

## Tour Report

# Borneo – Borneo's Rare Mammals

14 October – 26 October 2019

**Sunda Pangolin**



**Marbled Cat**



**Otter Civet**



**Proboscis Monkey**



Compiled by Siti Salihahfarhain Saidin

Tour Leader: Siti Salihahfarhain Saidin with 6 participants

The diversity and abundance of wildlife in Deramakot once again has proven it to be the best location for mammal watchers and birdwatchers alike to see the rare and elusive wildlife of Sabah, Borneo. In total throughout our 12-days trip we had about 45 species of mammals, 113 species of birds, 9 species of reptiles and 6 species of frogs.

The highlight of the trip was definitely none other than the rare and totally protected Sunda pangolin, the elusive marbled cat, Sunda skunk, a pair of otter civet hunting for frogs in a puddle near the bank, a herd of Bornean pygmy elephant and smooth-coated otter. We were delighted with the quality of our elephant and proboscis monkey sightings, and not forgetting the orangutans, gibbons, slow lorises, colugos, civets, and moonrat that we saw. We also enjoyed several excellent sightings of birds, including species which are endemic to the island of Borneo and common species such as Storm's stork, lesser adjutant, the colourful rhinoceros hornbill, Bornean falconet, buffy fish owl, barred-eagle owl, Blyth's hawk eagle, changeable-hawk eagle, verditer flycatcher, reddish scops owl, whiskered treeswift, stork-billed kingfisher, rufous-backed kingfisher, wreathed and wrinkled hornbill, white-bellied woodpecker, white-crowned shama, dusky munia, baya weaver, mangrove blue flycatcher, brown boobook and many more. Though we didn't have many sightings of amphibians and reptiles, we were lucky to encounter an Atlas moth, a large saturniid moth endemic to the forests of Asia and a three-metre-long reticulated python on our last night at Deramakot.

## **Days 1-2: London Heathrow to Kuala Lumpur; Kuala Lumpur to Sandakan/Sepilok Forest Reserve**

**Monday 14 to Tuesday 15 October 2019**

The group travelled from London, departing from Heathrow Airport on a midday Malaysian Airlines flight to Kuala Lumpur (KL), a journey of about 12 hours. I met with the group at the arrival lounge at Sandakan Airport on October 15th. Once there, everyone was driven by minibus to Sepilok Nature Resort, a 30-minute drive. After a visit to our chalets to drop off bags and get organised, we relaxed in the restaurant area for lunch. After lunch, we had more relaxation time, but several of us decided to wander around the resort area to do a little bit of birdwatching. Walking around the resort compound, we saw our first hornbill (Asian black hornbill): between three and five individuals feeding on ripe figs before flying off.

After our short birdwatching activity around the resort, we went back to our respective rooms to get a quick rest before meeting up with everyone else at the resort lobby for our night walk. At 5.45pm we got transferred via minibus to the Rainforest Discovery Centre to meet our ranger and spotter, James and Jan, respectively. The night walk included sightings such as red giant flying squirrels, mother and baby slow loris, rufous-backed kingfisher, a really good close up of flying lemur, bent-toed gecko, barking gecko and several house geckos. Insects sighted include whip-tailed scorpion, Malaysian forest scorpion, brown tarantula, and huntsman spiders. In addition, we also sighted grass frog, Collett's tree frog and banded bull frog.

The western tarsier was nowhere to be found during this activity. Nevertheless, everyone enjoyed the sightings, especially the mother and baby slow loris. We were then sent via transportation back to the lodge for dinner and rest for the night.

## **Day 3: Sepilok Nature Resort/Sunbear Centre/Kinabatangan Wetlands Resort**

**Wednesday 16 October 2019**

Up early, we went for a morning walk along the road in search of wildlife. Sightings included plantain squirrels, Prevost squirrel, pink-necked green pigeon and Asian glossy starlings. There were also good sightings of sunbirds such as the copper-throated sunbird, olive-backed sunbird and the brightly coloured eastern crimson sunbird. Flowerpeckers were abundant and included a pair of orange-bellied flowerpecker

and uncommon scarlet-backed flowerpecker hopping around while finding caterpillars for breakfast. As we were heading back to the lodge for breakfast, we encountered old nests of baya weavers, with a sighting of a single female amidst a flock of chestnut munias. This was considered lucky as it was after the nesting period, people normally wouldn't be able to see them. Javan mynas frequented the roadside as we were getting close to the lodge.

