuk Hj. Md Zairi Zainal, Managing Director of Shaz Resort

Pulau Tinggi Sdn. Bhd. has taken the initiative to initiate the first private-funded biodiversity project in UTHM. Ministry of Higher Education and UTHM later acknowledged this effort and provided additional funding to empower the research on the island as part of UTHM's vision to pursue the field of sustainable technologies.

The special issue aims to focus on the documentation of biodiversity on the islands for various taxonomic groups in line with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 14 (life below water) and 15 (life on land). Covering SDGs 14, this special issue presents the findings on corals, marine fishes, cephalopods and sea cucumbers around the islands, which outlines the urgent need to empower marine conservation efforts to protect these precious marine parks. The first documentation of avifauna, mammals, insects and updated herpetofauna data of Pulau Tinggi in this special issue also proves that terrestrial island biodiversity must not be neglected in any conservation efforts in marine parks. We hope this research will serve as a benchmark and source of information for future conservation efforts for managing Pulau Tinggi as a marine park in Johor. The data generated from this study will also benefit the tourism industry as the demand for nature and organism-based tourism is increasing nationally and globally.

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