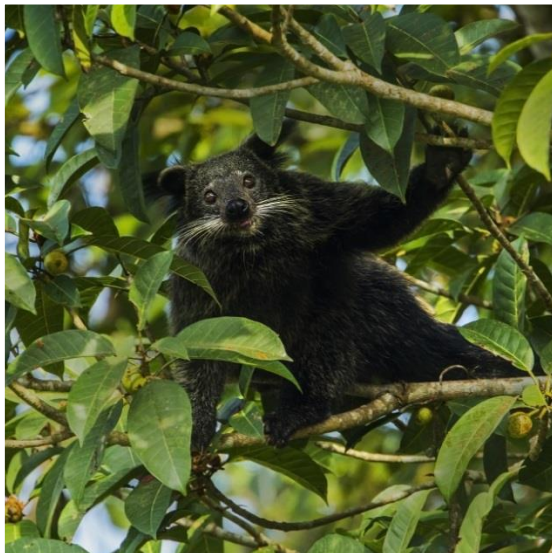


Tour Report

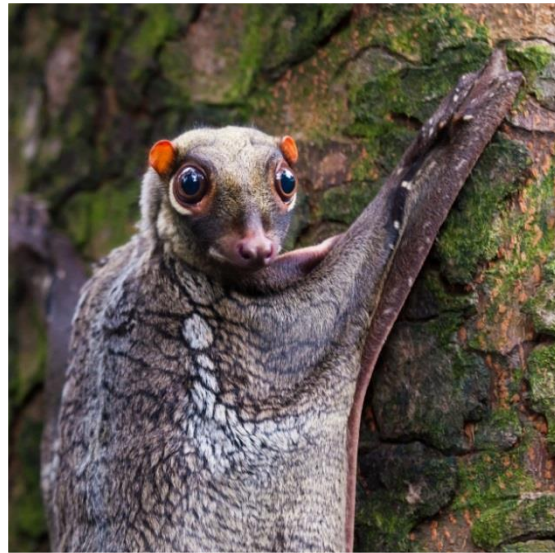
Borneo – Borneo's Rare Mammals

29 September – 12 October 2019

Binturong



Colugo



Malay civet



Proboscis monkey



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Tour Leader: Siti Salihahfarhain Saidin

This tour aimed to deliver views of Borneo's iconic species and the itinerary reflected this. The primates of Kinabatangan were fabulous, with great views of the proboscis monkey, a fine supporting cast of macaques and langurs and the bonus of 'Harry' a young male, fully wild, orangutan. Nocturnal species were also catered for on our night boat rides. Saltwater crocodiles, owls and civets were seen regularly, not forgetting the 'Christmas tree' of fireflies.

The jewel in the crown is Deramakot Forest, home of the elusive clouded leopard. Although we were not fortunate enough to see this beautiful cat on this occasion, we were, however, very fortunate to enjoy a wealth of mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians and other weird and wonderful wildlife. The diversity and abundance of wildlife meant there were creatures to enthral everyone. Highlights included spending time watching a family of binturong, coming across a short-tailed python and enjoying the spectacular birdwing butterflies. Every night drive produced new and exciting species as well as a regular diet of leopard cat, the strange colugo, civets and owls.

Day time drives produced sightings of sambar deer, bearded pig and perhaps best of all a dramatic acrobatic display from a troop of Borneo gibbons! In addition to all of this, there were the adorable loris, impressive hornbills, colourful sunbirds and cryptic, fascinating bugs, leaf mantis, stick insects and huge moths. It was a truly magical wildlife experience and I'll be back for another shot at that elusive leopard.

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

Sunday 29 to Monday 30 September 2019

The plane left and arrived on time and we all met up with our guide, Siti, in the arrivals lounge at Sandakan. We hopped onto the minibus and drove for about 40 minutes to Sepilok Lodge, which is set in very attractive grounds with a series of ponds and well-maintained gardens. The rooms were lovely, spacious and comfortable.

We had some free time to wander around the grounds before meeting for lunch at 2pm. The weather was overcast and threatening rain, but it stayed dry and became brighter. This meant a few butterflies were on the wing with the exquisite clipper and a swallowtail being the highlights. There was plenty of bird activity, with oriental pied and Asian black hornbills noisily patrolling the canopies. The bright and gorgeous crimson sunbird and pied fantail were seen, amongst others.

After lunch we had a bit more relaxation time before meeting at 5.30pm for the night walk. We drove to a nearby Forest Exploration Centre and followed the large groups along well made tracks. We stopped on the canopy walk to watch a giant red squirrel slowly ascend a large tree before eventually leaping and gliding to another tree. It was amazing to watch, but the evening was now getting dark so we were unlikely to see it again.

We instead opted to go on a night hike away from the crowds. It was a hot and sultry night, but the walk was very successful. The highlights included a beautiful keeled green pit viper, common palm civet, Phillipine slow loris, a few bugs and roosting birds. After an enjoyable walk we freshened up and met up again for dinner. The food was delicious and varied with both Western and more traditional local food. Everyone chatted amiably and in a relaxed atmosphere, until it was time to retire for the early bird/squirrel walk in the morning.