At the lodge, a traditional English breakfast awaited us. After our meal, we visited the famous Bornean Sun Bear Conservation Centre to learn about the conservation efforts of the world's smallest bear. We were also privileged to meet up with the founder of the center, Dr Wong Siew Te and he was kind enough to answer some of our questions during our visit. He then showed us a juvenile Bornean keeled pit viper that he spotted near one of the platforms through his spotting scope. We also had a good sighting of a horned flying lizard landing on a tree. It was an amazing spectacle as it's not an everyday chance to see one gliding. We then headed back to the lodge to proceed for checkout.

After a 40-minute drive, we arrived at the jetty to continue our journey to Kinabatangan Wetland Resort via boat for about an hour and 30 minutes, cruising the ocean before entering a river surrounded by mangrove trees and nipah palms. Brahminy kites, whiskered terns, white-bellied sea eagles and an abundance of egrets were our sightings during the boat ride heading to the resort. A buffet-style lunch was served upon arrival. Needless to say, the resort was beautiful, and its seclusion from other resorts made it a unique experience.

Our first river cruise commenced at 4.30pm and went in search of the critically endangered proboscis monkey. We saw a troop of long-tailed macaques with a few juveniles playing around, not bothered by our presence. As we cruised from the smaller channel to the main river, we finally spotted the endemic proboscis monkeys. Silvered langur was sighted as well, out in the open, and we watched them jumping around, hiding themselves into the vegetation away from us. As we cruised a little further upstream, to our surprise, we encountered our first orangutan in the wild, happily feeding just beside the river. It was amazing to witness its natural behaviour, completely oblivious to our presence as it was feasting on a tree which fruits are locally known as 'kerodong'. Egrets, darters and birds of prey are often seen during the river cruise too. As dusk approaches, we slowly headed back to the lodge, hoping for any new or interesting sightings along the way.

We were greeted with hot towels to refresh ourselves from the cruise upon arrival, as we headed back to our respective rooms to prepare for dinner and the night cruise. After dinner, we headed out at 8.30pm. As we were going to the jetty, we saw four Sambar deer walking amongst the mangrove vegetation. While cruising, we spotted our first civet – Bornean striped palm civet – hiding away in between palm leaves and rattans, as well as a few sleeping birds that included stork-billed kingfisher, blue-eared kingfisher and collared kingfisher. We also saw several insectivorous bat species hunting above the water surface. Our first owl species, buffy fish owl came into sight perching pretty low in the open vegetation, fully focused on its possible prey inside the waters. As we cruised back to the lodge, we had a quick sighting of a brown hawk owl before it flew off into the vegetation. A few smaller sized saltwater crocodiles were seen alongside the bank, but they were very skittish. Sightings were pretty quiet after that yet we enjoyed the breathtaking view of the starry sky above us as we cruised back to the lodge. We then returned to our rooms to rest for the night, in preparation for our early morning cruise the next day.

#### **Day 4: Cruising along the lower tributary of Kinabatangan River**

**Thursday 17 October 2019**

We gathered at the dining area for a quick coffee and then set off for our morning cruise. Walking to the jetty we saw a bearded pig strolling along the boardwalk. The weather was a little chilly in the morning but refreshing, and we were surrounded by the sound of wildlife waking up to the day. We then cruised along the river and sighted a pair of oriental pied hornbill basking under the sun – they were drying off their wings

from the overnight mist. The main highlight of the cruise was a bachelor group of proboscis monkeys foraging near the bank, giving us lovely clear views and a chance to photograph several individuals alongside a harem group. Sightings of long-tailed macaques had become a daily occurrence for us, as they were abundant along the banks, if not feasting on the fruits up in the trees. Apart from that, we also sighted the second largest woodpecker species in Borneo, the white-bellied woodpecker, flying above us as we were watching the troop of proboscis monkey. We then cruised into a smaller tributary known as the Oxbow Lake and stopped there a quick 20-minute rest accompanied by coffee, tea and sandwiches as our light breakfast.

After taking our proper and rather more substantial breakfast back at the lodge, we rested and did our Animal Check List an hour prior to lunch. We then headed out for our next, and longer, river cruise at 3.30pm, hoping to encounter the Bornean pygmy elephant. As usual, our sightings include long-tailed macaques, egrets, silver langur and proboscis monkeys but with an additional new sighting of Storm's storks hovering in the distance. Crested goshawk was a welcome addition as well as hill myna and the oriental dollarbird, and other birds as well. We saw another orangutan, and got a good view as it climbed down the tree trunk and disappeared into the lower vegetation. Finally, we added another primate sighting – pig-tailed macaque – that evening.

We waited until it got dark before heading back to the lodge to do some night-spotting. Saltwater crocodiles and buffy fish owl were again showing themselves as we headed back to the lodge and we stopped by an area to enjoy a display of flashing fireflies – they were gathered on a tree and resembled a Christmas tree and its flashing ornaments and lights. It made for a fitting end to our stay at the Kinabatangan River. As we enjoyed our dinner, we had a briefing about our next destination and journey before returning to our respective rooms to rest.

