

# JUNGLE TIMES

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## Sabah Society at Danau Girang

Photo: A. Chung



**Thirteen members of the Sandakan branch of the Sabah Society visited Danau Girang this month.**

The Sabah Society has been in existence since 1960 when it was created in order to preserve interesting historical, natural and cultural aspects of life in Sabah in a time of rapid change throughout the area.

The non-governmental organisation plays an important role in maintaining a wider interest and appreciation of Sabah's physical and cultural identity. Particular achievements of note include the creation of Sabah Parks and the Sabah Museum. In 1992, the Sandakan branch of the society was formed.

The visitors listened to talks by Dr. Goossens on subjects such as work on orangutan and elephant conservation genetics and the history of the field centre. A trip on the river allowed members to see wildlife, as well as visiting the

forest restoration site and eco-camp run by MESCOT. MESCOT is a community-based conservation and eco-tourism initiative based in Batu Puteh and has been working in the Kinabatangan since 1996.

The Sabah Society members enjoyed their stay at Danau Girang Field Centre. Rosalie Corpuz described the centre as 'a wonderful place with lots of potential!' and other members expressed their interest in the 'great work' being undertaken here.



## Banteng and Benoit in Bogor

**Benoit Goossens went to Bogor, Indonesia (on the island of Java) from 10 to 13 May to attend a Workshop on the National Strategy for Conservation of the Banteng (wild cattle).**

It was organised by Direktorat Jenderal Perlindungan Hutan dan Konservasi Alam, Departemen Kehutanan and the IUCN/SSC Asian Wild Cattle Specialist Group. The meeting was in Bahasa Indonesia and the objective was to come up with a national strategy for the conservation of the banteng in Indonesia (Kalimantan and Java) and identify conservation actions that will be implemented between 2010 and 2020. Benoit Goossens attended the meeting on behalf of Laurentius

Ambu, Director of the Sabah Wildlife Department.

There are three sub-species of banteng, *Bos javanicus lowi* in Borneo, *Bos javanicus javanicus* in Java and *Bos javanicus birmanicus* in Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. We estimate that there are about 5,000 to 8,000 banteng left in the wild.

In Sabah, the banteng can be found in Kulumba Forest Reserve, in Tabin Wildlife Reserve, in Maliau Basin Conservation Area, in Deramakot, Ulu Segama and Malua Forest Reserves. There is little knowledge on the number of individuals left in Sabah and on the ecology and habitat use of the banteng

in the country, something that needs to be addressed if we want to protect this large mammal species. The Sabah Wildlife Department is working on this and, with the support of Cardiff University and Danau Girang Field Centre, the Asian Wild Cattle Specialist Group, the NGO Hutan, Houston Zoo and several other local and international institutions, will start a long-term study on banteng ecology in Sabah.



The Banteng Workshop in Bogor

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### IN OTHER NEWS...

- After three months of volunteering at Danau Girang, João Alves has left the jungle to return to his home in Portugal. 'Spoonface' will certainly be missed from the DGFC student team.



### DID THEY REALLY SAY THAT?

"One day you will grow up to eat pig." - Ridzwan Ali to a small snake.

"I don't see the point in remembering people's ages. They just keep getting older." - Rachel Henson

# PHOTO ALBUM



Photo: T.M. Poh

*Clockwise: a tarsier, the boss, bird ringing, a floating flower, Sabah Society at the watchtower, visitors at DGFC, 'Cash' the large monitor lizard*

## 'Houston... We Have No Problem!'

**Two zookeepers from Houston Zoo visited Danau Girang Field Centre to experience the jungle this month!**

Martina Stevens and Amanda Daly, both from the Houston Zoo Conservation Department, spent three days at the centre as part of their trip to Sabah. The zoo has links with local NGO Hutan, based in Sukau, and with Danau Girang Field Centre (partly funding the elephant satellite-collaring project. Martina and Amanda will act as ambassadors for both Hutan and Danau Girang on their return to America.

Martina is the elephant manager at the zoo and is hoping to catch sight of wild elephants in the Kinabatangan during her stay. Amanda



Amanda and Martina (centre) with members of the DGFC team

has spent seven years as an orangutan keeper, and was lucky enough to see orangutans in the time she spent at the centre. Phoebe and her baby Pisang have become regular characters in the

area and decided to snack on some Sengkuang (*Dracontomelon dao*) fruits outside the hostel where the keepers were accommodated. The following morning a different pair of orangutans were spotted feeding in the same spot! This was the first time the visitors had seen orangutans in the wild and they had a good view of their lunchtime activities.

Houston Zoo has a 'Pongos Helping Pongos' programme, where paintings made by orangutans, siamang gibbons, elephants and other animals are sold to raise funds for conservation projects and behavioural enrichment activities within the zoo. More information can be found online at [www.houstonzoo.org/php](http://www.houstonzoo.org/php).

## SPECIES IN FOCUS: The Reticulated Python

This month Rachel Munds takes a look at the reticulated python...