Day 3: Sepilok walk; boat transfer to Kinabatangan Wetlands Resort

Tuesday 1 October 2019

We were up early, but it was still much lighter than in Peninsular Malaysia and fully light by about 6am. We met at the lodge and saw rhinoceros hornbill, our third species. A couple of smallish water monitors were hugging the banks in search of something tasty. We set off for a walk along the road outside the lodge, primarily looking for squirrel species. The walk was in the pleasant cool morning air and the birds and squirrels were fairly active. We saw three species of squirrel, plantain, ear spot and Prevost's, and a good mix of birds, including the delightful scarlet-backed flowerpecker and blue-throated bee eater among the highlights.

We returned to a surprise – a 'traditional' English breakfast and coffee. We chatted about the day ahead and agreed to meet at 9am to walk to the Sun Bear Rescue Centre. The sun and temperature had both risen and it was turning into a very warm and sunny day. The walk to the Sun Bear Centre was only about 10 minutes and we were soon immersed in sun bear ecology and conservation. The bears themselves were very small and cute. Borneo sun bears are half the size of their mainland relatives. Around the enclosures there were a few birds and butterflies. Green jay and great egg-fly were the standout butterflies, and the Borneo barbet was new for the trip.

After the Sun Bear excursion, we headed back to our rooms to get ready for check-out and loaded up for the drive to the jetty. Here we caught a boat to Kinabatangan Wetlands Resort. First we crossed an expanse of sea, before diverting up a river to the lodge. There were a few birds seen en route, including a lesser frigatebird and a grey-headed fishing eagle among other egrets and terns. After about an hour and a half we arrived at the lodge.

We checked in and went straight to a buffet-style dinner. The lodge is superb and surrounded by pristine rainforest and flooded forest. Getting around is by boardwalk or boat. There were some stunning butterflies: great crow, wood-nymph and golden birdwing to name a few, and some saw a water monitor before it splashed into the water.

Lunch was relaxing and fun as we all seemed to get an attack of the giggles. After we regained our composure we agreed to meet at 4pm for the evening boat ride. Until then a little downtime was in order. Some went out walking whilst others spent time in their rooms. Some of the group were lucky enough to spot juvenile wild pigs (bearded) running along a boardwalk, whilst enjoying watching these we also picked up a few new bird species with pink-necked and little green pigeons seen.

It was soon time to board the boat and set off on our evening/night boat safari. We had not even left the channel to the main river when we spotted our first proboscis monkeys. These were a little skittish and retreated back into the palm trees and we only had obscured views. We then entered the main channel and very soon found some silvered langurs, followed shortly after by a troop of long-tailed macaques and then some more proboscis monkeys. The proboscis monkeys were much more visible but still high up, backlit by a white and cloudy sky. As we continued along the river we encountered several troops of proboscis monkeys, most were high up due to them beginning to roost for the day. However, we did manage to find one bachelor group that was lower and easy to see. We also saw a few new birds on the journey, including white-bellied sea eagle and white-bellied woodpecker. Dollarbird and hill myna were also new for most of the group.

By now the light was beginning to fade and we turned to spotlighting finding a few roosting kingfishers and a number of juvenile saltwater crocodiles. We did later find a much bigger specimen, which was admired before it sank under the water. We also had a couple of very obliging buffy fish owls and whilst stopped admiring these large powerful owls we saw the twinkling of 'fairy lights' on one of the trees. We turned off

our torches and enjoyed the delightful display of fireflies gathering around their favourite tree twinkling in the night sky. A scene reminiscent of Christmas!

It was now time to get back to the lodge and we arrived back just after 8pm having enjoyed a really good trip, with plenty of sightings to keep us entertained. We all met again for dinner and were royally entertained by the manager and staff singing a medley of hits from bygone decades. Their impressive repertoire ranged from Frank Sinatra to Wham! If earlier it had felt like Christmas, it now felt like every wedding I've ever attended. We sorted out the plans for the next day, which involved taking another boat journey at 6.30am (meeting in reception). We then said goodnight and retreated to our rooms.

Day 4: Kinabatangan Wetlands Resort; boat trips up the Kinabatangan River

Wednesday 2 October 2019

We were up and ready to depart at 6.30am on what proved to be an exciting boat trip for more than one reason! It got off to a great start as we watched a bearded pig shuffling around the broadwalk on the way to the boat, and then a few minutes after we set off we stopped for some great views of a large male proboscis monkey eating young palm shoots. We stopped to admire and photograph the beast before it ambled away.

We got under way again and were soon finding long-tailed macaques, proboscis and silver leaf monkeys in abundance, some giving clear views. There were also a few kingfishers, hornbills and raptors around to entertain us. The highlight of the trip was coming across our first truly wild orangutan. This was a young male (Harry), although still fairly large. It was sitting comfortably gorging on fruits. We were able to spend quite some time watching the ape before we decided to leave it in peace and look at some rhinoceros hornbills that flew across the river.