## **Day 5: Kinabatangan Wetlands Resort to Sukau Lepit Jetty; Gomantong Cave to Deramakot Forest Reserve**

### **Friday 18 October 2019**

Today consisted of travelling towards Deramakot. We had an early rise for breakfast at 6.15am before boarding the boat towards the next jetty upstream at Sukau. The cruise didn't give us the opportunity to stop for wildlife but despite that, we had a good sighting of a pair of perching Storm's storks as we headed out of the small river channel before joining the main river. At the jetty, our driver picked us up, loaded all our luggage into one van while we got into another. After a 20-minute drive, we arrived at Gomantong Cave, parked our van and headed to the counter to pay our entrance and camera fee. We then continued walking on the boardwalk until we reached the entrance of the Simud Hitam cave which is open to the public. As we got closer to the cave we could smell the guano in the air as the breeze swiftly passed by. The smell was pungent and acceptable to most of us, but not all. Near the entrance to the cave we saw several swift species flying about in and out from the cave such as mossy-nest swiftlets and several nests of black-nest swiftlet on the cave wall. The boardwalk was not too slippery as it had been cleaned up recently. Around the cave were several other cave inhabitants including cave cockroaches, long-legged centipedes, freshwater crabs and a few cave spider species.

Other species of bats identified inhabiting the cave were the common acuminate horseshoe bat, free-tailed wrinkled-lipped bat, bent-winged bat, and several other bats that we are unable to identify roosting quite high up on the cave walls. We also saw a mother and baby orangutan moving among the vegetation through the open window inside the cave but they were quite distant. But then to our surprise, as we walked out the cave David saw another mother and baby orangutan near the mouth of the cave and called out to everyone to look. The sun was shining very brightly, but we had a good view and took several photos. We then continued walking back on the boardwalk and heard a high-pitched call from a squirrel. To our delight, we saw a plain pygmy squirrel climbing down a tree trunk – this is the smallest species of squirrel in the world (due to their small size, they move very quickly from one tree to another). After we

had had our fill of watching the squirrel, we continued back to the parking lot where our van was waiting for us.

After washing our boots, we got into the van and continued our journey for another couple of hours before stopping for lunch at a local restaurant in the town of Telupid. After lunch, we did a little bit of a shopping as some of us needed torchlights. We then met our drivers, to a 4WD which would be perfect for the rugged journey to Deramakot ahead of us. Driving towards Deramakot, we saw a few common bird species along the palm oil plantations including zebra doves, spotted doves, and flocks of cattle egrets, mynas and munias. Getting close to Deramakot's entrance gate, we saw three long-tailed macaques swimming in the pond and several medium sized water monitor lizards crossing the road.

We arrived at the base camp and settled into our rooms. We had a bit of free time to rest from the long journey before meeting up with everyone for dinner at 7.30pm. During dinner, we discussed the activities for the night as well as for tomorrow, which consisted of waking up pretty early to look for gibbons. We then had for our first three-hour night safari in Deramakot, in search of nocturnal mammals. Our first mammal of the night, Bornean striped palm civet, was sighted not too far away from the base camp on a fig tree surrounded by abundant of ripe fruits. That night our other sightings included a sleeping yellow-bellied prinia, a group of large fruit bats flying above a flowering tree, a distant Bornean slow loris, black flying squirrel, Thomas's flying squirrel, island palm civet and a skittish solitary Sunda leopard cat. Our first night safari had proven to be successful and in excellent conditions. After our drive, we returned to our rooms for the night.

## **Day 6: Morning & nocturnal drives, Deramakot Forest Reserve**

### **Saturday 19 October 2019**

Today it was an early start for most of us. Fuelled by coffee and tea at 6am, we then left for our morning drive in search of gibbons and other wildlife. We could hear their whooping and calling far in the distance but none of them showed up. It went quiet after that, but we had some new bird species including Oriental honey buzzard, crested goshawk, changeable-hawk-eagle, blue-crowned hanging parrot, silver-rumped spinetails, whiskered treeswift, blue-throated bee-eater, the second largest hornbill species, rhinoceros hornbill, along with wrinkled and wreathed hornbill, golden-whiskered barbet, Malaysian pied fantail, the noisy greater racket-tailed drongo, dusky munia, Oriental magpie robin, Asian brown flycatcher, yellow-vented bulbul and olive-winged bulbul.

Returning to our base, we enjoyed a hearty breakfast and discussed our activities for the rest of the day – namely, an early dinner at 5.30pm and night safari at 6.35pm, on which we'd try our luck at finding the elusive wild cats. Most of us decided to get more rest after the morning drive and to ensure that we had had enough rest for our long drive. At 12.30pm we then met again for a simple traditional lunch. In the evening, some of us rested and several of us walked around the grounds to look for wildlife.

