



The Jungle Times

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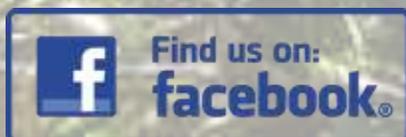
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Visitors

This month we welcomed Russell Mittermeier, the President of Conservation International and Chairman of the IUCN/SSC Primate Specialist Group who came to visit with Tetsuji Ida and Hiromi Tada. They are currently in Asia reassessing the conservation status of Asian primates with the IUCN Primate Specialist Group. They visited us for one night, hoping to be able to see a Western tarsier. He was in luck, as PTY Katey Hedger and Scientific Officer Danica Stark tracked down our collared tarsier, Meriah, for them to see. Russell was also kind enough to donate one of his new books, Primate edition of the Handbook of The Mammals of the World, to Danau Girang Field Centre. Thank you very much, we hope to see you again soon!



Goodbyes

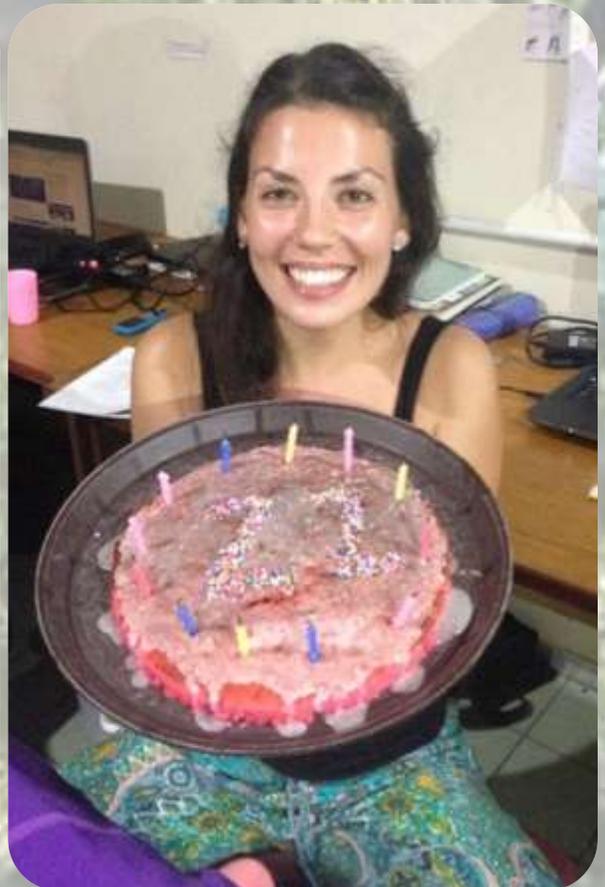
Masayo Nomoto

This month we said goodbye to Masayo who volunteered with us for three months. She came to DG to further her knowledge into field based conservation work. She has been very busy in her three months here, helping every single project that was running. She assisted Tim and Martijn with their orangutan follows, Abbie and Katey with tracking nocturnal primates and Rudi in finding frogs during his transects, and much more. She has been invaluablely helpful to us in her time here. Thank you Masayo, we hope you enjoyed yourself!



Happy Birthday!

Happy birthday to our PTY Abbie Fletcher and long-term volunteer Aubery Lebas, both of whom turned 22 this month! Aubery spent her actual birthday with her friend in Bali whilst on her visa run (lucky girl!) so we celebrated a few days early with birthday cake and a movie! Abbie spent her jungle birthday tracking our nocturnal primates with PTY Katey Hedger, after which we surprised her with a pink lemonade cake and a movie night. We hope you had a wonderful day girls!



Interview with Russell Mittermeier

Russell Mittermeier is the President of Conservation International and is visiting Asia in order to reassess the conservation status of Asian primates with the IUCN Primate Specialist Group.

Can you tell us about the work you did with the World Wildlife Fund?

I was very lucky, at about the time that I was finishing my thesis and I met Barbara Harrison, who was the first chair in the Primate Specialist Group IUCN. We hit it off really well and she was retiring so they dumped all the responsibilities of the group on me, in 1977. I did a global strategy for primate conservation, with a handful of other primate researchers, and that was successful enough that World Wildlife Fund created a primate programme that I became the head of in 1979. We created the first ever primate action fund, which was a \$30,000 pot of money, so we were able to do a lot of little \$1000 projects. I continued to do primate research in the 80's, focused on the Atlantic forest region of Brazil, which up until then everybody talked about the Amazon, but the Atlantic forest is this other whole ecosystem, a different biome really, that has lost about 90% of its habitat. It has 25 different kinds of monkey, and nobody had ever really done an in-depth analysis of all the species there, so I started working there. Then during that period, I also got interested in Madagascar, so I started working there in 1984, and ever since.

