

JUNGLE TIMES

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DGFC Established 2008

Here's to the Next Five Years... and Beyond!

Datuk Masidi Manjun, Minister of Tourism, Culture and Environment, came to Danau Girang Field Centre to witness the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding.



Photo: Rudi Delvaux

The signing of the Memo-

randum means that the collaborative work between Sabah Wildlife Department and Cardiff University will continue for another five years.

“Kinabatangan is rich with natural treasures and to protect it and use it wisely we first need to study it closely,” said Datuk Masidi the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Environment at Danau Girang Field Centre located within Lot 6 of the Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary.

The signing took place on July 18th whilst the Cardiff field course was taking place. In total, ninety people were at

the centre!

The future of Danau Girang Field Centre was discussed, including the introduction of new field courses and expansion of its research areas.

“During the coming five years we expect to see the centre expand its research and teaching activities to including research on the interactions at an ecosystem level between forests, oil palm plantations and freshwater environment,” added Masidi.

Field Course Returns to Danau Girang Field Centre!

The second group of Cardiff University students came to Danau Girang Field Centre in July for a tropical biodiversity assessment course as part of their second year studies.

The students received a proper (tropical) welcome as they meandered down the Kinabatangan River from Batu Putih, but a little rain was not able to dampen their spirits.

During the two weeks they took part in a range of different activities to examine the biodiversity of the area. Entomological studies, small mammal trapping, mist-netting, tree measuring and primate surveys were regular features of the course.

In the second week the students engage in an individual project which is later written up as part of their field course module. The projects this year covered a large variety of different choices including setting pit-fall traps and collecting millipedes. One project involved recording birdsong in the forest to later be studied back at the centre. Another group made use of the resident nocturnal person,

Rachel Munds, to study the techniques employed in searching for nocturnal primates. Also active at night were the crocodile team who prowled

the waters by torchlight looking for the reptilian predators.

Two Malaysian students who are currently studying in Wales, Anis and Kamila, joined the 21 students and staff from Cardiff University for the first week of the field-course. Andrew Smart from Cornwall College also attended, creating the largest group to visit Danau Girang so far.



Photo: Rudi Delvaux

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IN OTHER NEWS...

- A project on elephant social behaviour will go ahead thanks to a generous donation from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service of \$52,000. Farina Othman will undertake the PhD project under the supervision of Dr. Benoit Goossens and Dr. Marc Ancrenaz in collaboration with Hutan's Elephant Conservation Unit. The study will include elements of population biology, behaviour and conservation genetics.

DID THEY REALLY SAY THAT?

“There's nothing sugary around here. Except for sugar itself.” - Chloe Parker

“I don't know what I'd do if I had normal children. I mean obviously I'd still love them, but...” - Rachel Henson

PHOTO ALBUM



Clockwise: Toad-in-the-hole, fungus, Farina's wedding, Pied Hornbill, Ridzwan and Jeffery, the river, the two Rachels, Proboscis Monkey, Jeffery, Salin and Chloe, Benoit's birthday bowling—DGFC vs Hutan!

ELEPHANTS AND MOVIE STARS!

Excitement rippled through Danau Girang Field Centre this month as rumours of elephants and movie stars found their way to students' ears.

Although elephants were sighted nearby in October, their last visit to the centre was in August 2008. They passed through the site whilst travelling eastwards along the edge of the river. This June a group of elephants were taking a very similar route and were spotted on the riverbank before travelling through Danau Girang in the early hours of the morning.

Datuk Michelle Yeoh was also in the area, filming for a new documentary programme. The star is well known for roles in James Bond: Tomorrow Never Dies, Memoirs of a Geisha and the memorable fight scenes in Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon.

The elephants were travelling in a group of around fifteen animals and left plenty of evidence to remember them by. Enormous footprints and piles of elephant poo are still being found on the DGFC trails, over three weeks after their visit!

New elephant-fences constructed around the boat-house and the water tower are still intact and the structures are still standing, so the well behaved visitors are welcome



Elephants and Movie Stars...

back anytime!

SPECIES IN FOCUS: The Slow Loris

This month Rachel Munds takes a look at the Slow Loris

Common Name: Bornean Slow Loris

Scientific Name: *Nycticebus menagensis*

Distribution: Five species of Slow Loris (genus *Nycticebus*) can be found throughout South East Asia. The Bornean Slow Loris is the smallest, and believed to be the most insectivorous, of the lorises. It is only found on Borneo and exists as a single species on the island.

The Bornean loris is classified as 'vulnerable' according to IUCN and Appendix I by CITES.

The Slow Loris

*Hidden in a deep dark Bornean forest
Resides the smallest of the small slow lorises.*

The small slow loris appears extra small

Because it lives in the trees, sometimes ones more than 15 meters tall!