After an early dinner at 5.30pm, we went spotlighting. In a few hours we saw eight new mammals: common porcupine, moonrats, Malay civet, bearded pig, lesser mousedeer, greater mousedeer, Sambar deer and Bornean pygmy elephants. The moon rat was spotted at different locations; both sightings gave us a close view of them before they went into some long grasses. The Bornean pygmy elephant was the highlight of the drive, and when we came across some forestry staff on their way back to the base camp, they mentioned to us that they had seen a herd of pygmy elephants at KM23. We then made the decision to drive past other mammals in order to see the elephants. We drove to the area as quickly as possible and saw a herd on the side of the road, grazing on the grasses and vegetation. We had excellent views of the herd at different locations about 2 kilometres away from each other. We watched them for a few minutes until they started trumpeting and moved away. There were at least 20 of them. We then returned to the lodge to rest.

## **Day 7: Early wildlife excursion & night drives at Deramakot**

**Sunday 20 October 2019**

Our first outing of the day was a long night drive after an early dinner. Most of us spent the day resting as we'd returned quite late from yesterday's night safari (having had excellent views of the elephants). After dinner, we left the car park and started spotlighting for wildlife. During the first hour we saw our first colugo in Deramakot. It was high in a tree, clinging to the trunk, and we watched as it moved to the other side of the trunk and climbed to a thicker foliage in the middle of the canopy. Driving along the road we encountered a bluish eye reflection on a tree not too far. As we drove nearer, we saw a marbled cat resting quietly on the branch. We got really excited as it is one of the elusive wild cats we had hoped to see, as well as the clouded leopard. We asked the driver to switch off the engine as we did not want to scare the animal away. After a while, the marbled cat moved and turned its back to us. Because we couldn't see it very well, we decided to get out of the car and walk along the road to get a better view. It was definitely the right decision; as we were trying to get into position to take photos, the marbled cat suddenly climbed to a branch above and gave us an astounding view showing its beautiful patterns and amazingly fluffy tail.

We spent about 30 minutes watching and enjoying every detail of the individual before it climbed back to the branch where we had first spotted it and disappeared from view. We got back into the car very excited and pleased with the amazing views we'd had and continued our drive. Along the road we saw an island palm civet walking along, looking at us, before it hurriedly jumped into the roadside vegetation. We had a couple of good views of this species on our safari along with Bornean striped palm civet.

After a couple of hours, we stopped to stretch our legs. The fig tree next to where we had parked was fruiting, and we saw a couple of short-nosed fruit bats flying around it. As we continued with the drive, we stopped to view a trefoil horseshoe bat hanging under a branch. Trefoil horseshoe bats feed on variety of airborne insect life which it detects by echolocation whilst hanging from its perch. In addition to the mammals, we saw three species of frog: dark-eared tree frog, file-eared frog and the less famous harlequin tree frog which belongs to same family, Rhacophoridae, as the famous Wallace's flying frog. We finished quite late, arriving back at our lodge around 3.50am, and went straight to bed.

## **Day 8: Late afternoon drive & our first Deramakot rain shower**

**Monday 21 October 2019**

Today we caught up on some sleep and had breakfast late, around 9.30am. For breakfast we were served toast, scrambled eggs, sausages and slices of fruit. After breakfast we went through last night's sightings and updated our checklists. Some of us decided to go and rest while others went around the surrounding forest for a stroll to look for birds before it got too hot for a walk. We all met for lunch at 2.30pm and enjoyed a Malaysian-style buffet while waiting for the hot sun to subside. We began our late afternoon drive at 3.30pm; an Oriental darter perching on a branch at the pond next to the main road was our first sighting of the day. We then continued driving up to a road called the 'Whitehouse' which area has been previously logged but left for a certain period. A couple of members of the group had been keen to see the Bornean falconet and we did on this drive – we found a pair perching high up, but in full view, on a branch next to our car! Bornean falconet is the smallest bird of prey and endemic to Sabah in the island of Borneo; it's also known as white-fronted falconet and is only 14-16 centimetres long – comparable to the size of a typical house sparrow. While looking at the bird, we felt a few raindrops. And then what had been a few drops of rain turned rather suddenly into a downpour – the first rain shower on our safaris here.

