

Obituary

Celebrating the life of Dr Lum Wei Wah

Belinda Wong¹, Lai-Peng Chiang¹, Abbott Chong¹, Ding-Li Yong² & Amar-Singh HSS

¹Malaysian Nature Society Johor Branch, ²Nature Society (Singapore)

Dr Lum Wei Wah, with his wife Dr Tan Hong Lee, have been friends and birdwatching colleagues for many decades. It was a shock to many of us to learn of his recent and sudden demise. He died unexpectedly in May 2023 while on holiday in Egypt with his family. This is a short note to celebrate our friend and fellow birdwatcher, affectionately known as Wei Wah.

Wei Wah came from Penang and was educated at the St Xavier's Institution. He did his medical training at University Malaya from 1978 to 1983, where he met his Johorean wife Hong Lee, who is also a doctor.

Wei Wah was an avid bird watcher and nature lover. He was a keen nature photographer and often made trips to visit mountains and forests overseas. Although he 'carried' a serious demeanour, below that serious look and deep beliefs was a man with a good sense of humour, a ready smile and a keen outlook to life. Those of us who went birdwatching with him locally or on overseas trips enjoyed his bubbly enthusiasm; at times he would do pretty wild stuff to pursue his passion of watching birds.

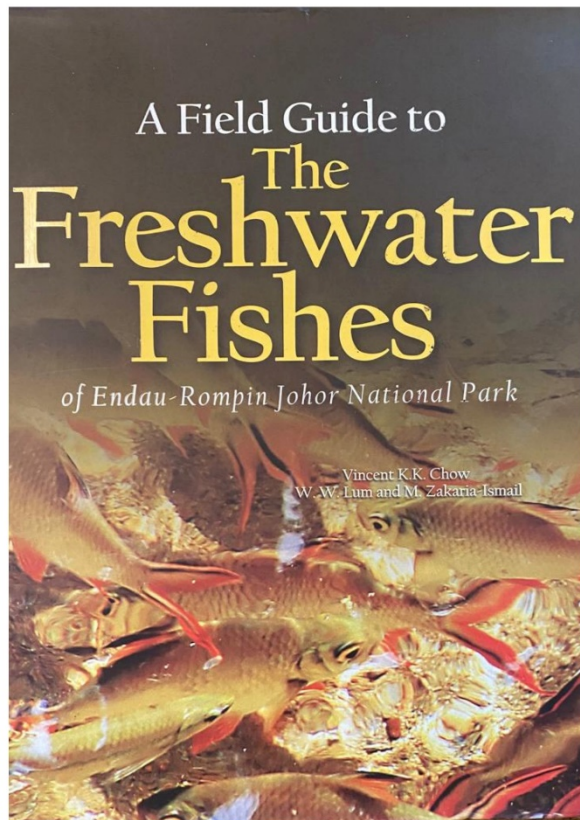
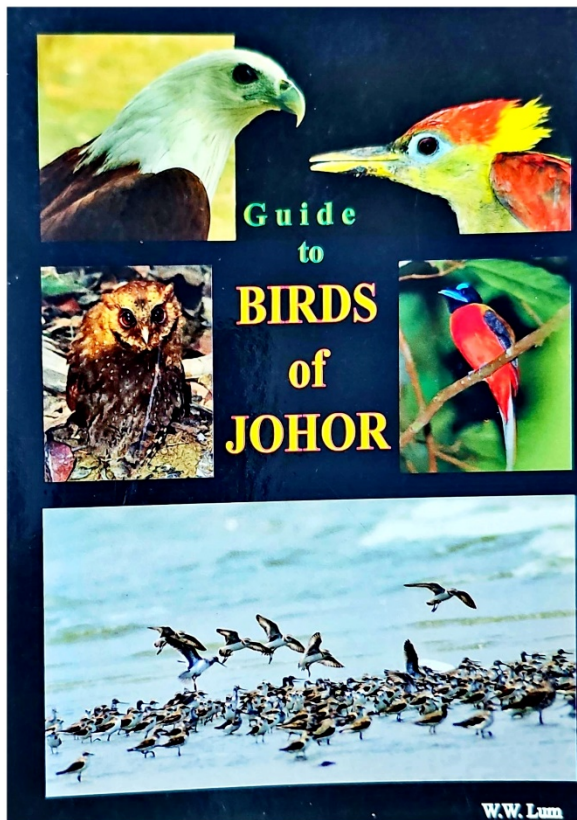


Wei Wah was a Life Member of the Malaysian Nature Society (MNS) and a very active member of the Johor Branch. He was a long-standing committee member of the Johor MNS Branch and served as its vice-chairperson from 2003 to 2009. During that time, he organized a community service project for the Orang Asli of Kg Selai near Bekok, Johor. A group of volunteers from MNS Johor, led by Wei Wah, provided medical and dental services to the village's locals. Those who worked with him remember him as *"unassuming, full of humility, with a calm demeanour"*. One said *"I felt as if I have lost an arm, an ally, and a confidant"*.



Wei Wah was a naturalist with a wide knowledge of birds, butterflies, fish, and many subjects. He contributed to nature conservation and played a critical role in the fish surveys in Endau Rompin during the Malaysian Heritage and Scientific Expedition. These led to the park being gazetted as Endau Rompin National Park. He actively participated in the annual Asian Waterbird Census over the years. He aimed to encourage the youth to appreciate our vast local biodiversity and was involved in many educational efforts. He led a special interest group on nature education and organised nature education camps for school students in Johor.

He authored a number of publications. They include a *Guide to Birds of Johor* (2010), which was published to commemorate the 70th anniversary of MNS, and *A field guide to the Fresh Water Fishes of Endau Rompin Johor National Park* (2104) (co-authored with others). He had publications in the Malayan Nature Society journal and BirdingASIA. DLY worked closely with Wei Wah and other contributors over two years to prepare the Guide to the Birds of Johor and fondly recalled the field trips made to Muar, Mersing and Kota Tinggi to collect material, as well as memorable meetings to draft the text for that book, which then also led to a number of articles on birding in Johor.



Wei Wah was a keen Christian and involved in his local church, where he also encouraged nature conservation. He was a man more inclined to do meaningful and good things behind the scenes.

It is hard to think about Wei Wah without Hong Lee. Their partnership and life together have been at the centre of their life. We cannot appreciate the pain and loss that Hong Lee is experiencing, and our hearts and prayers are with her and the family. We will continue to remember and value Wei Wah's contributions to all of us in the birdwatching community.