



The Jungle Times

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Inside this issue:

Page 2: Arrivals

Page 3: Visitors

Page 4: Quentin Phillips

Page 5: Pangolin found and collared!

Pages 6 & 7: Elephant poaching

Page 8: Ken, Liz and Andrew from Kyoto University

Page 9: PhD Update

Page 10: Solar Panels

Page 11: New Jetty

Page 12: Christmas at DG

Page 13: Proposed bridge at Sukau

Page 14: Conservation Corner

Page 15: Word scramble

Page 16: Photos of the month



Page 4



Page 5



Page 10



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Arrivals



This month we welcomed Kyle Hendrikson, of Boulder, Colorado. Here for a duration of three months, he will be working with the Nocturnal Primates Project. Kyle has a Masters from UCL in primatology, and has previously worked with olive baboons in Nigeria. Welcome to DG Kyle!



DG also welcomed Kenneth Keuk, of Paris, France. Kenneth arrived early in December with Liz and Andrew of Kyoto University. He is currently working on the primates of the Kinabatangan, investigating parasite communities in relation to ecological changes. Kenneth has previously worked at DG, volunteering for the Nocturnal Primates Project. Welcome back Kenneth and good luck with the project!

Visitors



In January we welcomed a number of visitors, including Danica's parents Loren and Sig! This is their first visit to DG during Danica's seven-year career here, they were able to witness first hand the work we do here, observe some of the amazing animals Borneo has to offer and finally, were lucky enough to meet her second family. We hope to see you again soon Loren and Sig!



We were also happy to receive two close friends of ex-PTY Kieran, Juliet and Rhianna. The pair is taking six months out from physiotherapy to travel Australasia and South-East Asia. During their stay they followed a variety of projects and saw some of the rarer animals at DG including orang-utans and otters! The bright and bubbly girls provided endless laughter and brought fresh smiles to everyone at DG. Enjoy the rest of your travels girls.

Visit by Quentin Phillips



Born and raised in Sandakan, Quentin Phillips moved to England as a teenager to study economics at Cambridge University. Ever since, he has been a frequent visitor to his birthplace of Borneo, and throughout his life cultured a deep rooted affinity towards the island's vivid natural history.

In recent years, Quentin has committed his depth and wealth of knowledge to paper, publishing a revised version of the book "Mammals of Borneo" as well as "Birds of Borneo". Currently he is close to completing a third book, "Figs of Borneo", a field guide with up to date taxonomic identifications for all 150 of Borneo's known Ficus plants based on non-herbarian fruit and leaf samples, as well as descriptions of each species ecology.

It has been our absolute pleasure here at DG to host Quentin for the final four days of December. During his stay, Quentin was accompanied by the remaining researchers and research assistants whilst searching the forests surrounding DG for Ficus plants, particularly those which were fruiting, to collect leaf and fruit samples for identification. The staff at DG also contributed as much local knowledge of the known Ficus plants and nearby wildlife as they could in order to help build a bigger picture of the dynamic ecological interactions between the two. We wish Quentin all the best with finishing the book!

Pangolin found and collared!

When Mr Nasri Manjah of Batu Puteh found a Sunda pangolin in late November, he did something unique. Ignoring the appeal of a large cash sum being offered by illegal animal traders, Mr Manjah immediately notified Sabah Wildlife Department and DGFC. Elisa Panjang, who is currently carrying out a PhD on pangolins, used this unique opportunity to expand her research. A GPS tag was fitted to the pangolin's scales, allowing Elisa to gather entirely new data on the Sunda pangolin movement habits and home range through VHF tracking, once the pangolin has been collared and released into the forest.

The Sunda pangolin is one of the most heavily trafficked wild mammal species and is heavily endangered, yet so little research has ever been carried out on them in the wild, and with their diminishing numbers and reduction in habitat, potential for such research to be carried out is rapidly declining! A perfect example for the importance of local involvement in scientific research, the contribution of one farmer's chance find opens the doorway for totally novel research to be carried out.

Congratulations Elisa!



Director Dr Benoit Goossens presenting Mr Nasri Manjah with a small gift, as thanks for his kind deed.



The pangolin, collar attached, being released into the forest around DG.

Elephant poaching

Everyone at DG was devastated to hear of the poaching of two Bornean elephants. The carcasses of the two bulls were found by a combined team of WRU and DG members in the close vicinity of Ulu Segama Forest Reserve.



