

Articles

Birdwatching Hotspots Series: Sabah Birding Routes 2024

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Sabah, North Borneo, Malaysia, is a birdwatcher's dream destination. With its diverse habitats, ranging from pristine lowland and montane rainforests, peat swamps and mangrove forests, to stunning coastal areas and islands, Sabah offers a unique and unforgettable experience for bird enthusiasts. Sabah is renowned for its incredible biodiversity, and birds play a significant role in this ecological richness. The diverse environments support a staggering array of bird species, more than 600 species with an excess of 30 endemics.

There are numerous opportunities for birdwatching in Sabah. Visitors can explore the state's national parks and wildlife sanctuaries, where they can embark on guided nature walks and birdwatching tours. These guided excursions offer a chance to learn about the local bird species and their habitats, while also enjoying the stunning scenery. Recently the Sabah Birdwatchers Association together with the Sabah Tourism Board published the Sabah Birding Routes 2024 (Plate 1). It was launched in July at the Global Birdfair 2024 in the United Kingdom. It offers a number routes and additional information as to possible species to see at each site.

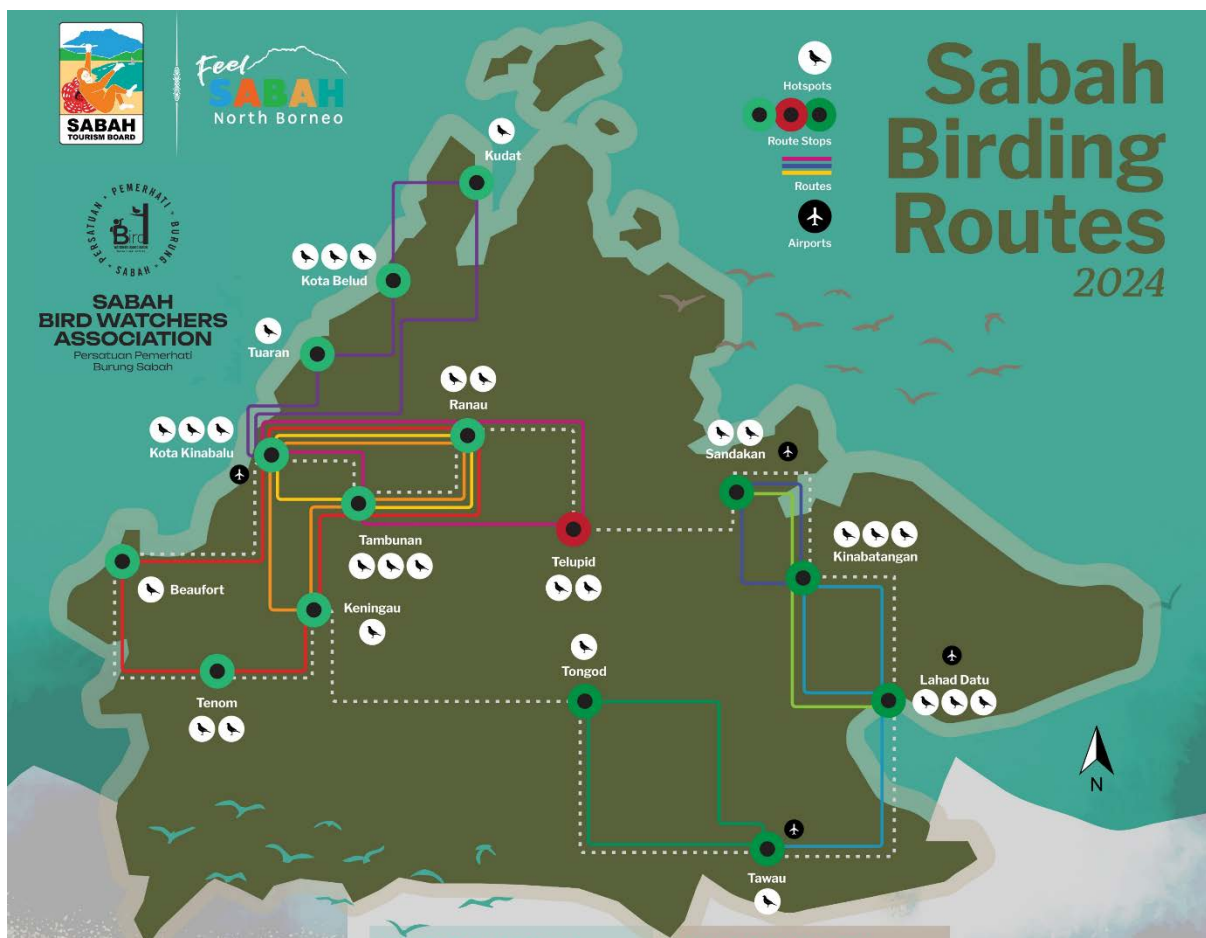


Plate 1: West & East Coast, Central and all of Sabah Birding Routes.

West Coast Routes

Birding routes that start & ends in Kota Kinabalu, 3 to 14 days recommended.

KOTA KINABALU - RANAU - TAMBUNAN - KOTA KINABALU

Montane Endemic Route, 3-5 days

Endemics Highlights: Whitehead's Trogon, Whitehead's Broadbill, Whitehead's Spiderhunter, Red-breasted Partridge, Crimson-headed Partridge, Bulwer's Pheasant, Bornean Banded Pitta.

Notable Species: Blue-naped Parrot, Banded Kingfisher, Sunda Frogmouth.

