

UMS student finds self-transformation during internship at Imbak Canyon

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KOTA KINABALU: Clara Jepicca Jadrin's 57-day industrial training at the Imbak Canyon Conservation Area (ICCA), one of Sabah's premier conservation areas, became a life-changing journey that transformed her outlook on the environment.

She said every step along the study trail, using the transect method, provided her with a new experience – from spotting animal footprints, to hearing the echoing calls of birds, and breathing in the fresh, unpolluted air.

"It instills a deep respect for nature and a sense of responsibility to continue contributing towards forest conservation in the future.

"This is the true experience of entering a pristine, intact rainforest," said Clara, who completed her internship at ICCA with her project Observation of Wildlife Presence, conducted near the Imbak Canyon Studies Centre (ICSC), from May 13 to July 10, 2025.

The 24-year-old final-year undergraduate at Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) said her practical training at ICCA had inspired her to take forest conservation and wildlife protection more seriously.

"When I saw for myself the interaction of wild animals with their habitat, I became increasingly aware of the importance of continuous conservation efforts, so that these natural treasures are not lost in the wake of development," she said.

She added that among the most valuable lessons she gained during her industrial training were the encounters with various wildlife species, through their footprints, droppings and footage from camera traps.

"From these, I realised that every small sign in the wilderness, even just footprints or scraps of food, actually carries great significance in understanding and preserving biodiversity.

"Before this, I was a little less affected when I heard about poachers.

"However, after going through



Clara's internship at Yayasan Sabah brought her to Imbak Canyon Conservation Area.

this project, every time I hear about poaching, my feelings are deeply disturbed, as if I myself had witnessed the fate of wildlife unable to defend itself," she said in an interview.

Clara believes the Imbak Canyon Conservation Area holds great potential for the development of community-based eco-tourism, which would also benefit scientific research activities and bring economic opportunities to the local communities living nearby.

"To me, the uniqueness of Imbak Canyon lies not only in its wealth of flora and fauna, but also in its role as an important research and conservation centre under the management of Yayasan Sabah.

"Imbak also functions as a biodiversity corridor that connects the Danum Valley and Maliau Basin conservation areas, making it a strategic asset in efforts to preserve Sabah's natural heritage," she said.

Clara explained that her wildlife observation project near the Imbak Canyon Studies Centre involved setting up camera traps and observing the natural habitats of various wildlife species, including discovering their footprints and droppings.

"For direct observation, it was

done twice a week during the day, and once a week during the dawn.

"Similarly, the selection of day was based on the advice of a ranger who was an expert on the area.

"However, the camera traps were installed for 57 days and operated 24 hours a day to observe shy wildlife and those that only come out at dusk/night in the area where my project was carried out.

"Although the duration was short, this experience felt very intense because every day in the field provided new and valuable observation.

"Overall, the experience of undergoing industrial training at Imbak not only fulfils academic requirements, but also marks a journey of self-transformation," said Clara, who was born in Keningau, but now living in Kg Sembirai, Kota Belud.

Clara was among seven UMS students who presented their internship findings at a special session held at the Yayasan Sabah headquarters in Kota Kinabalu recently.

The others were Helieevilla Heavie Billy, Sheldon Silley @ Muni, Nur Asmira Abdul Halim, Mohd. Sufwan Rasad and Muhd Pekrye Abdul Razak.