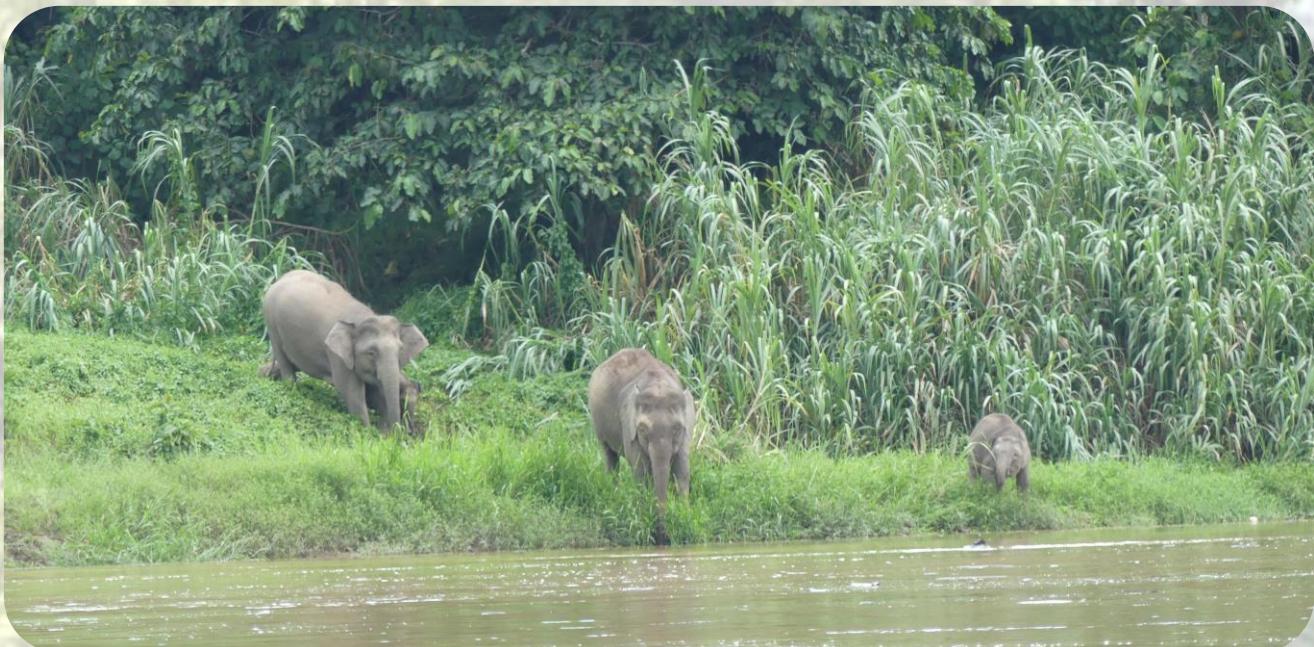
Sabre being removed from oil palm plantation

The remains of the elephants were found no more than a kilometre and a half from one another, though both elephants were not killed at the same time. It is believed that poachers bypassed checkpoints into the reserve by using boats to pass along the unpatrolled Segama River. One of the elephants lost was the beloved Sabre, an adult male that had been rescued in August 2016 from an area of plantation near Tawau. Sabre had a unique congenital defect that meant his tusks grew backwards, giving him the appearance of a sabre toothed tiger, from which he was named. Sabre was known to be a docile animal, his inverted tusks prevented him from properly jostling with other males, and so would shy away from confrontation.

Evidence suggests the rounds used to kill the bulls were fired from high powered rifles, the use of these expensive firearms suggests the involvement of professional poachers.

While progress has been made in the fight against the ivory trade with China set to officially ban it, these incidents highlight that the elephants in Sabah are still a target for poaching. The ban is a step in the right direction, but it is likely that there will be an increase in the price of ivory, providing greater incentives for international poachers.

The Bornean elephant population within Sabah draws a large number of tourists into the region and is of great ecological importance, by maintaining the forests through seed dispersal. The loss of two breeding age males is one the population cannot afford. More must be done by the relevant authorities who are responsible for the protection of these majestic animals to ensure their survival.



Bornean elephants photographed on the banks of the Kinabatangan.

Visitors: Andrew, Liz and Ken from Japan

Whilst Kenneth Keuk is staying at DG for several months, the first two weeks of his arrival were spent alongside PhD student Liesbeth Frias and her supervisor Prof. Andrew Macintosh.

Liz, Ken and Andrew are recurring visitors from Kyoto University, who aim to collect ecological data as well as faecal samples from as many primate species along the Kinabatangan, for an ongoing project analysing the variation of parasite communities amongst their different host species. The group spent a lot of time conducting boat surveys to measure relative abundance of primates and to acquire faecal samples, before using the lab at DGFC to observe and extract nematode larvae from the faecal samples as well as preparing the faeces for further analyses at Kyoto University. Whereas both Liz and Andrew have already returned to Japan to further analyse their samples, Ken will remain at DGFC until the end of February. We wish them all the best of luck with their continued study!

PHD Update: Pythons

Rich continues to experiment with sampling techniques, this month trialling longer surveys from the river and along paths in jungle and plantation, and is happy with his capture rate so far. Originally, he expected to capture 50 snakes in five years but in six months has already caught 30.

