

Make Pulau Kendi Area an Angling Zone Only
By
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Most anglers in Penang know Pulau Kendi and have fished there. This is because the island itself is very close to the main island and can be reached by sampans. One side of the island is quite deep, suitable for bottom fishing and float fishing. The shallower side is quite suitable for trolling. On a good day, may be the good days are getting more rare now, tenggiri, barracuda are caught by trolling, kerapu, gerut-gerut not to mention duri and gelama are caught by bottom fishing. I myself have caught haruan tasik there.

Not far from the island there are a few ship wrecks commonly known as Japanese wreck, Taiwan wreck and slightly further away, pari wreck. These are very fertile fishing grounds. The water is about 100 feet deep and offers many species of fish, including, besides what have been mentioned, jenahak, tuna, selar, tamban, cincaru and talang. The advantage of fishing in the area is that it can be done on a day-trip, you can do float fishing, bottom fishing and jigging at the same time. There are also boats for hire there from Pangkalan Asam or Teluk Kumbar. It is very convenient and the chances of catching something are there. My article in Rod and Line about tenggiri caught there during the El Nino season (1997) bears witness to this.

One thing that should be noted is that most of the tenggiri, baraccuda and jenahak caught there are with eggs. Local fishermen say fish go there to spawn. I used to see tiny fries swimming close to rocks. I believe what they say.

The Fisheries Department has placed tyre-wrecks close to the island. But, most of them seem to have been scattered by trawlers. A few years ago an old boat was placed (not dropped) there with the good intention of making it a reef. Unfortunately, it was placed on the wrong side of the island, i.e. the shallow side causing half the boat to be above the water posing danger to boats.

The greatest threat to the fishing ground in the area, as in most places, comes from trawlers. Next is the apollo-net fishermen who come from outside Penang even though they do not come very often. Next is the use of nets. It I observed that whenever some anglers catch a few tenggiri, a few days later, we will nets around the island, to the frustration of anglers.

What should be done? Let us talk about Pulau Kendi proper. I think the water immediately around Pulau kendi, say one nautical mile or whatever, should be turned into an exclusive zone for angling only. Meaning, fish can be caught there but only using hook and line, with or without rod, but not rawai. Even fishermen

can catch fish there provided they use hook and line. All other methods of fishing should be prohibited.

There should be rule about size limit. Certain species of fish below a certain size should be released. A certain period in a year, during the period when fish come to Pulau Kendi to spawn, if they do, may even be closed to fishing. Let them reproduce first and then catch.

Now let us consider the pros and cons. Arguments in favour first. If that is done anglers will have a place to fish. As I always say, you don't exhaust the sea with hooks and line. Fish are not caught indiscriminately. The fish that are caught must in the first place be willing to take the bait. There is that voluntary act on the part of the fish. Many may not take the bait at all and escape. Fish have a chance to spawn and breed there.

The only argument against the suggestion that I can think of is that it will deprive local fishermen from earning their livelihood. I do not think this is a very strong argument. First, (I am only talking about the vicinity of Pulau Kendi) even now they cannot earn a living by placing their nets there alone. Secondly, they should supplement their income by taking anglers to go fishing. As I have said many times, they should also catch anglers instead of fish. Compare what Ah San and Ah Guan and their colleagues earn by taking anglers to go fishing with what the fishermen using nets catching fish in the area.

We know that the Fisheries Department has agreed in principle to license fishing boats to taking anglers to go fishing for hire. They should snatch the opportunity.

The problem will be enforcement. It is unfortunate that in this country there are always greedy, mean and inconsiderate people who think only of their own short-term gain. I know it is not possible for the authorities to patrol the area everyday. But, I think there is no harm trying. Once the anglers know that the area is an exclusive angling zone, they will be too willing to co-operate with the authorities. Anglers will be there every day. Make use of them to give information. Of course there must be contact persons who must act, quickly.

The alternative is to privatize it. Give someone, say the Fishermen's Association in the area, the "fishing" right over the area. They pay a certain fee annually to the Government. They are allowed to charge a small fee on anglers who fish there, along the same principle as the commercial ponds. It will be their responsibility to see that no other methods of fishing are used there.

I think it is worth giving a try. Who knows that it may turn out to be a model that can be applied in other places.

I think, in this article I should only confine myself to the immediate vicinity of Pulau Kendi first. I don't want to be too ambitious.

I must also stress that the views expressed here are of general nature. No study is made. Indeed I am not qualified to make an in-depth study on the subject. But, even the construction of the pyramid began with an idea. Then, the technocrats come in to think of the details as to how it is to be done.

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