It was this point we lost power to the engine and began to drift gently upstream. With only coffee and a few tuna sandwiches to sustain us, it wasn't long before some dubious survival plans were hatched. Luckily these didn't come to fruition as we managed to restart the engine after about 30 minutes of stop-start drifting and headed back to the lodge. Despite the technical interruption, it was an excellent morning's wildlife watching, which didn't end when we were back on the dock. On the walk back for breakfast, a troop of silvered langurs spectacularly leapt through the trees and a few birds and butterflies held our interest. A new bird that only a few saw was the mangrove flycatcher, but most saw the dusky munia and little green pigeons.

We arrived back for a hearty breakfast and chatted in a fun atmosphere. We then retired to our rooms as the overcast skies carried out their threat and it began to rain heavily. We agreed to meet at 10.30am for a walk, but also to keep an eye on the weather.

Siti and the group met at 10.30am as planned, despite the steady rainfall. We walked the broadwalk loop and Siti pointed out plants of cultural and ecological interest. There were few birds or mammals to be seen, due to the weather and time of day. Siti pointed out some needle-like structures on a palm, which she explained were used as the darts for a blowpipe. The needles are dipped in resin from the ipoh tree, which is very toxic and then used for hunting.

She next pointed out different varieties of pitcher plant and told us about the symbiotic relationships with individual frog species. We then completed the walk as the sun burst through and were treated to a flurry of dragonfly and butterfly sightings to complete an enjoyable though damp walk. We now had free time until lunch at 1.30pm, prior to our double bill of boat trips.

Free time proved interesting as a 6-foot-long Water Monitor was seen close to the boardwalk. Other notable sightings included more bearded pig and a mangrove cat snake, which was a beautiful black-and-

yellow ringed snake. It was being constantly scolded by a Prevost's and plantain squirrel, but stubbornly refused to move.

We met for dinner on time and enjoyed another buffet feast, chatting amiably until it was time to gather our belongings for the first of two boat excursions. We set off on time at 3.30pm and saw many of the same species as before. Later we did manage a new mammal, with a sighting of about three maroon langurs. We took a detour up a smaller tributary and enjoyed several kingfisher sightings and a new woodpecker (grey and buff woodpecker). However, the best bird was probably the chestnut-winged cuckoo, with its rich chestnut wings contrasting with its creamy front – a gorgeous bird.

On the return journey it was now quite dark and we began spotlighting; we managed to find Harry the orangutan again, who looked decidedly uncomfortable balancing in the trees. We left him in peace and made our way back to the lodge to grab dinner before heading off again. A couple of the group wanted to catch up on some sleep so only four set off on the night boat trip. We had a great start when Siti spotted a small-toothed palm civet above the boardwalk. We boarded the boat and headed out towards the river. Another new mammal – this time a large fruit bat – was found soon into the trip and then a new bird in the shape of a purple heron. It then became a little quiet until we stumbled across a 15ft saltwater crocodile! He was well known in the region and thought to be the oldest crocodile in the area. He was certainly an imposing beast. He slipped quietly away and we continued our trip. A few more buffy fish owls were found and one stayed for a decent photo opportunity. The trip then came to an end as we headed back to the jetty.

On the walk back to the chalets we continued to find new creatures with a forest rat running along the boardwalk and a lesser mouse deer located in a grassy patch. Terry and Siti continued the walk, whilst the rest turned in. It was mostly a quiet walk a mouse and a greater mousedeer were the highlights. However, just as we were saying goodnight, Siti found a fabulous barred eagle owl. These magnificent owls with the bushy ears are not very common, so this was a rare treat and for me the best creature of the night. Now it was time to turn in as we had another early start and a long journey ahead.

Day 5: Journey to Gomantong Caves; on to Deramakot

Thursday 3 October 2019

Today was mostly a travelling day as we headed to Deramakot. We met early for breakfast at 6.15am, before loading on our boat and heading for the jetty upstream to connect with our minibus. The boat transportation didn't allow for wildlife watching, but it was good to relax and watch the riverine scenery flow past.

We then met with our minibus and climbed aboard. Our luggage went ahead onto the field station. We drove to the Gomantong Caves; as we approached the caves we added another mammal to our list as we spotted a pig-tailed macaque. We then parked up and after purchasing tickets and a hefty camera permit (30MR) we followed the boardwalk down to the caves. We managed another new mammal on route as we watched a lowland pygmy squirrel, 'ping' about the branches of a tree, no bigger than a hamster. We also enjoyed some lovely butterflies as golden birdwing and great mormon were both watched, although they were skittish in the very warm day.

At the caves, the smell of the guano was evident before we approached. The boardwalk around was not too slippery as they had apparently cleaned up. There were, of course, many bats and swifts' nests. Most evident was the mossy edible swift, but we also noted one or two black edible swifts' nests too. The third species, edible swift, nests very high up and out of view. We were lucky to find some bats roosting low down and identified the very common acuminate horseshoe bat and a free-tail wrinkle-lipped bat. There was a third species, but we were unable to identify this to species level.

Around the caves were some other fascinating creatures, including cockroaches, long-legged centipedes and a few cave spider species. It was an enjoyable walk around, but good to get some fresh air at the end. Siti told us a little bit about the nest collecting for the Chinese market. They normally collect about twice a month and have modernised to abseiling, no longer using the more risky ladders. Siti said that the soup is basically flavourless and is flavoured to suit. She believed it was made popular by the Chinese Emperor's eating it and now is a valuable commodity.

