

Answering Attenborough's Call - Cempedak's New Ocean Learning Hub Sparks Hope for Dugongs and Coastal Communities

Tuesday 27 May, 2025

"If we save the sea, we save our world." These words from Sir David Attenborough in his latest documentary 'Ocean' highlight the unprecedented threats our oceans face.

Ahead of World Dugong Day (28 May), International Animal Rescue's Indonesian partners, YIARI, WeBe, a local grassroots organisation, and the Marine and Fisheries Development Agency (BPSPL) from the Ministry of Marine and Fisheries of the Indonesian Government have come together to safeguard dugongs and their fragile marine ecosystems.

The partnership has already made significant progress in community outreach and environmental education, recognising that lasting conservation begins with awareness and engaging and supporting the local communities.

A key initiative is the establishment of the Maritime Learning Centre (Pusat Pembelajaran Bahari) on Cempedak Island, a place where children and young people can learn about the wonders of the ocean and the importance of preserving seagrass meadows, mangroves, coral reefs, and other critical coastal habitats.

"Dugongs are gentle, elusive creatures who depend entirely on healthy seagrass meadows to survive," said Gavin Bruce, CEO of IAR. "We hope that by educating local communities, in particular the next generation, we are turning the tide and creating lasting change that will not only benefit dugongs but entire marine ecosystems as well as the coastal communities that rely on the ocean for their health and prosperity."

The learning centre is a vital step in understanding the connection between dugong conservation and wider environmental goals, including climate change mitigation. Seagrass meadows, where dugongs feed, act as powerful carbon sinks, absorbing and storing significant amounts of carbon from the atmosphere. Plans include habitat protection, sustainable livelihoods, and increased support for coastal communities that share their shores with this rare marine mammal.

"World Dugong Day is a reminder that the oceans' health is fundamental to the planet's health. Through education, community partnerships, and habitat protection, YIARI is working to ensure that dugongs continue to swim safely in Indonesia's coastal waters for generations to come." Added Gavin.

To learn more about our work, you can visit www.internationalanimalrescue.org and www.yiari.or.id

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Company Contact:

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International Animal Rescue UK

T. 07870808166

E. media@internationalanimalrescue.org

W. <https://www.internationalanimalrescue...>

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