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✓ <u>Chief Editor's Desk</u>	<u>2</u>
✓ <u>News &amp; Reports</u>	<u>7</u>
✓ <u>Language Club News &amp; Reports</u>	<u>16</u>
✓ <u>Image &amp; Lifestyle</u>	<u>44</u>
✓ <u>Pet Lovers' Central</u>	<u>70</u>
✓ <u>Lecturer's Contribution</u>	<u>93</u>
✓ <u>Creative Corner</u>	<u>119</u>
✓ <u>The Team</u>	<u>131</u>



# Pet Lovers' central

<a href="#"><u>Owning Leopard Tortoises</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>71</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Tricky Treats!</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>77</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Naming Your Cat</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>81</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Stingless Bees in Malaysia</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>86</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>My journal of raising a poodle puppy.</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>89</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>My Memorable Visit to Pet Expo Malaysia in Penang</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>91</u></a>





## Stingless Bees in Malaysia

*By Wan Noorli Razali*

Stingless bees, scientifically known as Meliponini, are a unique and vital component of Malaysia's rich biodiversity. Unlike their stinging counterparts, these bees possess vestigial stingers, rendering them harmless to humans. Malaysia, with its tropical climate and abundant flora, provides an ideal habitat for these industrious pollinators, playing a crucial role in both natural ecosystems and agricultural productivity.



Thoracica stingless bee log

The significance of stingless bees in Malaysia extends beyond their docile nature. They are exceptional pollinators, contributing to the fertilization of a wide range of plants. This includes several economically important crops such as mangoes, guavas, and various other fruits and vegetables. Their pollination services are indispensable for maintaining the health and yield of these crops, ensuring food security and supporting local economies.



Honey pots

In recent years, there has been growing interest in meliponiculture, the practice of stingless beekeeping, in Malaysia. This sustainable agricultural practice not only provides farmers with additional income through the sale of honey, propolis, and beeswax but also promotes environmental stewardship. Stingless bee honey, known for its distinct taste and medicinal properties, is highly sought after in both local and international markets.

The most commonly found species in Malaysia include *Heterotrigona itama*, *Geniotrigona thoracica*, and *Lepidotrigona terminata*. *Heterotrigona itama* is the most prevalent and widely cultivated species in Malaysian meliponiculture. Known for its robust foraging behavior, this species thrives in various environments, from forests to agricultural landscapes. It is highly valued for its honey and propolis production.

*Geniotrigona thoracica*, another significant species, is notable for its larger size compared to other stingless bees. This species is often found in lowland forests and is known for producing high-quality honey with unique medicinal properties. Their colonies are robust and can adapt to various environmental conditions.



**Lepidotrigona terminata**, though less common, is an important pollinator in Malaysian forests. This species is distinguished by its smaller size and specific nesting habits, often choosing hollow tree trunks for their hives. They play a vital role in the pollination of native flora, contributing to the maintenance of forest ecosystems.

Despite their benefits, stingless bees face numerous challenges in Malaysia. Habitat loss due to deforestation, agricultural expansion, and urbanization poses a significant threat to their populations. Additionally, pesticide use can adversely affect these sensitive pollinators, leading to declines in their numbers. Conservation efforts are essential to protect these bees and their habitats, ensuring their continued contribution to Malaysia's ecology and agriculture.

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Harvesting the honey from the Itama honey pots.