Interview cont.

And you left WWF to become President of Conservation International?

Yes in 1989 I got tired of World Wildlife Fund. My last position there was Vice President, and so I shifted to Conservation International and became President there, and I occupied that position for 25 years. I've been fortunate in that I've been able to find unusual funding sources for primate conservation. In the 80s I met this nice old lady from California who was pretty wealthy and loved primates, so I took her all over the place showing her lemurs and mountain gorillas and monkeys in the Atlantic forest in Brazil, and then when she died she left her \$10million estate, from which the Margot Marsh Biodiversity Foundation was created. Since then, for the past almost 20 years now, we've been able to do small grants for primate research using that money. More recently in 2009, we managed to convince the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi to create a special species conservation fund. He gave a €25million grant, and that is another fund that is not just primates but all critically endangered species.

Because primatologists are good at writing grants we usually get between 50 and 100,000 US\$ in primate projects per cycle. Not a lot of money, but small amounts applied quickly with minimum bureaucracy are very often worth much more than much larger amounts of money. So, with the Primate Specialist Group my core costs have always been covered and I've been able to find other funds to get the Primate Specialist Group on a really solid footing.

Interview cont.

What's been your favourite part about working with Conservation International?

Well I am particularly fond of the concept of hotspots. There are several concepts floating around out there, but there are two of which I developed, one of which Norman Myers, a British ecologist, developed. That's really the best story, biodiversity hotspots, which really looks at those areas with the highest levels of endemism and the highest risk, threat, and loss of habitat. So Norman started out with 10 hotspots in 1988, and I saw that and I said "wow, that's great, I love it", so I made some suggestions to him, he published the paper with 18 hotspots. Then when I went to Conservation International in 1989, I brought the hotspots concept with me, and we made that the central focus of the organisation for the next 20 years. And we would find that several times over, we're now at 35 hotspots, they originally occupied about 16% of the land surface of the planet, but about 90% has been lost. So what remains is a little over 2% of the Earth's land surface but it's got 50% of all plants and 40% of all vertebrate endemics. If you're looking at the most endangered species, depending on the group of organisms, anywhere from 80 to 90+ % of your most endangered, your CRs and your ENs are in the hotspots. So if you're going to try to avoid extinctions, these are the places to focus on. We've used the hotspots concept very effectively, we used it for a couple of mega fundraising campaigns where we raised a million dollars over several years, and with that also we've created the Critical Ecosystems Partnership Fund, which continues to this day.

Interview cont.

Then we have the mega-diversity concept, which I came up with in 1986, which basically says, 18 countries have 2/3 of the world's biodiversity, and they really have a major responsibility to take care of that. I was just looking through the guidebook today and I was very happy to see in it that Lonely Planet had said this is a mega-diverse country. Malaysia actually is a mega-diversity country, it's the 2nd smallest after Ecuador, but it has extremely high levels of diversity, and endemism, much of it thanks to Sarawak and Sabah. And then there's another concept called the high biodiversity wilderness areas, which I also created, which is the other end of the spectrum from hotspots, areas with high biodiversity, high endemism, but still 80-90% intact; the Amazon, the Congo forest, islands in New Guinea, and a handful of others. So you put those two together, and really have the bulk of the terrestrial biodiversity out there, and it really helps you focus your efforts.

Tell us about some of the work you have done with the Primate Specialist Group

So we do newsletters, we do an Asian primates, a Neotropical primates, an African primates newsletter, we have a journal called Primate Conservation, all that is distributed free. We do these red-listing activities every few years, we just finished the Asian one two days ago, we've got one more to go now, the African one and then we won't have to do one again for another five years at least. Using the information from the red-listing process, we write action plans.

Interview cont.

The most successful plan so far was one for lemurs back in 2012, and we did a red-listing workshop that showed that about 90% of all lemurs were endangered. So we did an action plan, and instead of just handing that around to our best friends, we published an article in Science, we actually had donors coming to us asking to help, which usually doesn't happen. So we've raised about \$1million dollars through that, for lemurs specifically, so far. The way we've structured the group now, we have 10 different sections, we've got a South East Asian section, a South Asian section, a China section, a Brazilian Guianas section, a tropical Andes, Mesoamerica, we have just one for Africa, but a separate section for Madagascar, and then we have two specialist sections, one for great apes and one for gibbons. We're particularly lucky with apes because there's a foundation in New York, called the Arcus Foundation that is a big supporter of apes. No other primates, just great apes, and gibbons, and they give out about \$10million a year. I've used a lot of the primate work to focus on tropical forest in general because about 90% of all primates are tropical forest animals, and of late I've really gotten into pushing this concept of primate ecotourism, primate watching, primate life listing and that's based on a bird watching model. The idea is to get people out, to remote areas where primates occur, pay to the local communities, develop guide associations, develop all these materials around primate conservation. One of the best examples is Madagascar, we're in a country that's probably among the five top tourist countries on Earth. You've got these local community guide associations that, not only take you out to see lemurs in government protected areas, they are also now creating their own reserves, so we help them with small grants, and it's amazing.