We travelled on for another couple of hours in the minibus before stopping for lunch. En route the scenery consisted of endless palm oil plantations and it was sobering to see how much pristine forest had been lost.

We ate lunch in a local restaurant and enjoyed traditional cuisine and a refreshing drink. We now swapped vehicles for 4WD trucks as most of the next leg was down a gravel/stone road. We travelled through yet more plantations before finally hitting the native forest; the scenery and atmosphere changed simultaneously as we reached it. We watched out for potential wildlife sightings and both cars happily saw the herds of elephants that were surprisingly shy. We also saw crested serpent eagle, blue-throated bee-eater and a fair sized monitor lizard. Our only other mammal was a long-tailed macaque. The second car also managed a small flock of Borneo bristleheads, a genus totally confined to this Island.

We arrived at the field centre and settled into our new homes for the next week. After a little free time, we met in the reception area at 7.30pm for dinner and to discuss the next activities. Firstly, we were to set out for an introductory three-hour night drive and in the morning try for the gibbons. We started out at 8.30pm after our buffet dinner and Siti took the spotlighting role. We soon started to pick up a few mammals with large fruit bat being our first sighting, quickly followed by two Malay civets. Then we came across the first of our leopard cats and, although not particularly obliging, we got to see it well and admire this beautifully marked small cat. Sightings of giant red and Thomas' flying squirrels were dotted throughout the drive. A second leopard cat went the same as the first and a few more civet sightings were enjoyed. We then had the more unusual sighting of a long-tailed porcupine, followed by perhaps the highlight of the evening, the unusual looking colugo, an endemic of Borneo. A close-up view of two more Malay civets was also another treat. Three sightings of buffy fish owl completed the evening's roll call. It had been a very successful start to the week and we hoped our luck would continue.

Day 6: Drives & walks around Deramakot

Friday 4 October 2019

Another early start saw us down for coffee at 5.45am before heading out on the truck, primarily looking for gibbon and, of course, anything else that turned up. Unfortunately, the gibbons that had been calling and whooping in the early hours had now gone quiet and were not to be seen or heard again all morning. We did manage a few familiar mammals, such as Prevost's squirrel and long-tailed macaque. Despite it being relatively quiet, there were some excellent birds and beautiful butterflies once the morning warmed up. The highlights were the maroon woodpeckers, lesser fish eagle and rufous piculet, among others. Rajah Brooke's birdwing was finally spotted but it flew through without stopping, giving only brief views.

It was an enjoyable morning even if a little quiet for wildlife. We returned to the reception area for breakfast and relaxed chatting for a while. Some of our group then went out on a walk around the Ecological Trail and one went off to photograph butterflies in what was becoming a hot morning. We all agreed to meet back at 2pm for lunch. Short-tailed babbler was the only new bird, but we had great views of black-and-yellow broadbill and of rufous piculet. A jewelled nawab was a beautiful butterfly seen along with common three ring and Malaysian albatross. There were a few birdwings about but not unfortunately Rajah Brookes.

Lunch was the usual buffet with Asian-style Western food, vegetable spring rolls and chips! The day was now scorching hot and most went back to their rooms after lunch to cool off. As it got a little later and the

heat abated, people ventured out to see if the wildlife was more active after the hot afternoon. Indeed it was, but nothing new was added before a storm rolled in and ended proceedings. The rain began to fall quite heavily as we retreated to our rooms.

Dinner was scheduled for 7pm, enabling us to leave on the night drive at 8pm. The weather had eased but it was still raining lightly as we left. A buffy fish owl on the reserve signpost was a good start to the evening and proved a good omen. We followed the main road out and branched off down a side road. During the course of the night safari, Siti did a superb job spotting a variety of wildlife, ranging from dark-sided frog to binturong and lots in between. We had multiple sightings of leopard cat and a variety of civets. A colugo was an exciting find, but probably the highlight was finding a family of binturong, with a mother and her two infants sitting along an exposed branch giving distant but clear views. We were able to watch them for 10 minutes, until they drifted back into the forest and out of view. This was an exceptional sighting and we were buzzing with excitement after watching them. A long-tailed porcupine completed the mammal sightings, but we also had a brown wood owl on the return journey, which was lovely to see. We managed an island palm civet and a last leopard cat just before the Field Centre came into view and our trip came to an end. It was 2am and time for bed, except the verandah had some great wildlife of its own, with three tropical swallow-tail moths and some bizarre-looking long-horned beetles and other moths, geckos and creatures. It had been a great evening's wildlife viewing, thoroughly enjoyed, but bed was calling.

Day 7: Deramakot walks & drives around logging roads & trails

Saturday 5 October 2019

We met at the comparatively late time of 7am to walk the main logging road for about 2km. The morning was fresh and cool and pleasant to walk in. We enjoyed a good mix of birds with a white-crowned shama, Borneo bristlehead and Borneo black magpie among the highlights. The fly-over violet cuckoo would have been a lovely addition, but the bird flew past quickly in poor light so none of the colour was clearly seen. A surprise greater mousedeer was a bonus and one of five mammal species. Other mammals included the giant squirrel and lowland pygmy squirrel at the polar ends of squirrel extremes! As the weather warmed the butterflies became more active and plenty of golden birdwing were seen. We eventually made our way back after failing to see a calling nearby barred kingfisher.

