

[The Star Online](#) > Focus

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Swiftlet farming will boost economy

THE Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP) appreciates the concern highlighted in “It’s time to ban farming of swiftlets” (*The Star*, Aug 28).

Edible-nest swiftlet (*Aerodramus fuciphagus*) is currently protected under the Protection of Wildlife Act 1972 [Act 76]. It is widely distributed in the South-East Asian region and commonly mistaken for swallows.

The swiftlet is slightly smaller in size and is free flying, perching only at its nest and nowhere else.

This is one of the species which is known to have commercial value throughout the world. Due to that, many venture into this industry and bird-houses have mushroomed throughout peninsular Malaysia, especially in the urban areas.

In order to lure the swiftlets into the house, the bird-house operator will set up speakers playing bird sounds outside and inside the house.

Currently the DWNP, together with related agencies and with cooperation from Bird Nest Association, is revising the guidelines on time usage to play the audio.

A sampling conducted by a related agency shows that the swiftlet is not a carrier of the bird flu disease.

The bird-houses are regularly cleaned as the swiftlets prefer a clean environment. Bird-house operators also practise systematic harvesting of bird nests, done only when the fledglings have left the nest to fend for themselves.

Currently, the DWNP is conducting research under the 9th Malaysia Plan for the sustainable management and conservation on the species. The results will help the DWNP in conserving this species, and at the same time benefit Malaysians and the country’s economy.

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