

Community Mangrove Restoration Event in West Borneo to Mark International Day for the Conservation of the Mangrove Ecosystem

Saturday 26 July, 2025

As flooding, coastal erosion, and extreme weather events become more frequent and severe, a quiet hero stands guard at the water's edge: the mangrove.

Mangrove ecosystems support rich biodiversity, provide essential nursery habitats for fish and crustaceans, and act as natural coastal defences against storm surges, tsunamis, sea-level rise, saltwater intrusion, and erosion. Mangrove soils are also highly effective carbon sinks, sequestering vast amounts of carbon and playing a crucial role in mitigating climate change.

Despite their vital role, these life-saving ecosystems are being lost at an alarming rate, making their protection and restoration more urgent than ever.

On the International Day for the Conservation of the Mangrove Ecosystem, it is time to spotlight this often-overlooked champion of our planet's health. The day raises awareness about the importance of mangroves and the urgent need to conserve these critical ecosystems.

However, mangroves are disappearing at a rate three to five times faster than overall global forest losses, with severe ecological and socio-economic consequences. Estimates suggest that mangrove coverage has declined by half over the past 40 years. According to UNESCO, some countries lost more than 40% of their mangroves between 1980 and 2005.

International Animal Rescue's partner in Indonesia, YIARI, has long recognised the value of mangrove restoration for both people and nature. As part of its holistic, community-led conservation programme, YIARI has worked alongside coastal farming communities to develop a successful mangrove restoration initiative. Since 2021, over 50,000 seedlings have been grown and planted by local people.

On July 26th, YIARI will host a community event to raise awareness about the importance of mangroves and their benefits for coastal farming communities. The event will specifically engage young people and children, with the aim of scaling up the mangrove restoration programme.

Activities will include presentations by YIARI and previous beneficiaries on the benefits of mangrove protection and restoration, practical sessions on growing and nurturing seedlings, a hands-on planting exercise in the tidal zone to encourage participation, and a beach clean-up to highlight the impact of plastic waste on marine ecosystems.

Gavin Bruce, CEO of conservation charity International Animal Rescue, said: *"Mangroves are in danger, and it's estimated that more than three-quarters of the world's mangroves are under threat. It is widely recognised that conservation strategies led by local communities are the most sustainable and impactful. YIARI's community event on World Mangrove Day is a perfect example of how our efforts can benefit both people and nature."*

In 2025 alone, this community mangrove restoration project has already planted more than 5,750 seedlings, with a target of over 10,000 for the year. Thanks to the passion and dedication of local people, YIARI's initiative boasts a remarkable seedling survival rate. These efforts not only restore mangrove ecosystems but also highlight their critical role in protecting coastal areas and supporting biodiversity.

Gavin Bruce also emphasised the urgent need for greater action: *"We are witnessing catastrophic changes in the weather, with severe drought, storms and flooding becoming a regular occurrence. What were once-in-a-century events are now happening annually. Mangroves stabilise sediments, reduce wave force, and shield farmland from saltwater intrusion. Without them, coastal communities face failed crops, accelerating erosion, and mass displacement."*

Let us use this International Day for the Conservation of the Mangrove Ecosystem to change the narrative and recognise the irreplaceable value of mangroves, before it's too late.

For more information, please visit www.internationalanimalrescue.org

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