Interview cont.

Also we're trying to show how primates are really fundamental components of tropical forest systems. At the climate convention coming up now, in five days it starts in Paris, there's a paper about to come out, showing that tropical forests are 50% of the solution to climate change. Not just 50% of the solution to red areas, 50% of the solution to climate change overall. And another paper just came out showing that 1% of forest trees in the Amazon, just about 20 species or something, sequester 50% of the fauna, these are the big hardwoods, really tall, slow growing hardwood species. And guess who disperses those; monkeys, like spider monkeys, woolly monkeys, and things like that.

So, you reassess conservation status about every 5 years?

Well as it works about it's about every 7-10 years. We did the last assessment, it was all for a global mammal assessment which came out in 2008, but we started in 2005 so we did first primates 2005-2007, and we fed that into the 2008 assessment. Now for the 2016 assessment which is coming out next year we did Madagascar 2012, Neotropics early this year, Asia the day before yesterday, Africa will be some time in early 2016. So then we just redo the assessment of everything that we know about primates, and it's come out a lot worse because primates really look like they're going to be out of the larger groups of vertebrates, the one with the highest percentage of endangered species. With Madagascar its 90%, the Neotropics was pretty good, there was only about 50% because there's a lot of forest left, a lot of good conservation work going on in South and Central America, so it's not a whole lot that's going to disappear there.

Interview cont.

In Madagascar there's a lot that could disappear tomorrow. Asia is similar to Madagascar, it looks like it's going to come out close to 90% in one of the three threat categories, and more than 60% critical and endangered, that's a lot. Africa is probably going to come out somewhere in between, but we figure that we're probably going to have about 60% of all primates in the critical and endangered categories. But, we haven't lost any for sure yet, in the 20th century we did not lose any primate taxa, and that's a really good record, because every other larger group of mammals lost at least one taxa. And now there's a bunch that are pretty close.

So you would say that Asia and Madagascar are the areas that really need to be focused on in terms of conservation?

Yeah, we want to focus on all of them, but the ones where you have the greatest extinction risk are those two. And really Madagascar, you almost need a separate category for Madagascar because it's so tiny. The whole island is 600,000 square kilometres which is a little bigger than France. The remaining habitat is about 10%, so that's about 50-60,000 square kilometres, which is the size of Costa Rica. What remains in Madagascar is probably not dissimilar from Sabah, maybe a little bit more. So you have all this global biodiversity crammed into a tiny area

What do you think, in your opinion, are the best methods of Asia tackling the huge decline that they've had?

Well it would be really nice if governments like Indonesia and Malaysia took a zero deforestation policy on palm oil,

Interview cont.

put palm oil on degraded lands, don't clear any more natural forest, but yesterday we saw an announcement that the Indonesian and Malaysian governments told the oil palm producers don't pay attention to the zero deforestation policy. "You've got to keep burning the peat swamps", it's unbelievable. So the biggest problem is large scale industrial action I guess. There are many problems but they clear vast areas for oil palm in this part of the world, soy and cattle in South America, and increasingly oil palm as well. What you need are more protected areas, more effective management of existing protected areas. But to me the two pieces that I think are critical are a research presence, a long term research presence like you have here. If you have a research presence, it's better than a guard force, because you hire local people; everybody knows what you're doing. You don't usually have big poaching or habitat destruction problems, if you have a research presence. Ecotourism is another one, if local communities are making money, they're not going to cut down the forest. Now you need the government policies, you need all these other things but to me the most basic elements are conservation communities engaged with local communities, so everyone understands what's going on. And it helps to have, you know, an honest director in a national park, which sometimes isn't easy. It helps to have the involvement of national and international NGOs, and helping to support whatever you've got on the ground, the long-term permanent presence. With the presence of researchers and tourism you're in good shape, now one or the other or both.

Interview cont.

Time and time again I've been going into a place where there's research presence, you see loads of animals, then you go next door and there's nothing. And of course keeping the funding stream going, but you don't need vast amounts of money, very often some of the big agencies dump large amounts of money on conservation and most of it gets stolen or misused. We managed to move large amounts of money into Madagascar and most of it is wasted. The good money has been the small grant mechanisms that really get stuff done.