We had our usual breakfast of eggs, sausages and beans and planned for the day ahead. We agreed to meet for lunch at 2.30pm; until then we had some downtime to explore the trails or catch up on some rest after a late night and in preparation for another late one.

A storm had started to brew over the valley yesterday, and we were hoping to avoid a similar downpour as we had decided to set out before dusk to look for roosting gibbons. As we made our way a few spots of rain started to fall, but we decided to carry on. Remarkably we did get a distant sighting of a gibbon, but it was very brief and not easily identified. The rain began to fall more heavily until it became a deluge. We decided to head back to the field centre to dry off. We had had some excellent sightings, but they were hard to enjoy in the downpour. A barred eagle owl and colugo much closer were the highlights as we returned to dry off and have some dinner before setting out again.

After dinner the rain had died down and we decided to risk going out again. Apart from a black flying squirrel, we did not get any new species, but we did have great views of some of the commoner mammals and all three of the large owls. We had our best views of a colugo and, better still, this one was carrying a baby, enveloped in the mother's membrane and scarcely visible. We also had excellent views of civets and a leopard cat; most had been very skittish. We returned back to the Field Centre at 3:30am, a little tired, but having enjoyed another excellent wildlife evening.

Day 8: Drive to Kinabatangan River/walks & night drives

Sunday 6 October 2019

Today we caught up on some sleep and had a late breakfast at 9.30am. The weather was mixed with showers, warm sunshine and cooler cloudy spells. We decided on a drive out at 4pm and a walk before pushing on to the river at K35. We decided to do a night drive back, return for dinner and then go out again. It seemed like a cunning plan which would make a nice change if the weather held.

In the meantime, some of the group went around the surrounding forest and up the logging path for a stroll. There was little new wildlife around, and the birds were a little quiet except for the swifts and swallows overhead. There were many butterflies around but few settled long enough to ID them. Wreathed hornbill was the highlight of the stroll. On the return to the centre a little spiderhunter gave good views and, whilst watching this and a few birdwing butterflies, I notice a Rajah Brooke's birdwing resting against a tree. What a lovely surprise! I even managed a few photographs of this magnificent butterfly. Now back for chores and to cool down before lunch at 2pm.

We all met for lunch at 2pm and enjoyed the Malaysian-style buffet. It was a very warm afternoon so most of the group relaxed until the next scheduled activity at 4pm. We met at the activity centre at 4pm and set off for a drive along the river road, stopping for a walk just before it became dark. Along the route we had a few new birds, including red-bearded bee-eater and a young changeable hawk. As the afternoon edged towards dusk we also spotted a few mammals with maroon langur, bearded pig and sambar deer (new for the trip) all seen well.

After our walk along the trail, we were picked up again by our driver and went to the river to have coffee and stretch our legs again. The drive on the way back was less productive than usual, but we still managed to see black and Thomas's flying squirrels and Malay, island and small-toothed civet. En route we met Mike Gordon's group who told us that they had a glimpse of a marbled cat at the nearby quarry. We got back for dinner at 10.30pm and then went out again at 11.15pm to check the quarry for marbled cat; unfortunately, there was no sign of the cat. We then explored a side road of the main track and had some nice sightings of gliding Thomas's squirrel as well as frogs and civets. Also along the road was some very fresh banteng 'pats', although we didn't manage to see them. On the road back we had a few more civet sightings and one leopard cat (some saw a spiny rat). A bearded pig in the Field Centre was our last sighting before arriving back at our rooms. A leaf mantid and hawkmoth were seen around the accommodation before we all turned in.

Day 9: Wildlife walk & drive in the local area

Monday 7 October 2019

It was another late morning for most, with everyone gathering for lunch at 1.30pm. After lunch a stroll down the access road turned up a good mix of species. A lovely male red-bearded bee-eater was giving a colourful display, snatching insects and returning to its perch. Orange-bellied flowerpeckers were plentiful as were dusky munias. A couple of nice babblers, the fluffy-backed tit-babbler and the chestnut-winged babbler eventually gave enough of a view for identification. A flock of noisy brown barbets flew above us, and overhead silver-rumped spinetails whizzed around with swifts and other hirundines. There were good numbers of birdwing and mormon butterflies around. The only new species were a couple of skippers that will need further work for a definitive ID. It was then time to return and get ready for the evening's long drive. Distant thunder sounded ominous and the gibbons' whoops and howls could be heard as I headed back to the room. En route I spotted a pair of fiery minivets adding a splash of colour to an increasing grey afternoon.

After a Western-style dinner of burger and chips, we set off as the rain was diminishing. Sheets of lightning were still illuminating the sky and thunder rumbled over head. Spotting wildlife was slow and the increasing rain made it uncomfortable. As we drove along to the end of the access road, the weather and spotting improved. A few Malay civets were seen and a few leopard cats, but both these animals were skittish and didn't stay around. A brown wood owl was a nice find and a lesser mousedeer was seen close and well, as it unhurriedly retreated from the road. A slug-eating snake was fascinating to watch as it glided over the ground seeking out tasty molluscs.