Everyone enjoyed the short, cool shower. Having our car parked next to a pond, we saw a water monitor lizard lying on a dead tree trunk. As we approached the 'Whitehouse' (an empty building down a side track off the road), we saw crested firebacks by the side of the road; spooked by our presence they quickly fled into the forest. The firebacks only gave us a fleeting view and only several of us saw it. At the Whitehouse

compound we stopped for coffee, tea and snacks and waited for dusk. As soon as it got darker, we drove back spotlighting for nocturnal mammals. Driving out along the small road we saw another colugo but it was quite distant compared to the one we saw during a night walk at the Rainforest Discovery Centre. To our amazement, a Sunda stink badger walked in front of our car. Despite the common name, stink badgers are not closely related to true badgers and are, instead, Old World relatives of the skunks. Further up we ignored some of the distant sightings of squirrels and civets but then stopped for a Malay civet foraging on the road ahead of our vehicle with its head held low searching for frogs after the rain. We took some good photos of the animal before it scurried off into the vegetation. We came back early for dinner at 8pm due to bad weather conditions and had an early rest that night in preparation for our early dawn drive the next day (leaving at 3.30am).

### **Day 9: Dawn Drive to Balat; late afternoon & night drives**

#### **Tuesday 22 October 2019**

We depart from the base at 3.30am heading towards the riverside known as 'Balat'. A short way along the road passing by the 'No Name' River, I stopped the car as I had glimpsed an otter swimming and then climbing onto a dead log. I looked through my binocular for closer inspection and to my delight mentioned it was a smooth otter, another rare mammal not often sighted by the guides here. The otter was very accommodating, just resting its head on the log while taking a short peek at its surrounding before swimming back into the river. Its head popped above the surface from time to time before it gradually swam off into the river and disappeared from view. Our sightings were a bit quiet after that, but we did see some flying squirrels and civets. These species are abundant around Deramakot and we thought we would also see them on today's night safari.

As soon as sunrise approached, the forest began to teem with life from various bird species to singing gibbons. We soon reached the riverside and rested a little from the drive. Our driver took out the thermoses from the car and we enjoyed coffee, tea, snacks and some packed egg sandwiches, all made by our lovely Chef Dun. It was still very misty when we left the area. While the daytime sun was still acceptable for some of us, we decided to walk in search of more species to add to our checklist. We found the walk refreshing and saw a couple of birds that were new for us such as Blyth's hawk-eagle, verditer flycatcher, bronze drongo, grey-rumped treeswift, black-and-yellow broadbill, dark-throated oriole, slender-billed crow, thick-billed spiderhunter, a brief view of spectacled spiderhunter, greater and lesser green leafbird, dark-sided flycatcher, chestnut-winged babbler and scaly-crowned babbler. Driving back to the base, other mammal species sighted included the lovely north Bornean gibbons, Prevost's squirrel, Sunda pig-tailed macaque and cream-coloured giant squirrel which was a new addition to our species list.

We came back to base at 10.50am for an early lunch and rested for the rest of the day until 6.00pm, when we had dinner and embarked on another night drive.

Tonight proved to be a lucky and delightful sighting for us. Driving onto a small old logging road, we saw a new bat species, a diadem roundleaf bat, hanging from a long vine that was itself hanging from the underside of the tree near the road before it flew off. We also saw a Malay civet foraging close to the bank; we enjoyed good views before it scurried off into the vegetation. We also saw a Sunda leopard cat but it was skittish and hurriedly ran down a slope, disappearing from our sight. As we came out from the smaller road onto a bigger one, we came upon the rare Sunda pangolin! It was crossing in front of our vehicle in full view, before disappearing into the dense vegetation. Pangolin are seen far less frequently at Deramakot than clouded leopard, so this was a very exciting sighting for the group. One member of the group was absolutely delighted, as she had really wanted to see one in the wild. It was truly a lucky though brief encounter for us and we could hardly believe our luck. A wild Sunda pangolin! After a couple of hours of seeing mostly civets and flying squirrel, as we passed by KM21. I stopped the vehicle as soon as I saw a pair of eyes reflecting in the distance from inside a tree hole. I thought it might be some sort of civet at first but then as soon as it climbed out from the hole, giving the group and myself a better view of the animal, it

revealed itself as a yellow-throated marten. A pair of yellow-throated martens then climbed down from the tree in turns before becoming hidden by the vegetation in front of us. Not too far from where we saw the martens, we could hear noisy calls from a bird and as I moved the spotlight, searching for the source of the noise, we saw a group of bushy-crested hornbills sleeping, huddled close to each another on a branch less than a metre away from our vehicle. After 1 KM, we stopped for a quick stretch and coffee to keep us awake and continued our search for the forest's elusive mammals. As we drove to a corner, we then saw a pair of otter civets strolling next to the road, hunting for frogs in the puddles. What a delight for all of us! As soon as the otter civet realised our presence, it disappeared into the vegetation. We wanted to get more views of this odd-looking creature. It is the only civet species that is adapted to an aquatic life and consequently has developed slightly webbed toes. After a couple of minutes' waiting in silence, the otter civet popped its head between the grasses as if it was going to emerge, but then seemed to think better of the idea on seeing us and went away. Nonetheless delighted, we continued our drive, passing by more flying squirrels and a bat clinging to a dead Macaranga leaf. We couldn't identify the species as there's an array of fruit bats species in Borneo; we took a photo and decided to do further identification using our Mammals of Borneo book the following morning. As we reached KM 10, I saw a pair of eye reflections amidst some bird's nest fern leaves about 3 metres up a seraya tree – another marbled cat hidden in the vegetation. The head stuck out from time to time among the leaves, but we didn't get a full view of its body. We then decided not to wait for it to come out as most of us were pretty happy with the excellent view we'd had the previous day. We returned to base about 12.45am, all tired and ready for bed.

