



The Jungle Times

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Welcome

March has been one of the busiest months yet. We welcomed the first field course of 2012, hornbill and snail researchers, two French interns and an Egyptian volunteer. Plus, three nocturnal primates were collared, making Alice very busy! We hope you enjoy this jam packed issue!

Josie Alice Becky



This Month's Guests

*Among this month's guests were **Prof. Menno Schilthuizen** and **Dr. Heike Kappes** from The Natural History Museum and University of Leiden, Netherlands. Here's what they had to say about their stay:*

What brings you to Danau Girang?

"Benoit is an old friend of mine, so I've heard stories about Danau Girang from the very beginning. I am planning to run a field course here in 2014 so it gave me a reason to come and see the place for myself. We also took the opportunity to do some sampling at Batu Batangan for a snail diversity project."



Can you tell us more about your snail diversity project?

"We're looking at land snail fauna on the limestone hills in the area. Land snails are reliant on calcium found in the limestone for shell and egg formation. They are isolated to the limestone and this has led to the evolution of endemic species. For example, on the limestone ridges of Batangan and Gomantong, there are species which are endemic only to those cliffs. There is some very interesting diversity patterns on a small population scale. On a larger scale, evolutionary patterns emerge which make it possible to study the land snail's macro-ecology."

What sampling methods are you using?

"We look for shells in the soil, which can be used for identification. Heike has developed a new soil sampling system which involves the use of a 10 cm X 10 cm quadrat, scaling up by a factor of 10 each time. This means we can sample 9 orders of magnitude on a single hill and look at biodiversity changes over a range of scales."

This Month's Guests continued...

What were your thoughts on Danau Girang Field Centre?

"It's much larger than I thought it would be. It has a very cosy atmosphere and it's nice that all the facilities are in one place. Altogether it's a great set-up and well equipped for hosting field courses. We look forward to returning in 2014!"

Hadeel Ragab, Egyptian pharmacist

She is taking on the role of a volunteer at DGFC for 3 months. Her dream has always been to be close to and study animals and their behavior patterns and she thought a chance to spend time in a rainforest, rich in biodiversity, would be the perfect way to realize that dream. She is here to lend a hand to whoever needs it and perhaps come up with a topic to research while she's here.



So far she thinks DGFC is a fascinating place to be in terms of the variety of animals and plants one can find just by taking a walk down the main path, and also in terms of the research being done by the resident students, which includes studies carried out on everything from primates to frogs to the assortment of habitats they inhabit.

**We were also visited by a Hornbill expert and her team from Thailand.
Go to page 5 to find out more!**

New arrivals



Carole Penpoul – AgroParisTech-ENGREF, Nancy, France.

This is the start of a new adventure for me, Carole Penpoul. I arrived on the 30th of March at DGFC and will stay for 4 months. I have already seen some nice animals; like eyes of crocodiles, a group of bats, beautiful birds and butterflies and a big spider on my head!! Next step is to start my project. The aim is to go back to the 20 permanent botanic plots in different degraded forest habitats in the lower Kinabatangan wildlife sanctuary. These plots were set up two years ago and I will collect data about growth, mortality and regeneration with the help of Emma Do Khac. Thus we can have an idea of the difference of tree species composition between several habitats and study the evolution of the forest. I am really happy to come to a tropical forest and see trees totally different from France and learn more about conservation of monkeys! DGFC seems a really nice organization, in a wonderful area with lovely people and really hot! These 4 months will be legendary!!

Emma Do Khac, French – Forestry engineer student AgroParisTech-ENGREF, Nancy, France.

This time period is too short to complete a full project so I'll be helping Danica by creating an identification key to help her recognize the tree species in her plots, and I'll also be helping Carole.

My objectives for this internship are to discover the rainforest of tropical ecosystems that I've never seen before, discover a new way of working in forest management and improve my English, thanks to the many British students, who are very welcoming and talkative at DG. Also to discover a different climate, country, culture and food.

After a few days here I have become used to the hot and humid climate; watching the heavy rains falling from the inside is a very pleasant feeling. Being outside in the rain is very interesting to try as the water is hotter than the shower...! You also get used to all the sounds you hear day and night in the surrounding forest and after a short time they don't even prevent you from sleeping! Everybody in the centre is very nice and always smiling. This makes it a very comfortable place to spend a couple of months.

