

Obituary

A Tribute to David Hogan Jr., Founder of Birdwatching Asia

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On behalf of the [Birdwatching Asia](#) Team, it is with deep sadness that I announce the passing of David Hogan Jr., the founder of Birdwatching Asia. David passed away peacefully at Hospital Sungai Buloh at approximately 1.20 p.m. on 5 August 2026. His passing is a profound loss that will be deeply felt by the birdwatching community, not only in Malaysia but across Asia and beyond.

In the midst of this heartbreaking loss, I feel it is important to reflect on David's remarkable legacy and the lasting impact he made on the birdwatching community. While his contributions spanned many fields, it is his passion for birdwatching and his dedication to sharing it with others that I wish to honour in this tribute.

David was passionate about sharing his travel experiences with people from all walks of life through his websites and social media platforms. His flagship travel website, [Malaysia Asia](#), earned numerous awards and established him as one of Malaysia's leading travel content creators. However, beyond his achievements in travel journalism, David's greatest contribution, in my view, was the role he played in making birdwatching more accessible to people throughout the region.



David's fascination with birdwatching began during a trip to Sandakan in 2007. Introduced to the hobby there, he quickly developed a lifelong passion for birds and nature. By 2018, he realised that birdwatching deserved its own dedicated platform, separate from his travel website, and founded Birdwatching Asia.

David often described himself not as an expert but simply as a casual birdwatcher who loved learning and sharing his experiences. That humility became one of the defining qualities of Birdwatching Asia. His articles were written in a way that was approachable, informative and enjoyable, making them equally valuable to beginners taking their first steps into birdwatching and experienced birders looking for local insights.

Over the years, Birdwatching Asia became an important source of information on birdwatching destinations, festivals, events, bird photography and practical birding tips. Before David's initiative, much of the online birdwatching content relating to Malaysia and Asia was produced from a Western perspective, particularly by writers from the United States and the United Kingdom. Even articles about birding in our region were often written by overseas visitors. David changed that by providing a distinctly local perspective while maintaining a high

international standard of content. As a result, Birdwatching Asia earned the respect of birdwatchers both within the region and internationally.

One of David's greatest passions was Sabah, where his birdwatching journey first began. Over the years, he developed close friendships with Sabah's birdwatching community, bird tourism operators and the Sabah Tourism Board. He travelled extensively throughout the state to promote its incredible birdlife and birdwatching opportunities. He worked closely with the Sandakan Borneo Bird Club in promoting the Borneo Bird Festival, helping to bring international attention to one of the region's premier birding events.



David together with Mr Tang from WBCM and Mr Tim Appleton during the Borneo Bird Festival. David was especially elated to meet Tim at this event. Tim was one of his birdwatching heroes.

Whenever I travelled to Sabah with David, I witnessed firsthand the affection and respect that local birdwatchers had for him. He was welcomed not simply as a visitor, but as a dear friend. I know that his passing will be particularly painful for the Sabah birding community, and my deepest thoughts are with them during this difficult time.

Like everyone in the tourism industry, David faced significant challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Although travel came to a standstill, he continued producing content whenever possible. When restrictions were finally lifted, birdwatching experienced a remarkable surge in popularity as more people sought outdoor activities and nature-based hobbies.

It was during this period that I came to know David and Ashraf personally. All three of us were active members of the Malaysian Nature Society (MNS), particularly the MNS Selangor Branch Bird Group. David and I were also members of the Wild Bird Club of Malaysia (WBCM), with Ashraf joining the club shortly afterwards.



David Hogan Jr, giving a presentation during the Borneo Bird Festival

Living in Petaling Jaya made it convenient for the three of us to travel together on birdwatching trips. Eventually, we began organising our own birding excursions outside the activities of the societies. One outing, in particular, became an unforgettable moment for all of us.

During a day trip to Old Gombak Road in Selangor, we photographed a flycatcher that none of us could confidently identify. After sharing the photographs in several birdwatching WhatsApp groups, experienced birders confirmed that we had discovered a Blue-and-white Flycatcher - a very rare migrant in Peninsular Malaysia. David immediately recognised the significance of the sighting and quickly published an article about it on Birdwatching Asia. News spread rapidly, and many birdwatchers and bird photographers travelled to the location in hopes of seeing the bird for themselves.