## **Day 10: Morning walk, Deramakot**

### **Wednesday 23 October 2019**

Some of the group decided to lie in, but a few of us met for coffee and then took a walk along the road to look for birds. At the start of our walk on the paved road from the lodge, we saw a beautiful red-bearded bee-eater perched on an electric wire. The red-bearded bee-eater is the largest bee-eater in Borneo and seeing one – a male with its contrasting plumage of a tinge of pink and red against its green body – is truly a delight. Continuing our walk to the main road we could hear the gibbons' whooping calls in the distance. We waited for a couple of minutes hoping to see the singers responsible for this wonderful morning orchestra, and we did. The gibbons were swaying amongst the vegetation in front of us, calling and then sitting on a branch giving us a full view of several individuals. We then saw a group of other guests who were staying in the reserve, led by another guide colleague of mine, commencing their morning walk. We informed them about the troop of gibbons that we had just seen and they stayed for a couple of minutes to have a look. A few moments afterwards, one of the group stopped and started photographing. The guide walked towards her guest and took a look in the vegetation. We followed and, as we looked through our binoculars, we saw a lesser treeshrew moving in between the dense foliage followed by several bulbul species. Afterwards, the rest of them walked past us looking for more birds and photographing them.

As we took a turn to return back to the lodge, we saw another Bornean falconet perching on a small branch sticking out from a tree canopy, giving itself a bird's eye view looking out for possible prey.

Soon we could hear our stomachs growling, and we laughed as we walked back to meet everyone for breakfast. At breakfast we discussed our sightings from last night and talked about how lucky we were to have seen several rare and elusive species in a single night, and we ticked species off on our checklist in high spirits – especially when we reached the Sunda pangolin. In addition to our morning walk, we had several new species including yellow-vented flowerpecker, lesser cuckooshrike, ashy (red-headed) tailorbird and cream-vented bulbul. We heard a call from a blue-banded pitta but sadly it did not show itself.

We had some free time before meeting up with everyone again for lunch. At 4pm, we left the parking lot and continued with our late afternoon drive. On our drive, we encountered another group focusing on something in a tree. Curious as always, we knew that they might have seen something. We stopped our car,



talked to their guide and he mentioned that an orangutan was around. Hearing the news, Alfred switched off the car engine and we got out of the car, trying to get a better view of the orangutan. We positioned ourselves at a point where we could get a better view of the individual. We watched until dusk and it was too dark for us to get more views, then continued with our nocturnal spotting until we reached the base for dinner.

Shortly after dinner at 10pm, we went for a drive that lasted until 1am seeing only lesser mousedeer, flying squirrels and civets. Despite the quiet night, we were happy that we managed to see some wildlife and had several good close views.

## **Day 11: Early start & long night drives at Deramakot**

### **Thursday 24 October 2019**

We went out for our morning drive at 6.30am after a quick coffee. We passed by the tree where we had seen the orangutan yesterday evening and did a quick inspection among the foliage. We noticed a freshly made nest from last night and shortly after, an orangutan made an appearance and started moving out from the nest. We spent some quality time watching the orangutan. Our morning safari sightings consisted of a solitary Prevost's squirrel, little green pigeons, blue-crowned hanging parrot, Raffle's malkoha, lesser and greater coucals, Oriental honey buzzard, crested serpent eagle, a brief view of a common emerald dove, silver-rumped spinetails, grey-rumped treeswifts, whiskered treeswifts, blue-eared barbet, the oddly miniature woodpecker rufous piculet, Malaysian pied fantail, bronze and greater racquet-tailed drongos, cawing slender-billed crows (as they flew above us), Asian fairy bluebird, dusky munias, Oriental magpie robin, Asian brown flycatcher, black-headed bulbul, yellow-vented bulbul, cream-vented bulbul, Asian red-eyed bulbul, a group of brown fulvettas, an excellent view of a family of rhinoceros hornbill with its juvenile, and a house swallow as we reached the base for breakfast.

