

Obituary

HAJI MUSTAFA KAMIL OESMAN (1915 - 2004)

Brought up in a religious atmosphere, the Oesman family believes that the recognition of the Creator's existence is in the philosophical appreciation of nature and its processes. Mustafa Kamil and his younger brother Helmy Oesman were no exception. Whereas Helmy maintained a broad interest in nature and photography, Kamil became an enthusiastic ornithologist.

Mustafa Kamil Oesman was born in Gresik, East Java, on 15 August 1915. He developed his professional career in the oil industry, but after retiring in 1969, 'Pak Kamil' (as he was popularly known) found great interest and pleasure in studying the Indonesian avifauna. The later part of his life was devoted to promoting interest in Indonesian wildlife, birds in particular. Many will remember his support for the younger generation of Indonesian students, and his delightful sense of humour. A self-taught naturalist, he was popular among hobbyists and breeders, as well as scientists and conservation authorities in Indonesian government circles. He developed a great animosity towards bird trade, and made birding and conservation activities his top priority.

Pak Kamil established the Indonesian Bird Society (PBI) in 1973, and co-founded the Indonesian Zoological Park Association (PKBSI), with Harsono RM in 1975. He was closely associated with the International Council for Bird Preservation (ICBP) during the mid-seventies, and its offspring Birdlife International during the 1980s. In 1996 he was rewarded with Honorary Membership (which is a lifetime membership) in recognition for his tireless contribution towards the promotion of public interest in the conservation of birds and their habitats. In particular, Pak Kamil was a passionate supporter for national and international efforts to save the Bali Starling. Pak Kamil died on 29 October 2004 in Jakarta from at the age of 89. He is survived by his wife and three daughters. Friends and colleagues will deeply miss this jovial yet highly motivated ornithological enthusiast and conservationist.

(Written by Sampurno Kadarsan, with contributions from Richard Grimmett, Bas van Helvoort and Mochamad Indrawan)