How did you come to find out about Danau Girang?

I know Marc Ancrenaz (NGO HUTAN/KOCP), and I was asking where's the best place to see tarsiers and lorises, and he said this is it. I was coming for the Singapore workshop and every time I go for one of these workshops I try to add something on that is actually in the wild, otherwise you just become a bureaucrat. I was either going to come here or go to South Sumatra but the Kinabatangan is famous and I hadn't been to Sabah since 1979, so I thought "come back and see what I can see".

That's great, thank you for finding the time to speak to us, we hope you've enjoyed your brief stay here!

You're welcome, absolutely.

Update on PTY Projects

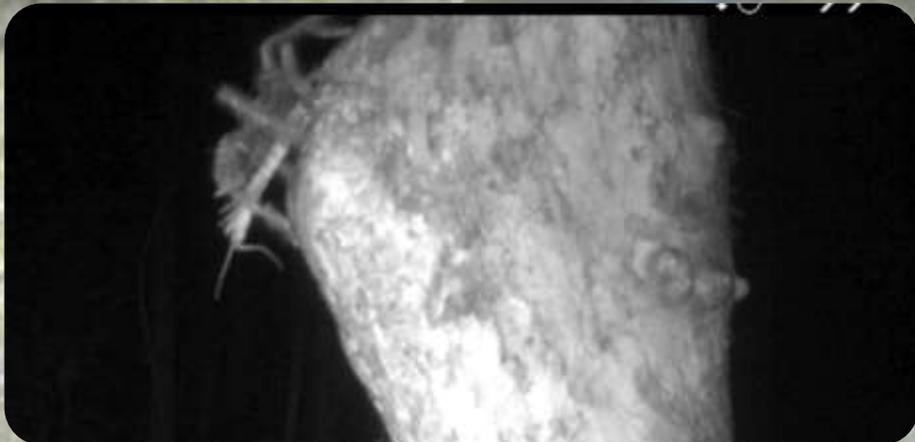
The projects being carried out by our four PTYs are now in full swing! Charlie has spent the last few weeks installing her pitfall traps around the field centre to identify reptile species, and since has been working long days trapping and sampling individuals, such as a juvenile reticulated python (pictured)!! She has been using a method of mark recapture to identify any previously caught individuals which will ultimately provide a much more accurate measure of abundance and diversity!



Our nocturnal primate girls Abbie and Katey have suffered some hard losses in regards to their collared tarsiers recently. With Comok's collar failing shortly after her collaring, the sad demise of our male collared tarsier Toots, and Kipas currently missing presumed dead. However refusing to be defeated, the girls have begun night-walking every night with the RA's, with the intention of catching and collaring some new tarsiers. Of course they are also looking out for slow lorises while walking as they recently received some brand new lorises collars, which they are excited to put into use.

PTY Projects cont.

Finally, Joe has been trialing methods he can use to observe tarantula behaviour and is scouring the forest for new individuals to observe. He has currently located three female tarantulas and their nests (males are nomadic and therefore harder to observe over long periods), one of whom recently gave birth to a lot of spiderlings! His current observation method is using camera traps, which takes photos in 5-minute intervals, this has produced some great pictures of tarantula behaviours, including Simone (pictured) and her offspring!



Conservation Corner:

Common name: False Gharial
Scientific name: *Tomistoma schlegelii*
IUCN status: Vulnerable



Description and Ecology:

The False Gharial is the largest of all extant crocodylians, with males recorded with lengths of over 5 metres. They are found, although not commonly, within peat swamps and freshwater swamp forests. Although overall the False Gharial is poorly studied, their diet is said to be comprised of fish, monitor lizards, birds and mammals. The nesting season occurs within the dry season and around 13-41 eggs are laid in nests, which then hatch after an incubation period of around 70 days. The False Gharial produces the largest eggs of all crocodylian species!

Threats:

- Habitat loss due to illegal logging and agriculture growth
- Commercial hunting within the 1950-70s
- Drowning in fishing nets

Conservation:

- Listed on CITES Appendix I since 1979
- Foundations fund raising for wetland and crocodile conservation
- Nest surveying within remaining swamp forest

Animal anagrams!

Below are anagrams of the English names of four animals found in Borneo, see if you can figure out what they are!

1

Decoupled a
lord

2

Evict

3

Alpha net

4

Zoom
tail rind

Fact of the month!

The reticulated python holds the record as the longest snake in the world, with a total length of up to about 10m!

Photos of the Month!



Photos by Charlie Cooper, Joe Hampson and Rudi Delvaux

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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