Some of us went for walks around the road and others decided to rest. Then we met everyone again for lunch and continued resting the whole evening. Dinner was served at 5.30pm and then we departed for our last night safari at about 6.00pm.

Tonight we had our best sighting of a Sunda leopard cat as it sat and walked on a dead log beside the road within 15 metres from the vehicle. It blinked at us, before slowly strolling away and calling in a voice that sounded un-catlike behind a slope. We had seen several leopard cat on our previous drives but most of them are very skittish, so we were really happy to have had clear views of one. Another species that we had our best views of the trip of tonight was sambar deer. The deer just stood on the road ahead of us, unsure what to do, before eventually making its way into thick undergrowth. We saw a Malay civet cross the road, colugo, slow loris, red giant flying squirrel and Thomas's flying squirrel.

We also had two good sightings of owl that night: a buffy fish owl perching on a fallen tree at the side of the road and barred-eagle owl. A three-metre-long reticulated python also showed itself and we got several great photos of it.

## **Day 12: Visit to Sepilok Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre**

### **Friday 25 October 2019**

We had breakfast at about 7.30am before heading off to Sepilok at 8am. As we were preparing for our journey, one of our vehicles was delayed due to unforeseen circumstances which meant that we arrived at Sepilok Nature Resort about 1.30pm. After checking in, we continued to visit the Orangutan Rehab Centre at 2pm. First we visited the Outdoor Nursery where the younger orangutans are undergoing the Buddy System to learn how to forage for their own food by learning from the older ones before proceeding to the next phase. At around 3pm, we went to the Feeding Platform to check on the orangutans which came to

the platform to feed. A couple came by, including a dominant male named Malim. It was lucky for us as we were able to see one up close. We were informed that sometimes no orangutans show up as the whole purpose of the Rehab Centre is to prepare them to be able to forage without relying on the food prepared at the platform. Pig-tailed macaques were also around, stealing food, and one particular dominant male kept shoving food into its mouth; aware of Malim's presence he quickly ran into the forest when he couldn't put any more into his mouth. It was very amusing to watch his antics. Sepilok closed at 4pm, and we went back to the resort to have a late lunch – fish n' chips, salads and prawn cocktails were on the menu.

Everyone chose to rest in the afternoon and we arranged to meet up for our last dinner together at 8pm. The food at Sepilok Nature Resort was undeniably tasty with a selection of Western and Malaysian dishes. We had appetizers to start with and ended our meal with delicious desserts. After dinner we went through our checklist, ticking off the species we had seen today and last night, and talked about how pleased and lucky we had been with our sightings at Deramakot, despite the clouded leopard managing to elude us.

### **Day 13: Depart from Sandakan Airport to Heathrow, London**

#### **Saturday 26 October 2019**

Everyone decided to have an easy day today. Some of us went for breakfast at different times. Two members of the group went to the Sunbear Centre. Everyone met up at the lobby to checkout and we transferred to the airport at 11.45am, and there we said our goodbyes. The rest of the participants departed for their flight back to Heathrow and I went back to Sepilok to attend the Borneo Bird Festival at Rainforest Discovery Centre.

## Species observed

Crested Fireback  
Storm's Stork  
Lesser Adjutant  
Little (Striated) Heron  
Eastern Cattle Egret  
Great Egret  
Intermediate Egret  
Little Egret  
Oriental Darter  
Bornean Falconet  
Oriental Honey Buzzard  
Brahminy Kite  
White-bellied Sea Eagle  
Grey-headed Fish Eagle  
Crested Serpent Eagle  
Crested Goshawk  
Changeable Hawk-Eagle  
Blyth's Hawk-Eagle  
Wallace's Hawk-Eagle  
White-breasted Waterhen  
Common Sandpiper  
Whiskered Tern  
Rock (Feral) Pigeon  
Spotted Dove  
Common Emerald Dove  
Zebra Dove  
Little Green Pigeon  
Pink-necked Green Pigeon  
Green Imperial Pigeon  
Blue-crowned Hanging Parrot  
Blue-rumped Parrot  
Long-tailed Parakeet  
Black-bellied Malkoha  
Raffle's Malkoha  
Greater Coucal  
Lesser Coucal  
Reddish Scops Owl  
Barred Eagle-Owl  
Buffy Fish Owl  
Brown Wood Owl  
Brown Boobook  
Glossy Swiftlet  
Mossy-nest Swiftlet  
Black-nest Swiftlet  
Edible-nest Swiftlet  
Asian Palm Swift  
Grey-rumped Treeswift  
Whiskered Treeswift  
Oriental Dollarbird

