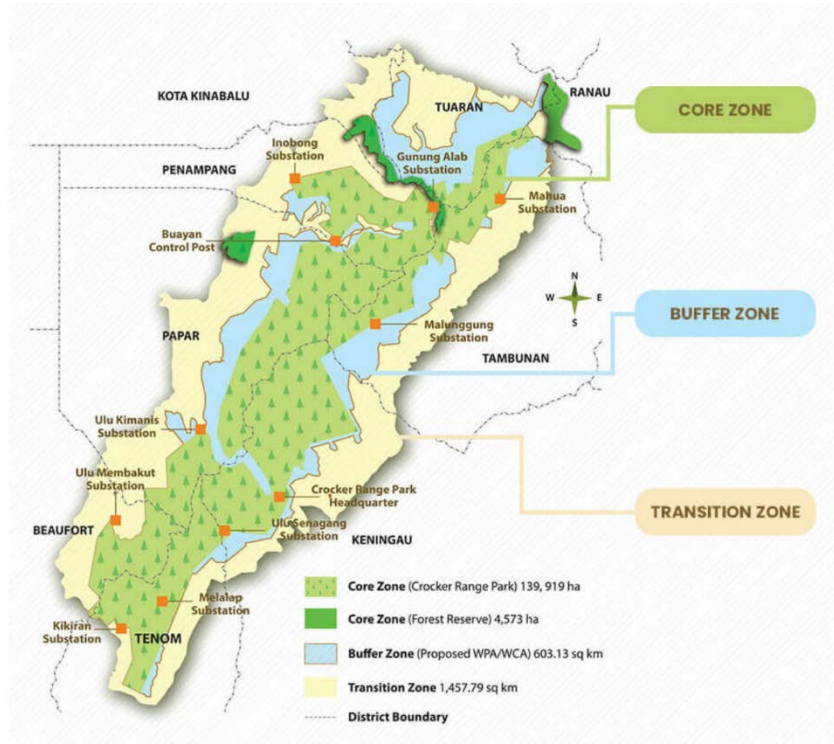


Birdwatching Hotspots Series:

Inobong Substation – An Easily Accessible Day Birdwatching Site

Amar-Singh HSS & Ron Pudín

The Inobong Substation is nestled within the Crocker Range National Park in Sabah. It is situated in the district of Penampang and is just about an hour drive from Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia. It is very popular with walkers and hikers. It has several nature trails and the adventurous Salt Trail; a route traditionally followed by villagers when taking their produce to the tamu (markets).

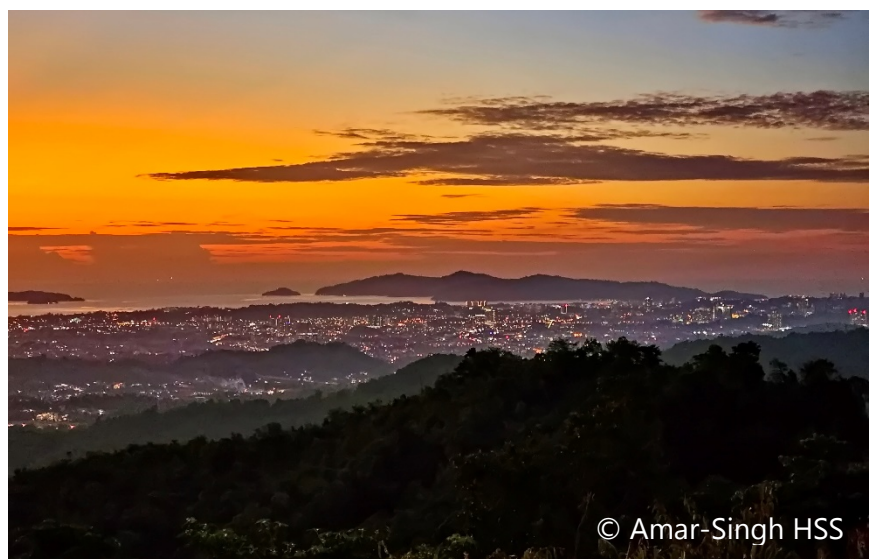


Crocker Range Biosphere Reserve

Plate 1: Crocker Range Biosphere showing Inobong Substation. Copyright Sabah Parks.

<https://crbr.sabahparks.org.my/crocker-range-biosphere-reserve>

A spectacular panoramic view of Kota Kinabalu and the islands can be seen from a vantage point (Nampasan viewing shelter) and the 7m tall Kibambangan Waterfall is within walking distance. Sunrise and sunset views are spectacular and photography of the night sky excellent.



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Plate 2: Sunset view of Kota Kinabalu and the islands from Inobong Substation.

As bird watchers we are always looking for new sites to explore birds. Some of us prefer the attraction of finding birds ourselves and not just viewing them at feeding stations or hides. Inobong Substation offers a quick getaway from the city for a day of pleasurable bird watching. It also offers a morning of good birdwatching while you are waiting to catch a flight out of Kota Kinabalu. The site is about 500-600m ASL and hence offers a cooler morning out.

The entry to the park, the Inobong Visitor and Research Station, can easily be accessed by road from Kota Kinabalu, although the last stretch is cement and some gravel. Many hikers will park lower down and hike up, so beware of walkers as you drive up. The park is open 8am to 5pm. There is a small entrance fee of RM 6 for Malaysians and RM 20 for international visitors; rates are cheaper for children.



Plate 3: Entry gate to the Inobong Visitor and Research Station.

The location offers a mix of lowland and montane forest birds in the park's well-preserved forest canopy. The eBird list compiled for the area is 111 birds (104 seen so far in 2025); a mixture of local endemics, regular Bornean species and migrants.

<https://ebird.org/hotspot/L36569431/bird-list>



Plate 4: A composite of some of the birds that can be seen in and around Inobong Substation.



Much of the birdwatching is just 1-2 km inside the entrance as you walk up a paved path and also outside before the gate. We saw or heard more than 30 species in a short morning. Interesting birds at the site include the Sunda Brush Cuckoo, Scarlet-rumped Trogon, Black-eared Barbet, Bornean Banded Kingfisher, Black-and-yellow Broadbill, White-breasted Woodswallow, Charlotte's Bulbul, Grey-hooded Babbler, White-crowned Shama, Greater and Lesser Green Leafbirds, and a variety of Flowerpeckers, Sunbirds and Spiderhunters. The Great Argus and Sabah Partridge can be heard calling at the site.

There are chalets, hostels, a rest house and public washrooms for visitors to the substation. We chose to stay overnight at Sinurambi <https://sinurambi.com/>, 200m from the substation, which offers very comfortable accommodation and spectacular meals. The views from Sinurambi are excellent and they maintain a rich garden that attracts many birds out from the forest. A great location for a retreat and armchair birdwatching and a green-lung location near enough when visiting Kota Kinabalu.

In summary, it is the proximity to Kota Kinabalu and the ease of access that makes Inobong Substation a good site. It is probably underexplored.

Acknowledgment

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References

1. Salt Trail, Crocker Range Park, Sabah Parks <https://www.sabahparks.org.my/crocker-range-park/salt-trail>.
2. Crocker Range Park, Sabah Parks <https://www.sabahparks.org.my/crocker-range-park>. There is a Crocker Range Park e-Brochure for download at the site.

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