A few weeks later, David invited Ashraf and me to officially join the Birdwatching Asia Team to help expand the website and elevate its content. It is an opportunity for which I will always be grateful.

Working alongside David taught us countless lessons. More importantly, it created a friendship and partnership that was truly special. Each of us brought different strengths to the team, and together we helped Birdwatching Asia grow into an even more valuable resource for the regional birdwatching community. None of us worked on the website for financial reward; we did it purely out of our shared passion for birds and nature.



The Bird Watching Asia Team consisting of David, myself (Ashwin) and Ashraf (from right to left) during our trip to Sabah to cover the Asian Bird Fair.

David's contributions extended well beyond birdwatching. He was also highly respected within Malaysia's photography community. Besides wildlife and bird photography - which I had the privilege of witnessing many times - he was actively involved in street photography and underwater photography. Before his health declined, David was an enthusiastic scuba diver, and many articles on Malaysia Asia reflected his passion for the underwater world. Ashraf, himself an experienced diver, worked closely with David to produce scuba diving content for the website.

David also covered countless tourism events throughout Malaysia and was a familiar face at the Kuala Lumpur Photography Festival, where he regularly exhibited his work. One presentation that remains particularly memorable to me was his talk on wildlife photography in Sulawesi. It held special meaning because I had shared that unforgettable Wild Bird Club of Malaysia expedition to Sulawesi with him in 2024.



David had a great talent in Bird Photography. This was his winning photo in the WBCM Bird Photography Competition. It is a photo of the Snowy-browed Flycatcher taken in Sabah.

Throughout the years we worked together, I came to appreciate David's remarkable ability to connect with people. He had a warm personality, an infectious sense of humour and a natural talent for making everyone around him feel comfortable. He was generous with his knowledge and always willing to mentor others.

Wherever he travelled, David made a genuine effort to engage with local communities and understand their cultures and traditions. This respect for local people was reflected throughout his writing and gave his work an authenticity that readers appreciated.



David showing the humorous side of his personality. Gunung Mahawu (volcano), North Sulawesi, Indonesia with a traditional Minahasa outfit. Used with the kind permission of Andy Lee.

Perhaps the quality I admired most was his humility. Running one of the region's leading birdwatching media platforms came with great responsibility. Inaccurate information could easily spread within the community. Yet David never claimed to know everything. Whenever mistakes were pointed out, he welcomed corrections with grace and gratitude. Because of his humility, he built strong relationships with birdwatchers, researchers, guides and photographers, all of whom were happy to contribute their knowledge and support his work. It is something I deeply respected, and I will certainly miss collaborating with him on the many projects we shared.

The past year was especially difficult for David. We had been invited by one of our international partners to attend the Global Wildlife Fair in India - an event he had been eagerly anticipating

and one that would have provided an important platform for promoting Birdwatching Asia internationally. Unfortunately, complications with his health prevented him from making the journey.

Although there were periods when his condition improved, his health gradually declined. Eventually, he made the difficult decision to sell the camera lens that had accompanied him on so many birdwatching adventures. Over the last few months, Ashraf and I saw less of him as he focused on his health. During the final week of his life, his condition became critical, and on 5 August 2026, he passed away peacefully, surrounded by those who cared for him.

He will be deeply missed by his family, friends, colleagues and the countless people whose lives he touched.

Despite our sorrow, David's extraordinary contributions to birdwatching in Malaysia and across Asia will endure. Through Birdwatching Asia, he worked tirelessly with birdwatching societies, conservation organisations, tour operators, eco-lodges, bird guides, event organisers, tourism boards, photographers and optics companies throughout the region. In many ways, he became one of the driving forces behind the growth of bird tourism and bird travel in Southeast Asia.

His greatest legacy, however, is not merely the website he founded or the hundreds of articles he published. It is the community he helped build, the friendships he fostered, and the countless people he inspired to appreciate birds and the natural world.

Although David is no longer with us, his passion will continue to live on through Birdwatching Asia, through the people he mentored, and through every birder who discovers the joy of watching birds because of his work.

Thank you, David, for your friendship, your generosity and your unwavering passion. You have left an enduring mark on the birdwatching community, and your legacy will continue to inspire us for generations to come.

May you rest in peace.