The weather fluctuated, but eventually the moon appeared and the skies cleared and we enjoyed the rest of the trip without further rain. The leopard cats remained elusive, but a colugo gave good views as it hung from a branch to nibble at leaves. Sightings were less frequent on the return journey as we decided not to stop for squirrels. A large fruit bat back at the Field Centre rounded off the evening's sightings as we all looked to get some sleep.

Day 10: Dusk drive

Tuesday 8 October 2019

This morning we had a late breakfast and some free time. I decided on a walk for a couple of hours back up the access road (11am to 1pm). It proved very productive; I was primarily targeting butterflies and birds, but instead enjoyed a run of mammals. Firstly, a crashing noise in the trees alerted me to some primates, which proved to be pig-tail macaques. Similar noises from the other side of the road I assumed to be part of the troop. When I finally got a glimpse of the creatures I was delighted to see they were Bornean gibbons. Whilst all this was going on, a common treeshrew scurried across the road a few feet from me. On my way back to the centre I tried to follow the movements of the Bornean gibbons, but they went from view and the forest went quiet again. However, approaching the Field Centre, I had two views of giant squirrel to add to the morning's views... now time for A/C!

We met for lunch at 2pm and prepared for an early outing at 3.30pm. We left in glorious sunshine and the breeze from driving was welcome as it cooled us. It was lovely to head out in the rainforest at this time, enjoying the butterflies floating past and listening to the orchestra of birds, cicadas, frogs and crickets.

As we drove along we had some excellent sightings of helmeted hornbill, which were new for this trip; and later a party of bushy-crested hornbills landed in a tree nearby. We turned off the river road down a small track, looking out for wildlife along the way. We decided to jump out and walk along the track to see more birds and butterflies. We heard a ground cuckoo calling out in response to Siti's call. Unfortunately, it didn't reveal itself – it is a notoriously difficult species to see. We again passed some banteng dung; they seem to favour the smaller tracks. We spotted a few more bird species, before the truck came to collect us and take us back to the main river road. As it started to get dark we began to enjoy some of the nocturnal species. The light rain didn't seem to deter the wildlife and we watched with glee as a Thomas's flying squirrel gilded right over our heads, giving an amazing 'fish-eye' view. Bornean striped and island civets were both seen well and close, and a sambar deer gave excellent views as it 'hid' under some vegetation. The rain suddenly got very heavy and wildlife viewing became very difficult. We cut the drive a little short and headed back. As we returned, the rain began to ease and, thankfully, stopped a few kilometres from the centre so we could resume looking out for wildlife. Almost immediately, we had a great view of a lesser mouse deer by the side of the truck and, a little later, a Malay porcupine ran across the road in front of the truck. It was an excellent end to the outing (which had been very enjoyable until the rain came).

We headed in for dinner and an early night, in preparation for a 3.30am start.

Day 11: Last day at Deramakot/early morning drive & later a short night drive

Wednesday 9 October 2019

We were collected at 3.30am for our early morning drive and headed out down the river road. The weather was clear and the sky was stunning without light pollution. Sightings were steady and an obliging Malay civet was enjoyed by all. Our most unusual sighting was of a short-tailed python (Siti had only ever see one twice before). It was beautifully marked and looked as if it had just eaten and was heading off into the forest. We watched for about five minutes as it slowly made its way across the road and out of sight. We heard a low rumbling sound of a large mammal, but were unable to locate its source.

We saw more civets, bearded pigs and sambar deer along the way and watched as the golden sunlight began to light up the forest. With dawn came the eerie, but beautiful, sound of Borneo gibbons calling. We stopped and eventually were delighted to be able to watch one demonstrate its breathtaking arboreal acrobatics. We then pressed on to the river for breakfast, noting a few birds along the way.

At the riverside we ate our breakfast overlooking the river and were treated to another gibbon display. A troop of about eight gibbons swung through the trees across the river, plummeting 15 metres onto the next tree and swinging along at an incredible speed. We watched this display for about 15 minutes. We ate up and made our way back to the Field Centre to get some rest. On the way back we saw a few more birds, including orange-back woodpecker, a group of about ten rhinoceros hornbills feeding together and a black eagle. We also saw a few spectacular butterflies including the Rajah Brooke's birdwing and common rose. We arrived back at 10.30am and relaxed until we had to meet up again for dinner at 5.30pm.

We met for dinner and, as we ate, watched as the storm clouds gathered ominously. Sure enough there was a torrential downpour and we decided to delay our last night drive. Alfred (the driver) kindly offered to extend our drive to make up for the lost time, though I'm not sure that all of us were entirely keen to make up the lost time.