KOTA KINABALU - RANAU - TAMBUNAN - TENOM - KENINGAU - KOTA KINABALU

Montane & Submontane Endemic Route, 8-11 days

Endemics Highlights: Blue-banded Pitta, Black Partridge, Mountain Serpent Eagle, Bornean Frogmouth.

Notable Species: Mountain Barbet, Bornean Bulbul, Pygmy White-eye, Philippine Cuckoo Dove.

KOTA KINABALU - RANAU - TAMBUNAN - KENINGAU - TENOM - BEAUFORT - KOTA KINABALU

Complete West Coast Route, 14-16 days

Endemics Highlights: White-fronted Falconet.

Notable Species: Hook-billed Bulbul, Scarlet-breasted Flowerpecker.

KOTA KINABALU - TUARAN - KOTA BELUD - KUDAT - KOTA KINABALU

Migration Season Route, 6-8 days

Note: North East Migratory Season in Sabah starts from October to March bringing plenty of migratory birds from the north to Sabah. Birding in this route is best during these months.

Notable Species: Philippine Megapode, Mantanani Scops Owl, Black-naped Fruit Dove, Nicobar Pigeon.

Central Routes

KOTA KINABALU - TAMBUNAN - TELUPID - RANAU - KOTA KINABALU

Partridges & Pheasant Route, 6-8 days

Endemics Highlights: Bornean Peacock-pheasant.

Notable Species: Straw-headed Bulbul, Helmeted Hornbill

East Coast Routes

Birding routes that start from Sandakan, Lahad Datu or Tawau, 3 to 14 days recommended.

SANDAKAN - KINABATANGAN - SANDAKAN

Lowland & Riverine Route, 3-5 days

Endemics Highlights: Bornean Bristlehead, Sabah Partridge, Black-crowned Pitta'

Notable Species: Storm's Stork, White-crowned Hornbill, Jerdon's Baza.

SANDAKAN - KINABATANGAN - LAHAD DATU

Lowland Endemic Route, 7-14 days

Endemics Highlights: Bornean Ground-Cuckoo, Blue-headed Pitta, Blue-banded Pitta.

Notable Species: Bornean Blue Flycatcher, Large Green Pigeon.

TAWAU-LAHAD DATU - KINABATANGAN - LAHAD DATU

Pitta Route, 7-14 days

Notable Species Highlights: Black-crowned Pitta, Blue-headed Pitta, Blue-banded Pitta, Bornean Banded Pitta, Giant Pitta.