I think it's going to be two very good months, interesting, rewarding, and full of wonderful experiences!



Hornbill Researchers at DG

On the 6th of March, Dr. Pilai Poonswad and three of her research assistants; Preeda, Jack and Comon visited DG in search of hornbills and their nests, to expand her research. Pilai is a leading world expert on hornbill research (despite a career in microbiology!), and is based in Mahidol University, Thailand.

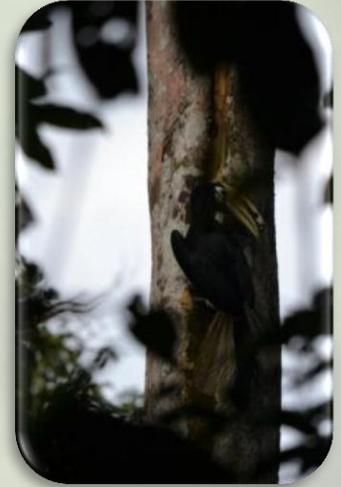


Above left: members and sponsors of the Thailand Hornbill Project. Above right: Dr Pilai Poonswad.

Whilst here, the team, plus Budin our resident bird expert and two research assistants from NGO, HUTAN; Eddie and Badul, walked our trails to find the birds and locate potential nesting and feeding trees. Two active oriental pied hornbill nests were found and the respective male partners were seen feeding their mates located inside the tree hole. Preeda also modified one tree cavity to increase suitability and encourage hornbills to nest within. After a day in the field, Pilai presented her work on Hornbill research and conservation to the captivated DG team!

Hornbills continued...

After their time at DG, the Hornbill team visited HUTAN in Sukau where they carried out similar research and set up a nest box. Their preliminary results showed that there are a limited number of suitable, large trees in the Lower Kinabatangan for hornbills to nest in, which may cause population declines of hornbill species in this area.



Left: White crowned hornbill with fruit. Right: the first oriental pied hornbill nest at DG, male feeding his mate in the nest .



Left: The second nest found at DG with the male feeding his mate within. Right: Saying goodbye to Pilai and her team!

However, more research is needed here and throughout Sabah, to gain a better understanding of the gravity of this problem and how we can improve the future for hornbills.

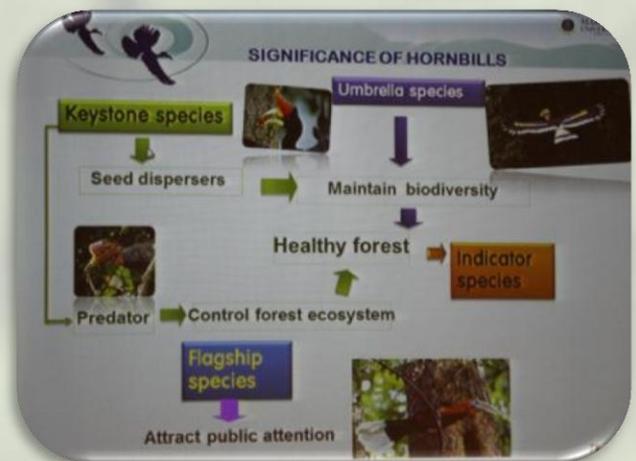
Hornbills of Sabah Workshop at RDC

After completing their field work at DG and HUTAN, Dr Poonswad and her team set up a Hornbill Workshop at the Rainforest Discovery Centre, in Sandakan. Benoit, Mark, Budin, Alice, Danica and Josie, as well as several other NGOs, bird watchers and university students attended.



Above left: Preeda (a hornbill research assistant and artist) sketch of the hornbills of Sabah. Centre: Pilai talks about her passion for Hornbills. Right: Presentation from Pilai. Below: The Significance of Hornbills.

Pilai explained she worked together with local people, children and organisations in Thailand in order to reduce poaching and highlight the importance of hornbills as a key stone species in forest ecosystems. Dr Poonswad explained that we must work together to save the hornbills that inhabit Sabah.



Hornbill Workshop continued...