Eventually the rain abated and we set off just before 8pm. Unfortunately, the rain returned and continued for the next hour at a steady rate. The storm continued to rumble on and spectacular streaks of lightning raced across the sky. However, the wet conditions did give us a chance to see a moon rat as it scurried across the road. This creature prefers wet evenings to dine on earthworms and arthropods. As we continued we had a steady flow of sightings. We ignored distant squirrels and mouse deer, but had some lovely views of Malay civet, island civet and eventually leopard cat. We saw about six leopard cats, but all but one were quick to dive into cover. When we stopped for a coffee and snack, the rain had finally ended and the skies cleared to reveal a bright moon. The return journey produced a few good sightings of the same set of species and nothing new was added. We had been lucky enough to have some excellent mammal and wildlife watching and enjoyed the drives enormously. The clouded leopard would have been the icing on the cake, but it was not to be on this occasion. We finished our night drives at Deramakot on a great note with another new mammal to our sightings. We had enjoyed some rare and unusual animals and had superb views of most species. We will just have to return for the leopard!

Day 12: Deramakot to Sepilok morning drive/Orangutan Centre/Forest Exploration Centre walk

Thursday 10 October 2019

After an early morning walk we meet at the reception for our breakfast and to depart Deramakot. We left just after 8am and drove the 40km to the edge of the forest. En route we did see a troop of maroon Langurs, and a probable common treeshrew ran across the road. At the junction we switched cars and drove the minibus back to Sepilok. We arrived just before 12pm and went straight for our lunch. Everyone seemed to enjoy their meals and afterwards went to their rooms to get ready for the walk to the Orangutan Centre.

It was a warm afternoon and we arrived at the Orangutan Centre just after 2pm. We walked around to the outdoor orphanage and watched the orangutans being fed. A few pig-tailed and long-tailed macaques were there stealing the food put out. A very large male orangutan arrived and soon put them in their place.

At 3pm we went to the feeding platform and watched as a mother and her infant came in to feed, accompanied by the troops of macaques. We watched the mother for a while then it was time to return to the lodge for dinner and a trip to the Rainforest Exploration Centre. The weather looked ominous and a storm began to brew. Luckily it seemed to move away without the expected downpour and we were able to get to the centre for our walk.

We waited for the ranger to appear just after 7pm and started our walk. We quickly found a lot of wildlife, with first a reddish scops owl seen and then, the highlight of the evening, a diminutive tarsier was spotted which hung around for great views and some photographs before it bounded away. Other mammals include a colugo and mouse deer, but we just missed a Malay badger as it disappeared into the forest. There were also some amazing bugs, such as leafy mantids, long stick insects and lantern bugs to name a few. We had an exceptional walk around and enjoyed every minute of it, but it was now time to return to the lodge and catch up on some much needed sleep.

Days 13-14: Morning walk/flight to Kuala Lumpur & UK

Friday 11 to Saturday 12 October

On our last morning we had a leisurely few hours before check-out and the airport run. I went to the Rainforest Discovery Centre for a last bit of wildlife watching. The birding was slow with mainly common birds, but I added scaly-breasted munia and white-breasted waterhen. At the centre there were a few macaques and lots of squirrels. I could hear gibbons calling in the distance. Despite the birding being slow, I gradually picked up some nice species such as Raffles' malkoha, paradise flycatcher (white morph male) and a checker-throated woodpecker, resplendent with its yellow crest.

It was now time to pack up and get ready for the airport. Borneo had been a wonderful wildlife experience and I was already looking forward to coming back!

Species observed

Birds

Lesser Adjutant
Striated Heron
Black-crowned Night Heron
Purple Heron
Eastern Cattle Egret
Little Egret
Intermediate Egret
Great Egret
Lesser Frigatebird
Cormorant sp (probably Great Cormorant)
Oriental Darter
White-bellied Sea Eagle
Brahminy Kite
Grey-headed Fish Eagle
Lesser Fish Eagle
Changeable Hawk Eagle
Wallace's Hawk Eagle
Oriental Honey Buzzard
Crested Goshawk
Japanese Sparrowhawk
Whiskered Tern
White-breasted Waterhen
Common Sandpiper
Zebra Dove
Spotted Dove
Emerald Dove
Little Green Pigeon
Pink-necked Green Pigeon
Green Imperial Pigeon
Long-tailed Parakeet`
Blue-crowned Hanging Parrot
Lesser Coucal
Greater Coucal
Violet Cuckoo
Chestnut-winged Cuckoo
Chestnut-bellied Malkoha
Buffy Fish Owl
Brown Wood Owl
Barred Eagle Owl
Reddish Scops Owl
Asian Palm Swift
House Swift
Grey-rumped Treeswift
Whiskered Treeswift

Glossy Swiftlet
Edible Nest Swiftlet
Black Nest Swiftlet
Mossy Nest Swiftlet
Silver-rumped Spinetail
Common Kingfisher
Blue-eared Kingfisher
Stork-billed Kingfisher
Collared Kingfisher
Rufous Backed (Oriental Pygmy) Kingfisher
Blue-throated Bee-eater
Dollarbird
Bushy Crested Hornbill
Wreathed Hornbill
Oriental Pied Hornbill
Asian Black Hornbill
Rhinoceros Hornbill
Helmeted Hornbill
Gold-whiskered Barbet
Bornean Brown Barbet
Checker-throated Woodpecker
Maroon Woodpecker
White-bellied Woodpecker
Rufous Piculet
Grey and Buff Woodpecker
Hooded Pitta
Dusky Broadbill
Black and Yellow Broadbill
Common Iora
Lesser Green Leafbird
Greater Green Leafbird
Fiery Minivet
Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike
Lesser Cuckoo-shrike
Long-tailed Shrike
Dark-throated Oriole
Asian Fairy Blue
Greater Racquet-tailed Drongo
Bronze Drongo
Borneo Black Magpie
Slender-billed Crow
Borneo Bristlehead
Pacific Swallow
Red-headed Tailorbird (Ashy)
Yellow-bellied Prinia
Black-headed Bulbul
Olive-winged Bulbul