**Common Name:** Reticulated python

**Scientific Name:** *Python reticulatus*

**Distribution:** South East Asia



### *Python reticulatus*

A large, wet log is on my trail,  
It seems rather wet and with a 12-15%  
of body length tail.

Oh dear! This may sound ridiculous  
But I think I'm facing a *Python re-*  
*ticulatus!*

A reticulate python is its common  
name

And it being the longest snake is its  
claim to fame.

It's net-like decorative patterns and  
guitar-shaped head are ways to I.D.  
them,

They even have claws, but I sure can't  
see them!

Commonly found throughout South  
East Asia,

I found my first one in Borneo, Malay-  
sia.

Sought for its skin and its meat,  
I hear it is quite a delicacy to eat.

One thing more you should know,  
It can eat a boar or a small doe.  
If it can eat these large creatures,  
I doubt it'll have problems swallowing  
your fine features.

Now I must be on the run,  
'Cause this poem is done.

## HOW TO: Rid Yourself of a Rat

### *Nuggets of knowledge from the jungle...*

**When a particularly evil rat chews its way through two pairs of trousers, two shirts, three bags, a toothbrush and an inflatable kangaroo and proceeds to spend all night running around your room and gnawing at your door it's natural to end up pretty determined to catch it.**

The first stage of 'Operation Rat Attack' involved merely covering the hole in my door with gaffa tape. This had been successful for some time, but for some reason the rat set himself a real mission to enter my room. Since the tape ceased to be of any use, and having been severely annoyed at the rapidly decreasing selection of wearable clothes, I decided it was time for drastic action.

Paper, cardboard, tape and wood are obviously no match for my attacker so I set off on a hunt for something metal. If nothing else, it would give him toothache if he insisted on chewing at my door. The only moveable metal item I could find was a water bottle left by somebody after the Cardiff University field course; other options included the sink and the metal pipe running

down the outside of the studio, but I was unable to detach them from the wall. A highly technical application of tape and a precise positioning of the bottle to cover the rat hole, followed by further tape application would, I hoped, stop our rodent friend from entering the room. I took it a step further by attaching a piece of string to the back of the door which could be hooked up to a bungee cord outside my room to keep the door shut.



The unforeseen consequence of keeping the rat *out* was that it then channelled all of its energies on trying to gnaw its way back *in*. Nothing I tried during those long,

sleepless nights worked, so eventually I gave in and set a trap.

I closed my door and locked it from the inside. I heard an ominous 'cluck' which indicated that the locking mechanism had come unattached from the locky-unlock-knob thing (technical term). I was now locked inside my room. However, the rat didn't wait long and after only seven minutes I heard the trap spring shut. I managed to escape my room using the pliers attachment on my penknife and tried to make the rat apologise for destroying everything and keeping me awake. The next morning the captured fugitive was released a significant distance from the studios but dared to return the following night, and so was caught a second time. He was then transported by boat to an area of forest far, far away, where hopefully he's finding something else to chew on.



## Danau Girang Field Centre

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## JUNGLE JOKE

Q) How can you tell if there's an elephant in the kitchen?

A) If you have to ask me that then maybe you shouldn't be living in the jungle...

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Danau Girang Field  
Centre

## 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.*

## CONGRATULATIONS FARINA!

Everyone at Danau Girang Field Centre would like to wish Nurzhafarina binti Othman and Fauzie bin Sarjono the very best for their wedding day and all the happiness in the world for the rest of their lives together!

Farina is holding two ceremonies to celebrate the occasion in both Sabah and Alor Setar in Peninsular Malaysia.

Once again...

*...Congratulations Farina!*

## PTY Students in Statistical Turmoil!

**The Professional Training Year students from Cardiff University have been battling with orangutan data for some time now. This month, Dr. Ian Vaughan flew over to sort things out!**

Most undergraduate students are afraid of statistics. It's the unmentionable 's-word' that gets us all running for a coffee break or accidentally forgetting we have work to do, but sometimes you have to confront your fears, face the music and, if so inclined to do so, dance. There was no dancing at Danau Girang this month, but nevertheless the two students were far happier after a week of intensive computer-work than they were before their supervisor's arrival.

A meeting was held with Dr. Marc Ancrenaz from the Kinabatangan Orangutan Conservation Project to discuss the direction of the reports that must be written as part of their training year. It was decided that Chloe Parker would be concentrating on orangutan time budgets, which is how the animals spend their days, and Rachel Henson would be focussing on their feeding behaviour.

During his stay Ian managed to squeeze in two mornings of mist netting. In the first session thirteen birds were caught and ringed, followed by another six the next morning. Several birds already wore rings, having been caught during the Cardiff University field course last July. It was good to see some familiar feathers that were still fit and healthy ten months after being first captured. One of the most spectacular birds caught was the colourful Hooded Pitta (*Pitta sordida*).



Working hard at Danau Girang