

For immediate release



## Celebrating Dr. Lim Boo Liat, Malaysia's Pioneering Zoologist

*A special Google Doodle commemorates his legacy in the science of mammalogy*

**Kuala Lumpur, June 21, 2022** - Today's Doodle honors the late Dr. Lim Boo Liat, an eminent zoologist and mammalogist who dedicated his life to unearthing and conserving Malaysia's biological diversity. He helped start Zoo Negara and wrote more than 300 scientific publications about mammalogy and parasitology.

On this day in 2003, Dr. Lim was awarded an Honorary Membership to the American Society of Mammalogists (ASM) for his outstanding contribution to the science of mammalogy. He was the first Southeast Asian (and only the fourth Asian) to become an Honorary Member of the ASM, an award that dates back to 1919.

### The life and career of Lim Boo Liat

Dr. Lim was born on August 21, 1926 in Klang, Selangor. He was first exposed to small animals and insects during his time in high school when he would frequent the local school garden. In 1941, World War II hit Malaysia and Lim being only 16, was forced to abandon his studies and take on odd jobs to support his family. This led him to Carey Island in the coastal region of Selangor in 1944, where he befriended the Orang Asli, and learned how to identify animals from them.

In 1947, after the war, he applied for a temporary Lab Assistant job at the Institute of Medical Research (IMR) in Kuala Lumpur. The zoological knowledge that he obtained from the Orang Asli also led him to his first role which found him involved in field biological research under his mentors, the late Professor J.L. Harrison (Medical Zoologist) and the late Professor J.R. Audy (Medical Ecologist) specializing in host-parasite relationships in the study of zoonotic diseases.

In 1952, he was promoted to a permanent Lab Assistant and was involved in a number of scientific expeditions. From 1955 to 1969, he published more than 80 scientific papers on vertebrate animals and

was asked to head a newly founded Medical Ecology Division at the IMR. He became an expert recognized by both local and foreign research institutions in the study of animals and their role in the transmission of diseases. He founded the concept of 'ecological labeling by parasite pattern' in which parasites and food habits of small mammals were good indicators of their behavioral habits in their natural environments. The finding was published in the Zoological Society of London's Journal of Zoology in 1967.

Seeing his potential and expertise in the field, a few professors from European universities paved the way for him to pursue his Master's Degree, despite his lack of a formal education. In fact, Dr. Lim did not even receive his Bachelor's Degree before his sponsorship to the University of Aberdeen in Scotland. He returned to Malaysia in 1972 and continued running the Medical Ecology Division, this time as a full-fledged zoologist. Dr. Lim received his PhD in Zoology at the Universiti Sains Malaysia in 1977 and was seconded to the World Health Organization (WHO) in Indonesia where he headed the Vector Biology Control Research Unit in charge of conducting research on subjects such as plague, malaria control, and rodent control, until his retirement in 1987.

Even after retiring, he remained active in the scene, assisting research studies for undergraduate and postgraduate students at local universities and was involved in the conservation of natural history in association with government and non-government agencies.

### Leaving a legacy behind

Dr. Lim Boo Liat is an inspiration to the industry. Dubbed as 'the father of zoology', Dr. Lim and his fellow researchers discovered a new species of the mountain reed snake, *Macrocalamus gentingensis*, in Genting Highlands, Pahang, which is found nowhere else in the world. Today, his work is recognized and has been cited in many journals and publications around the world.



*Macrocalamus gentingensis*, a species of mountain reed snake found only in Genting Highlands, Pahang.

Photo credit: MyBIS

In recognition of his contribution in the field of biological science, the following species have been named after him by foreign and local scientists:

- Chigger: *Babiania booliati* (Audy, 1965), *Leptotrombidium limi* (Nadchatram & Traub, 1962);

- Flea: *Medwayellia limi* (Traub, 1972);
- Parasitic worms: *Plasmodium booliati* (Sandosham, Yap & Omar, 1965), *Heligmonella limbooliati* (Durette-Desset, Diaw & Krishnansamy, 1975), *Brienlia booliati* (Ho & Singh, 1973);
- Beetle: *Thalliseliodes limbooliati* (Chújô, 1963);
- Protozoa: *Sarcocystis booliati* (Dissanaike & Poopalachelvam, 1975);
- Lizard: *Dibamus booliati* (Das & Yaakob, 2003);
- Snake: *Oligodon booliati* (Leong & Grismer, 2004);
- Frog: *Kalophrynus limbooliati* (Matsui, Nishikawa, Belabut, Norhayati & Yong, 2012)
- Snail: *Rahula limbooliati* (Foon & Marzuki, 2020)

### Honorable recognitions

Dr. Lim has been awarded numerous accolades including the 1977 [Sandosham Gold Medal](#) from the Malaysian Society of Parasitology and Tropical Medicine, the 1995 [Science and Technology Award](#) by Malaysia Toray Science Foundation (MTSF) in recognition of his outstanding achievements in vertebrate ecology and zoonotic diseases in the environment, the 2007 [Spallanzani Award](#) from the North American Society for Bat Research, and the 2013 [Merdeka Award](#) for the environment category.