Recently, collaboration with Sepilok has led to Danau Girang receiving three snakes that had all been rescued from plantations. One of these snakes was large enough to be collared. Chahaya, a 4.2m female has now been fitted with a new type of GPS collar that allows for downloads over UHF frequency. This allows for downloads at a much greater distance, so that Chahaya's movements can be tracked more accurately. Chahaya was kept under observation for two weeks after the attachment of her collar to make sure she did not suffer any adverse effects before her release on the 3rd of January.

After an initially turbulent period where Chahaya was regularly moving up to 500m a night she has settled down slightly up river from DG. Rich hopes she will remain in this area so that she can begin to establish her home range.



Chahaya on the night of her release

Congratulations Rich!

Solar panels

This month saw DGFC take a big step towards “Going Green” by massively reducing its fossil fuel demand by fitting solar panels to the roof of the main building!

Solar power will henceforth be used in conjunction with the fuel powered generator, providing power to all the facilities and buildings throughout DGFC. This will not only prove to be more economic, but also greatly reduce the amount of gaseous CO₂ – a catalyst for climate change – that is produced by the field centre.

We at DGFC would like to thank Cardiff School of Biosciences and Cardiff University, and especially Vice Chancellor Professor Colin Riordan for their contribution of funds necessary for the completion of this project.



New Jetty

Another DGFC project was also completed at the start of this month: the building of a new jetty!

Due to the river frequently rising enough to submerge the steps of the previous jetty which would cause the steps to become slippery and treacherous to climb, DGFC manager Peter took the initiative to hire contractors and build a new, safer jetty better suited to fluctuating river levels.

All of us at DG are greatly appreciative of this safer way of getting to the boats, and would like to extend a big thank you to Peter on his great work.



Christmas at DG!



Whilst many of DG's staff, researchers, and volunteers spent this Christmas period away on holiday, there were still plenty enough people left in DGFC to throw a fantastic celebratory Christmas meal of our own!

Masters student Oriana Bhasin, alongside visiting researchers Ken and Liz, took charge of the kitchen, cooking up a feast of delicacies traditional to their respective heritages, mostly drawn from Indian and Mexican cuisine. Everyone contributed toward preparing the food, before sitting down together for a particularly festive makan with Christmas hats and Music.

Selamat Hari Natal to all!

Proposed Bridge at Sukau



For over a year Danau Girang and several NGOs have been fighting against the construction of a bridge in Sukau that will cross the Kinabatangan river as well as 8.5km of road that will cut right through the Lower Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary (LKWS).

In early January an area of forest was cleared to make way for an office for a construction contractor and for storage space of heavy machinery. Work on the bridge has not yet started.

If plans are to go ahead there will be a significant negative impact on the amazing flora and fauna found in the Sanctuary. The construction area passes directly through the last uninhabited route for elephants in the LKWS, leading to major human-elephant conflicts. The sanctuary could also lose 30% of its proboscis monkey and 10% of its orang-utan populations.

At a time when ecotourism is booming, Sabah could loose some of its most popular attractions. It seems madness that a fully protected wildlife sanctuary should have a RM220 million bridge, with connecting tarmacked roads, should be considered, let alone built.

All of us at DG urge the government to look at the evidence and reconsider their choice, for the sake of the wildlife and a large portion of eco-tourism income.

Conservation Corner:

Common name: Short-toed coucal

Scientific name: *Centropus sinensis*

IUCN status: Vulnerable



Description and Ecology: Like its larger cousin, the greater coucal, this nest-building cuckoo inhabits the understory of lowland primary forest. A clumsy-looking flyer, the short-toed coucal is often seen hopping between branches, as it searches for fruits and invertebrates, particularly snails. Of all the coucals, this is the rarest, due to its sensitivity to habitat modification by man. In ancient Bornean medicine, young coucals were believed to have magical health-giving properties, and were pickled in brandy, which would be drank or rubbed onto joints.

Threats:

- Destruction of lowland forest
- Conversion of riverine scrub to farmland.

Conservation:

- Protection of primary forest, particularly those with riverine scrubland present.

Word scramble

1

Stireug Liarnq

2

Grinpay timans

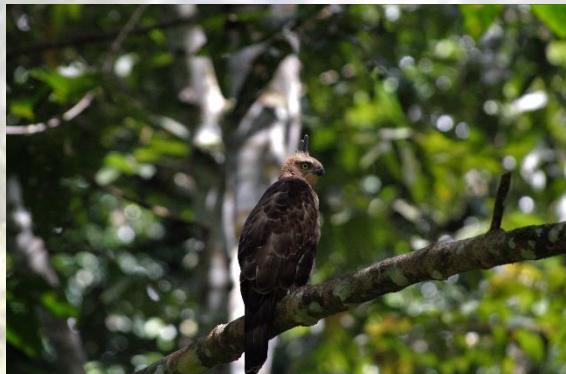
3

Kawp shaw

Fact of the Month !!

Tarsiers are the only exclusively carnivorous primate, with a diet made up mainly invertebrates, but can include vertebrates such as frogs, lizards and even bats!

Photos of month



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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