*15 meters tall, its meals it may lap
For it enjoys sweet, sticky sap*

*Sweet, sticky sap, fruit, birds and small mammals are excellent bait
Because they comprise the diet of this unique primate*

*This unique primate is active at night
And during the day is out of sight*

*Out of sight, it may seem difficult to find
But a headlamp will make its eyes*

shine

*Its eyes shine and orange they become
Thanks to their tapetum lucidum*

*Their tapetum lucidum is a feature
For a many a nocturnal creature*

*A nocturnal creature threatened mainly
by the pet bazaar*

*Making one wonder, how far, how far?
How far will slow lorises survive?
Can their populations revive?*

*Their populations revive only
time will tell for the slow lorises
Who lives in SE Asian deep dark forests.*



Ilkley Grammar to the Rescue...

Eight Students, two staff members from Ilkley Grammar School and one local guide worked hard to help clean up the Kinabatangan.

90 kg of Rubbish was collected from Sungai Khoya and the students did a wonderful job of cleaning up the old site of Uncle Tan's Jungle Camp. The rubbish was disposed of at Bukit Garam after being taken by boat to Batu Putih.

The task took five days to complete.



Students cleaning up!
Photo: Rudi Delvaux

Photo-tastic!

Photographer Rudi Delvaux is spending one month at Danau Girang Field Centre.

Rudi has spent time looking for wildlife in the forest, elephants in Sukau and taken boat cruises on the river in search of the perfect shot. In addition he's had his cameras at the ready for all the special events at DGFC this month. See more of his work at: www.ruidelvaux.com



Photos: Rudi Delvaux

HOW TO: Maintain a Botanical Plot

Nuggets of knowledge from the jungle...

There are four botanical plots at Danau Girang, containing a total of 820 labelled trees. It's up to the PTY students to keep them in working order.

In each of the plots trees with a DBH (Diameter at Breast Height) of 10cm or higher have been labelled. Sometimes the labels are subject to weather-damage or unintentional vandalism by various jungle-creatures and must be replaced.

1. The plots were checked twice this year by the Professional Training Year students and David Stanton, from Cardiff. They were checked before and after the floods hit the area in January. Trees were checked against a numbered list and those not found were recorded as miss-

- ing or tagless.
2. Back at Danau Girang Headquarters, new labels were printed for trees that had lost their tags during the rainy season.
3. The tags were then cut up and laminated...
4. ...and shiny new lengths of wire threaded through to hold them in place.
5. The PTY students then visited each plot with a hammer and nails and tried to find the trees that were un-findable the first time around, due to lack of labels. This was no easy task; it called upon their patience, mosquito-tolerance and tree-identification skills like no mission they had ever encountered. They also saw a turtle.



Attaching the first label



A turtle, taken at Tree 153,

Disclaimer: No trees were seriously injured in the labelling of our plots.

Danau Girang Field Centre

Lot 6
The Jungle
Lower Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary
Sabah
Email:
danaugirangfieldcentre@yahoo.com

In The Clouds...



...A Proboscis Monkey!

This cloud monkey was spotted floating above Sungai Kinabatangan, 16th June

Jungle Joke

- Q) What do you get if you cross a Chinese take-away with a pet shop?
A) Fried Poodles

Writer & Editor: Rachel Henson
(Rachel.Henson@rocketmail.com)

Director of Publication: Benoit Goossens



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.

Obituary

Dr. Mohd. Fairus Jalil sadly passed away on July 25, 2009 of B-strep pneumonia at the age of 36.

Fairus was passionate about entomology, primate studies and conservation genetics. After obtaining his PhD on the phylogeography and population genetics of primates in the Kinabatangan, he set up the primate centre at ITBC, UMS. He was a close colleague and friend of Dr. Benoit Goossens and a respected supervisor of Ridzwan Ali.



Fairus was a great man who will be truly missed by everyone at Danau Girang and all who knew him.



Nocturnal Students Go 'Trap-Happy'

After four months of hard work and perseverance, ten hand-made loris traps were hoisted into the trees at Danau Girang Field Centre.

The traps are the work of Rachel Munds and Ridzwan Ali who have spent many long afternoons bending bits of metal and sewing large pieces of wire mesh together. Each trap was painstakingly made from scratch, using designs altered from previous loris-trapping attempts elsewhere following lengthy behavioural reading, conversing with others who study lorises and brainstorming with family members. Munds, 24, said "I find making traps fun. It is like an adult version of Legos with a purpose."

Three types of traps were considered, two based on the pit-fall approach and one in the style of a large, humane, rat-trap. Constructing the traps was not an easy task, as Rachel explains:

"Making the traps was a learning experience and the time it took was unexpected and at times frustrating. But the end results are the reward. The traps are durable and well-made. Fingers are crossed that we will be able to capture some lorises and some other nocturnal animals!"

With the help of DGFC manager Zainal Abidin Ja'afar and a team of weekend workers Rachel and Ridzwan have finally completed the traps and it is hoped that the hard-work will pay off with captures in future loris studies.