Stork-billed Kingfisher  
Collared Kingfisher  
Rufous-backed Kingfisher  
Blue-eared Kingfisher  
Common Kingfisher  
Red-bearded Bee-eater  
Blue-throated Bee-eater  
Bushy-crested Hornbill  
Oriental Pied Hornbill  
Black Hornbill  
Rhinoceros Hornbill  
Wrinkled Hornbill  
Wreathed Hornbill  
Golden-whiskered Barbet  
Blue-eared Barbet  
Brown Barbet  
Rufous Piculet  
White-bellied Woodpecker  
Black-and-Yellow Broadbill  
Lesser Cuckooshrike  
Dark-throated Oriole  
Common Iora  
Malaysian Pied Fantail  
Black-naped Monarch  
Bronzed Drongo  
Greater Racket-tailed Drongo  
Slender-billed Crow  
Brown-throated Sunbird  
Red-throated Sunbird  
Copper-throated Sunbird  
Crimson Sunbird  
Purple-naped Sunbird  
Little Spiderhunter  
Thick-billed Spiderhunter  
Long-billed Spiderhunter  
Spectacled Spiderhunter  
Orange-bellied Flowerpecker  
Yellow-vented Flowerpecker  
Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker  
Greater Green Leafbird  
Lesser Green Leafbird  
Asian Fairy-Bluebird  
Dusky Munia  
Chestnut Munia  
Eurasian Tree Sparrow  
Baya Weaver  
Javan Myna  
Common Hill Myna  
Asian Glossy Starling  
Oriental Magpie-Robin

White-crowned Shama  
Mangrove Blue Flycatcher  
Asian Brown Flycatcher  
Dark-sided Flycatcher  
Black-headed Bulbul  
Yellow-vented Bulbul  
Olive-winged Bulbul  
Cream-vented Bulbul  
Asian Red-eyed Bulbul  
Barn Swallow  
House (Pacific) Swallow  
Brown Fulvetta  
Chestnut-winged Babbler  
Scaly-crowned Babbler  
Ashy (Red-headed) Tailorbird  
Yellow-bellied Prinia

### **Mammals**

Moonrat  
Lesser Treeshrew  
Short-nosed Fruit Bat  
Large Flying Fox  
Free-tailed Wrinkled-lipped Bat  
Bent-winged Bat  
Diadem Roundleaf Bat  
Acuminate Horseshoe Bat  
Trefoil Horseshoe Bat  
Whiskered Myotis  
Sunda Pangolin  
Bornean Colugo  
Philippine Slow Loris  
Silvered Langur  
Proboscis Monkey  
Long-tailed Macaque  
Sunda Pig-tailed Macaque  
North Bornean Gibbon  
Bornean Orangutan  
(Wild/Semi-Wild)  
Cream-colored Giant Squirrel  
Prevost's Squirrel  
Plantain Squirrel  
Ear-spot Squirrel  
Plain Pygmy Squirrel  
Black Flying Squirrel  
Red Giant Flying Squirrel  
Thomas's Flying Squirrel  
  
Red-spiny Maxomys (immature)  
Ranee Mouse  
Common Porcupine  
Bornean Sunbear (Semi-wild)

Yellow-throated Marten  
Teledu (Sunda Skunk Badger)  
Smooth (Smooth-coated) Otter  
Malay Civet  
Otter Civet  
Bornean Striped Palm Civet  
Island Palm Civet  
Marbled Cat  
Sunda Leopard Cat  
Bornean Pygmy Elephant  
Bearded Pig  
Lesser Mouse-deer  
Greater Mouse-deer  
Sambar Deer

### **Reptiles**

Saltwater Crocodile  
Flying Lizard (*Draco cornutus*)  
Bent-toed Gecko  
Barking (Green-eyed) Gecko  
Asian House Gecko  
Black-banded Skink  
Water Monitor Lizard  
Yellow-ringed Cat Snake  
Bornean Keeled Pit Viper  
Reticulated Python  
Sunda Rat Snake  
Amphibians  
Grass Frog  
Dark-eared Tree Frog  
File-eared Tree Frog  
Harlequin Tree Frog  
Collet's Tree Frog  
Banded Bullfrog

### **Other**

Long-legged Centipede  
(*Thereuopoda longicornis*)  
Giant Forest Ant  
(*Camponotus gigas*)  
Malaysian Forest Scorpion (*Heterometrus spinifer*)  
Brown Huntsmen Spider  
Whip-tailed Scorpion  
Rhinoceros Beetle  
Weevil sp  
Firefly (*Pteroptyx sp*)  
Cave Spider (*Psechrus sp*)  
Cave Cockroaches  
(*Periplaneta australasiae*)  
Freshwater Crab  
(*Arachnothelphusa rhadamanthysi*)

Atlas Moth (*Attacus atlas*)

