

Topics in Biodiversity and Conservation

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# Naturalists, Explorers and Field Scientists in South-East Asia and Australasia

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## Preface

A century after the death of the naturalist and co-founder of the theory of evolution through natural selection, Alfred Russel Wallace continues to inspire. Indeed the relevance of Wallace for fields of study as disparate as ecology, systematics, evolution, ethnobiology, biodiversity, and conservation, has never been greater.

The Institute of Biodiversity and Environmental Conservation, within Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS), has been in the forefront of Wallace studies in Southeast Asia, through research and its application, in addition to the organisation of meetings of minds in the field of biodiversity. We organised, between 13 and 15 July 2005, an international conference entitled “Wallace in Sarawak – 150 years later” here in Kuching, Sarawak, which was attended by natural historians, biologists, and other scholars of Wallace studies. The proceedings of the same were published by the Institute in 2005. A second conference on the same broad theme, “Wallace 2013. 2nd International Conference on Alfred Russel Wallace – His Predecessors and Successors. Naturalists, Explorers and Field Scientists in Southeast Asia and Australasia” was also organised by our Institute on 7–8 November 2013. The present volume comprises selected papers presented at this most recent effort to honour Wallace and to remember his legacy, a century after his passing.

We have organised the papers into three broad themes: *Wallace and His Period* presents papers on the life and contributions of Wallace, and those of some of his contemporaries, from museum builders to evolutionary theorists. *Natural History and Systematics* gathers together papers as diverse as the contribution of systematics to understanding the zoological sciences, as well as autecological and community level studies. Finally, *Biodiversity and Conservation* brings together studies on biodiversity and conservation of the Wallace area, from trees to butterflies, frogs to birds and dolphins. It concludes with the all important paper that challenges the conventional views on economic growth, and how sustainable development and conservation need to be incorporated into the rapid economic development now taking place in the region where Alfred Russel Wallace spent his defining years.

We are grateful to a number of individuals and agencies for supporting the conference on which this volume is based: to the State Government of Sarawak for sponsoring the Conference, and to Tan Sri Datuk Patinggi Haji Adenan Satem, then

Minister of Special Functions, Sarawak, and currently, Chief Minister of Sarawak, for delivering the inaugural speech. Our partners, the Sarawak Forestry Corporation and the Sarawak Museum, including Oswald Braken Tisen and Charles Leh, formed the backbone of the organising committee. Within UNIMAS, we are grateful to the staff of the Institute of Biodiversity and Environmental Conservation, and our graduate students helped with all stages of organising the meeting and presenting papers. Individual manuscripts were reviewed by Aaron M. Bauer, C. Kenneth Dodd, Michael Flannery, Gathorne, Earl of Cranbrook, Ulmar Grafe, Stefan Hertwig, Robert F. Inger, Elena M. Panova, and Mustafa Abdul Rahman. Finally, we are thankful to David L. Hawksworth, for initiating the idea of this volume, and Nel van der Werf of Springer for seeing the volume through press.

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