TAWAU - TONGOD - TAWAU

South Route, 5-7 days

Notable Species: Helmeted Hornbill, Bulwer's Pheasant.

Sabah Birding Loop Route

KOTA KINABALU - TAMBUNAN - RANAU - TELUPID - SANDAKAN - KINABATANGAN - LAHAD DATU - TAWAU - TONGOD - KENINGAU - TENOM - BEAUFORT - KOTA KINABALU
Sabah Loop Route 21-30 DAYS

Note that we will recommend the use of reputable bird guides in Sabah for the routes above
<https://www.sabahbirdwatchers.com/> or <https://www.sabahbirdguide.com/>

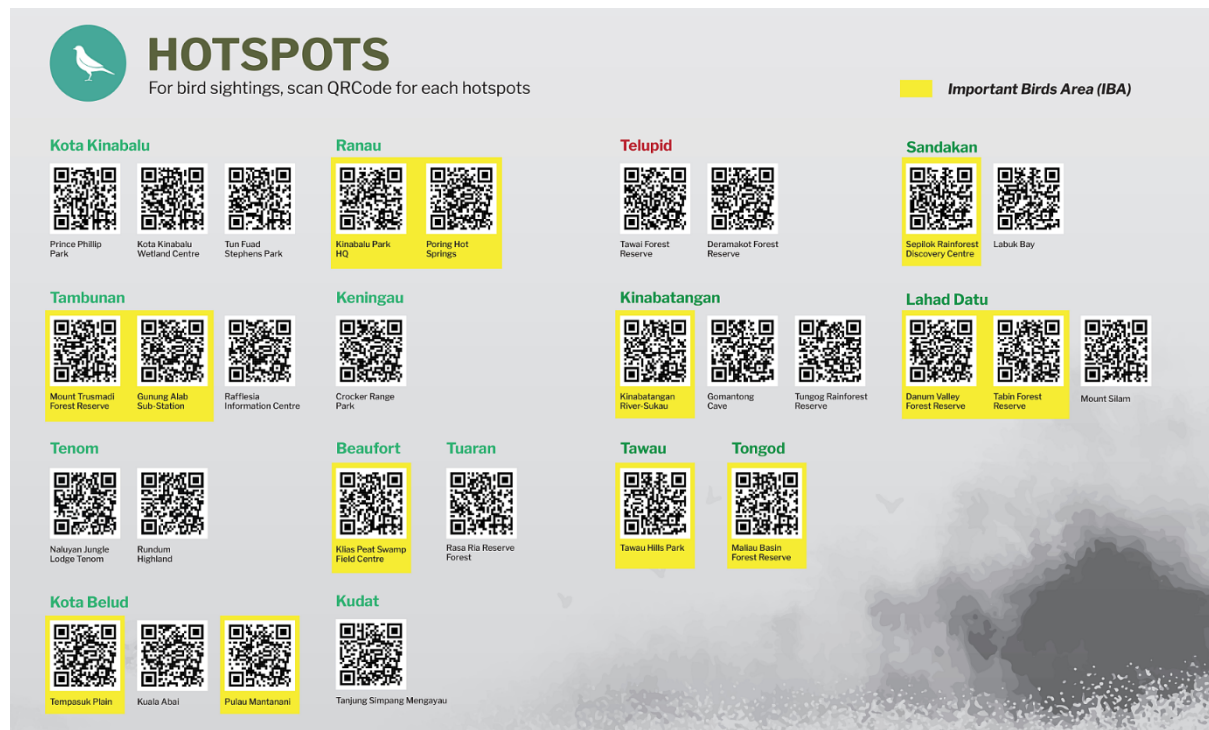
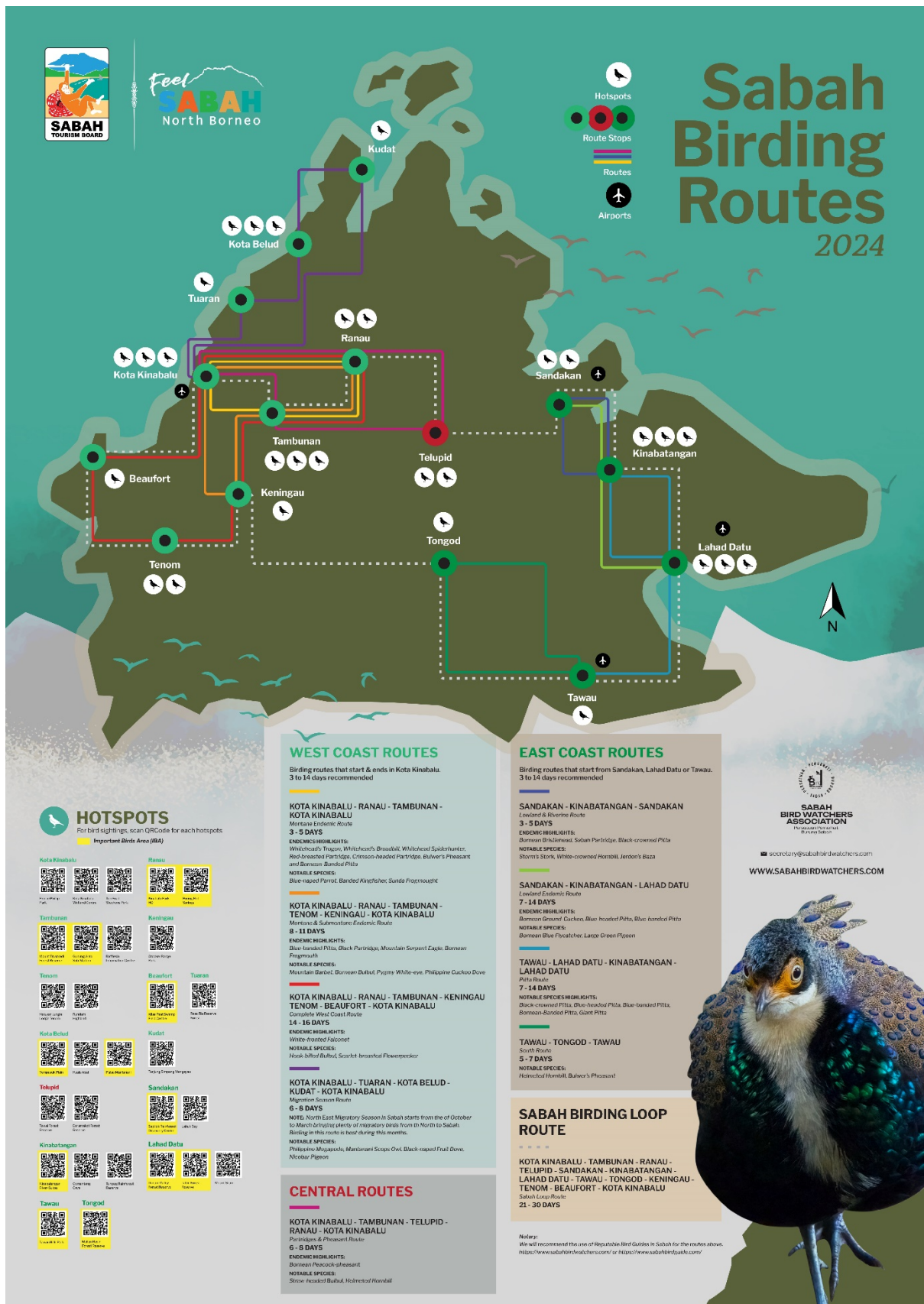


Plate 2: QR code links to eBird observations and bird list for the locality.

Whether you are a seasoned birdwatcher or simply looking for a new adventure, Sabah is sure to exceed your expectations.



Full page of the guide for easy use.