Yellow-vented Bulbul
Buff-vented Bulbul
White-bellied Bulbul
Hairy-backed bulbul
Rufous-crowned Babbler
Black-capped Babbler
Short-tailed Babbler
Chestnut-winged Babbler
Chestnut-backed Scimitar Babbler
Bold-striped Tit-babbler
Fluffy-backed Tit-babbler
Javan Myna
Hill Myna
Asian Glossy Starling
Oriental Magpie Robin
White-crowned Sharma
Asian Brown Flycatcher
Mangrove Blue Flycatcher
Verditer Flycatcher
Pied Fantail
Black-naped Monarch
Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker
Orange-bellied Flowerpecker
Copper-throated Sunbird
Purple-throated Sunbird
Ruby-cheeked Sunbird
Eastern Crimson Sunbird
Brown-throated sunbird
Little Spiderhunter
Spectacled Spiderhunter
Dusky Munia
White-bellied Munia
Scaly-breasted Munia
Richard's Pipit
Eurasian Tree Sparrow
Baya Weaver (Introduced)

Mammals

Common Treeshrew
Short-nosed Fruit Bat
Large Fruit Bat
Acuminate Horseshoe Bat
Wrinkled-Lipped Free-tailed Bat
Trefoil Bat
Moon Rat
Bornean Colugo



Phillippine Slow Loris
Western Tarsier
Silvered Langur
Maroon Langur
Long-tailed Macaque
Pig-tailed Macaque
Orangutan (wild)/Orangutan (Semi-tame)
North Bornean Gibbon
Lowland Pygmy Squirrel
Prevost's Squirrel
Plantain Squirrel
Ear-spot Squirrel
Sunda Giant Squirrel
Red-cheeked Flying Squirrel
Giant Red Flying Squirrel
Thomas's Flying Squirrel
Black Flying Squirrel
Rat sp
Borneo Porcupine
Long-tailed Porcupine
Captive (rescue) Sun Bear
Malay Civet
Binturong
Bornean Striped (Small-toothed) Palm Civet
Common (Island) Palm Civet
Sunda Leopard Cat
Bornean Pygmy Elephant
Bearded Pig
Sambar Deer
Lesser Mouse Deer
Greater Mouse Deer

Butterflies

Rajah Brooke's Birdwing
Golden Birdwing
Banded Swallowtail
Great Mormon
Spotted Mormon type
Black and White Helen
Green Jay
Common Jay
Common Yellow Jezabel
Malaysian Albatross
Lemon Emigrant
Chocolate Grass Yellow
Common Grass Yellow



Blue Glassy Tiger
Smaller Wood-Nymph (subspecies?)
Tree-Nymph
Great Crow
Dark Grass-Brown
Common Three ring
Jewelled Nawab
Malaysian Lacewing
Yeoman sp
Clipper
Commander
Common Lascar
Common Sailor
Horsfield's Barron (type)
Great Egg-fly
Chocolate Soldier
Grey Pansy
Brownwing sp?
Hedge Blue sp Plain Cupid
Common Cerulean
Tiny Grass Blue
Common Tit
Bush Hopper sp
Small Red Bob

Reptiles and Amphibians

Keeled Pit Viper
Mangrove Cat Snake
Slug-eating Snake
Striped Kukri Snake
Borneo Short-tailed Python (*Python breitensteini*)
Water Monitor (*Varanus salvador*)
Crested Green Lizard (*Bronchocela cristatella*)
Smith's (Barking) Gecko (*Gekko smithii*)
House Gecko
Bent-toed Gecko sp
Bornean Striped Skink
Red-throated Skink sp
White-lipped Frog
Dark-sided Frog
Cricket Frog
File-eared Frog
Brown-eared Frog
Four-lined Frog
Harlequin Frog
Giant River Frog
Frisled Tree Frog

Saltwater Crocodile

Others

Tractor Millipede (*Polydesmid* sp)
Lantern Bug (*Pyrops whiteheadi*)
Lantern Bug (*Pyrops sidereus*)
Long Legged Centipede (*Scutigera* sp)
Green-backed Centipede
Fungus Beetle (*Erotylidae* sp)
Malaysian Forest Scorpion (*Heterometrus spinifer*)
Brown Tarantula (*Phlogiellus obscurus*)
Firefly (*Pteroptyx* sp)
Tropical Swallowtail Moth
Tropical Carpenter Bee (*Xylocopa latipes*)
Night Wasp (*Provespa bastardi*)
Pryer's Hawkmoth (*Ambulyx pryeri*)
Large Cicada
Dead Leaf Mantis (*Deroplatys dessicata*)
Leaf Mantis sp