After Pilai explained her research in Thailand, and preliminary results from her field work along the Lower Kinabatangan, Cede Prudente presented a series of photographs and video clips of hornbills and other birds found in Borneo. The images shown, highlighted the beautiful nature of these large birds and how important it is to sustain healthy populations for our future generations to enjoy.



Above left: The hornbill team accept gifts from sponsors of the event. Above right: The participants of the Hornbill Workshop.

After the workshop, a discussion between all participants was started to begin talks of an action plan for Sabah's hornbill populations. Putting up artificial nest boxes, monitoring active hornbill nests and looking for potential nesting trees were some of the ideas suggested. Finally, the team were presented with gifts and wished good luck on continuing their research. Please read the press release posted on our Facebook page for more information on the status of Hornbills in this area.

This event was supported by: Sabah Forestry Dept., Sabah Wildlife Dept., HUTAN Kinabatangan Orangutan Conservation Project, Hornbill Research Foundation, Chester Zoo, Woodland Park Zoo.

Tarsier collarings!

On March 8th, Anto and Alice caught a second female tarsier on one of our trails around DGFC and she was set up with a radio collar. She was named “Como” (pronounced “Chomo”), meaning chubby as she was larger than the last female collared. However, on March 18th while out tracking her, it was soon realised that she was actually an expecting mother as she was spotted with a tiny baby. The baby was named Sabtu, meaning Saturday (the day it was first seen) and was thought to be no more than 2 days old.

Mother and baby are doing well and while out tracking Como, we have observed her carrying Sabtu in her mouth, as well as leaving him/her on a nearby tree as she goes off to forage.



Top left: Sabtu first seen,
Bottom left: Como carrying Sabtu
Top right: Como and Sabtu at a
sleeping site

Tarsier collarings continued!

On the same day that Como was collared, we received a special delivery of a male tarsier. He had been rescued by Anto's father from an area which was soon to be converted into a palm oil plantation.

The tarsier was kept in a cage for the day and was fed on insects. Later, he was fitted with a radio collar and released in to the forest surrounding DGFC and was named 'Lad', short for 'ladang', meaning 'plantation' in Bahasa Malaysia.

The following night, Alice and Danica went out to check on Lad using a telemetry and he was found 150-200 metres away from where he was released, foraging for food. It will be interesting to see how his home range forms within his new habitat.



Top right: Anto releasing Lad
Bottom right: Lad eating an insect shortly after release
Top left: Lad fitted with his radio collar

Slow loris collared!

On the 16th March a second Bornean slow loris was collared at DGFC. She was an adult female and caught right outside the main building by Doyo, one of DG's staff.

She was named "Boss"; a name commonly used between the residents of DG and she was rather feisty! She was measured and fitted with a radio collar and released where she was found.



While finding her sleeping tree a couple of days later, it was found that she was caring for a young infant, thought to be only a few months old!

This study and the tarsier study is part of a long-term project funded by Columbus Zoo, Cleveland Zoological Society (for the last 2 years) and recently by Phoenix Zoo. We are mainly looking at the affects of seasonal influences on the home range and behavioural ecology of both nocturnal species.



Selamat datang to Glamorgan university !

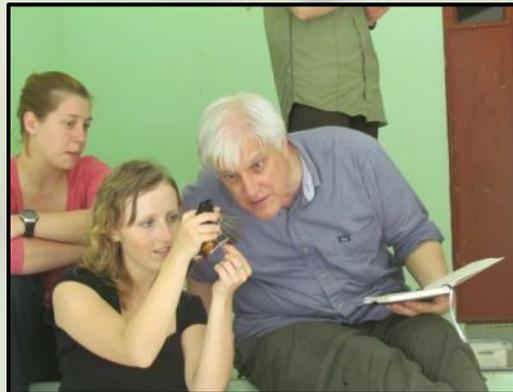


Glamorgan university returned again this year for their second field course at Danau Girang. The group was made up of 32 students studying Biology, Natural history and International Conservation Biology, from 2nd year undergraduate degrees and Masters programs. The course was supervised by Roy Wiles, Dave Lee and Carola Dallmeier, with help from DG students and staff.