Thank you, Dr. Lim Boo Liat for your dedication and advocacy in protecting the nation's rich biodiversity!

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**We extend our thanks to the family of Dr. Lim and our partners for their support on this project. Below, Dr. Lim's close associates reflect on his life, legacy, and today's Doodle:**

*"Dr. Lim was an outstanding mammalogist and his accomplishments are highly regarded throughout the world. He was honored by the American Society of Mammalogists as one of our Honorary Members. This was conferred by a vote of the entire membership attending our annual meeting in June, 2003. Honorary Members are elected in recognition of distinguished service to the science of mammalogy. It is considered the Society's highest honor,"*

**– Dr. Robert M. Timm, past president and historian, American Society of Mammalogists.**

*"The late Dr Lim became a small mammal / zoology research advisor for FRIM between 1993 and 1996. From 1999 to 2004, he worked closely with FRIM researcher, Norsham Yaakob, on a herpetofauna study. This prolific collaboration resulted in 13 publications altogether, including the discovery of a new species of mountain reed snake that's found nowhere else other than Genting Highlands, Malaysia. The inspiration, motivation and good example set by the late Dr Lim as well as his contributions will forever be remembered by the scientific circle,"*

**– Dr. Ismail Parlan, director-general, Forest Research Institute Malaysia.**

*"Dr. Lim had built strong characters in many people as field scientists. He was the father of zoology in Malaysia,"*

**– Prof. Dr. Norhayati Ahmad, research expert, Malaysia Biodiversity Information System.**

*"He used to come regularly to the MNS office, just to see us, have a chat, take us out for lunch, give advice, and help where needed. He was always very supportive of my work, and as far as I'm concerned,*

*he was one of the kindest and nicest men I've had the honor to meet and to know. We always look forward to his visits, as his office visits always made our day,"*

**– Lee Su Win, former executive officer, Malaysian Nature Society.**

*"Dr. Lim's six decades of scientific research and advocacy in protecting the nation's rich biodiversity has contributed immensely to the nation. He is an outstanding zoologist and has made significant contributions to the conservation of Malaysia's bio-diversity and the protection of our natural heritage. His wide-ranging work has had significant impact on Malaysia and Malaysians and it truly embodies the Spirit of Merdeka,"*

**– The Merdeka Award.**

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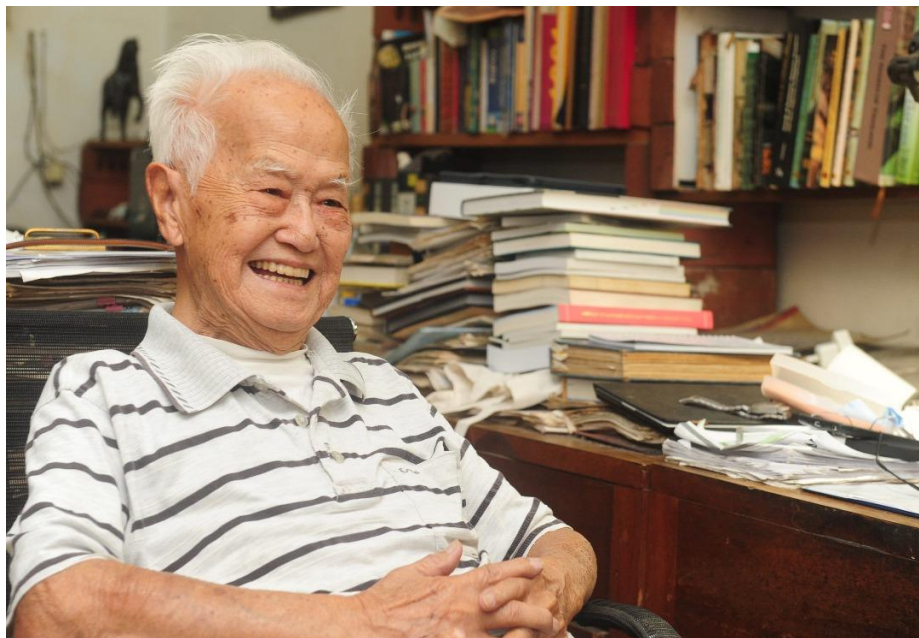


*Pictured: Dr. Lim Boo Liat working on a specimen of the yellow-throated marten, known locally as the 'musang leher kuning'. Photo credit: Courtesy of Malaysian Nature Society*





*Pictured: A young Dr. Lim Boo Liat as a lab assistant at the Institute for Medical Research, Kuala Lumpur in 1948.  
Photo credit: Courtesy of Dr. Lim's family*



*Pictured: Dr. Lim Boo Liat in his study room.  
Photo credit: Courtesy of Dr. Lim's family*

Be sure to also check out our [YouTube channel](#) where we share some messages from Dr. Lim's close associates where they talked about his impact on the study of local fauna and the lives of many in the industry.

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**Note to Editor:** Download images [here](#).

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