A busy two weeks saw the students take part in a range of activities including: bird surveys along the river, mist netting, bird call recording, bat surveys, camera trapping surveys, nocturnal primate surveys, crocodile surveys, frog surveys, canopy climbing and insect sampling using malaise and light traps. During their stay they also went on day trips to visit a nearby palm oil plantation and the Sepilok Orangutan rehabilitation centre. Between them, the students managed to build up an impressive list of species sightings!

Take a look at the Glamorgan university picture album on the next page to see what they got up to. We hope everyone enjoyed their stay and we look forward to seeing Glamorgan students return next year!

Glamorgan university picture album



Column 1: Bee-eater caught in the mist nets; dissecting an otter found dead on the road; bat identification; green tree lizard. Column 2: Radio telemetry for nocturnal primates; looking for bird parasites; light trapping; orangutan. Column 3: painted mock viper on the main path; whip tail scorpion; clouded leopard caught on a camera trap.

“Our favourite part of the field course was....”



...the night oxbow boat survey, bird netting, frogging and climbing the canopy!”



...using the telemetry to find nocturnal primates, seeing an orangutan, climbing the canopy, frogging and crocodile searching!”



...meeting all you lovely people!”



...going crocodile searching!”



...light trapping to see nocturnal insects!”

Conservation Corner: Hornbills of the Kinabatangan River

There are 52 species of hornbill in the world, 8 of which are found in Sabah and can be seen along the Kinabatangan river. Each of these species is protected from hunting and disturbance.



Helmeted hornbill
(*Rhinoplax vigil*)



Rhinoceros hornbill
(*Buceros rhinoceros*)



Oriental pied hornbill
(*Anthracoceros albirostris*)



Wrinkled hornbill
(*Aceros corrugatus*)



White - crowned hornbill
(*Bericornis comatus*)



Wreathed hornbill
(*Rhyticeros undulatus*)



Black hornbill
(*Anthracoceros malayanus*)



Bushy-crested hornbill
(*Anorrhinus galeritus*)

Photos by DG staff, Cede Prudente and
Hornbill Research Foundation

Conservation Corner continued...



Threats:

- Hornbills rely on the presence of suitable cavities in large trees in the forest for the females to nest inside. The birds cannot create these holes themselves, therefore it is the limiting factor in their reproductive success. It is for this reason that the **removal of large trees** and **deforestation** is a major threat to all hornbill species.



- A second threat, is **poaching** of the chicks and adults for the pet trade, where they are sold for up to \$750 for select species. However, this problem is not as prevalent here compared to Thailand and other South East Asian countries.

Future Directions:

The successful projects created by the Thailand Hornbill Project such as Adopt a Hornbill Nest and Hornbill Love Day (on the 13th February) could give us ideas on how to help the hornbills of Sabah.

With the help of dedicated researchers and conservationists such as Dr Pilai Poonswad and her team, the awareness and concern of these magnificent birds will improve their future prospects.



For more information and to support Hornbill Conservation in Sabah please contact HUTAN- Kinabatangan Orangutan Conservation Project at: contactus@hutan.org.my

Photos of the Month



Column 1: Our resident pair of white crowned hornbills – the male eating a harlequin tree frog!; blue eared kingfisher; macaque sitting on the orangutan bridge; Como the tarsier. Column 2: a large tarantula; metallic cocoon; Bornean narrow mouthed frog hopped onto a parang!; hairy white spider; blue winged pitta*. Column 3: monitor lizard; yellow and black beetles; black and red broad bills; rufous backed kingfisher eating a yellow bellied puddle frog; giant squirrel coming in for a closer look- taken from our canopy platform. Column 4: Sunset in the rainforest; unidentified bat sp; frilled tree frog; oriental bay owl*. * =photos taken by Glamorgan student, Harry Simpson

Danau Girang Field Centre

*Danau Girang Field Centre was opened in July 2008.
It is located in the Lower Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary,
Sabah, Malaysia.*

*Danau Girang is owned by the Sabah Wildlife Department
and supported by Cardiff University. Its purpose is to further
scientific research with the aim of contributing to long-term
conservation projects in the area, and develop a better
understanding of our environment and the living things we
share it with.*

Danau Girang Field Centre

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