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Bizarre Bazaar?

On 28th March 2009 a team from the Kinabatangan travelled to a Jungle Bazaar in Kota Kinabalu hosted by the Kinabalu International School.

'HEAP', the Hutan Education and Awareness Programme from Sukau, organised activities and games at the school to promote environmental interest amongst young people. They were joined by Chloe Parker, João Alves and Rachel Henson from Danau Girang Field Centre to lend a hand, as well as Farina Othman who is currently studying at Universiti Malaysia Sabah.

Activities included an orang-utan bridge which was constructed between two trees in the play area. These bridges are in use in the Kinabatangan to link patches of fragmented forest to allow animals to interact with members of popu-

lations which are usually inaccessible due to obstacles such as rivers. Macaques, proboscis monkeys and now human children have been seen to use the bridges.

The less adventurous visitors could take part in a darts challenge, aiming at a specially designed balloon-popping board, make animal masks or go home with a primate colouring sheet. An impressive display of conservation work being undertaken in the Kinabatangan was also on show, including examples of orang-utan food items and papier-mâché animals made by people from Sukau. The model elephant continued to attract attention whilst in transit, drawing particularly curious looks at petrol stations from shop attendants, who were even more sur-

prised to find an orang-utan and a giant tiger leech on closer inspection of the vehicle.



Volunteers Joao Alves, Chloe Parker and Rachel Henson with the HEAP team at KIS Jungle Bazaar

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Nocturnal Work Continues...

The nocturnal work has continued at Danau Girang Field Centre this month, with point sampling and survey walks being undertaken every night.

The trails and transects have been painstakingly searched for animals and many interesting sightings have been made. The focus of this work is on nocturnal primates, of which two species are found in the Kinabatangan: *Nycticebus coucang* (the slow loris) and *Tarsius bancanus* (the Western tarsier). Both species are extremely difficult to find, but the nocturnal team at Danau Girang have now made four slow loris sightings and found one western tarsier, with another having been spotted by Salen who works at the field centre.

Other interesting finds include sleeping birds, spiders, frogs, insects, mice and pentail tree-shrews. There are also several species of civet in the area and five have now been recorded by



A pair of unidentified birds: still to be confirmed.

the students here. The Malay civet (*Viverra zibetha*), small-toothed palm civet (*Arctogalidia trivirgata*), common palm civet (*Paradoxurus hermaphroditus*) and banded palm civet (*Hemigalus derbyanus*) have all been sighted, as well as the elusive Hose's civet (*Hemigalus hosei*). "We're certain that it was Hose's civet that we saw, but a second sighting and a photograph would be nice as a confirmation," said Rachel Munds who has been leading the nocturnal work. This particular species is more commonly found at higher

elevations but it is not known to inhabit lowland habitats.

The Malay badger (*Mydaus javanensis*) has also been seen snuffling alongside the main path, foraging for dinner in the soil, and a pair of otters was witnessed splashing near the banks of the Kinabatangan River at midnight. All of these sightings confirm the richness of wildlife abundant in this region of riparian forest. The infinite possibilities for future work on amphibian, reptile and insect presence will further increase our understanding of the forest.



Ridzwan Ali taking data from a civet sighting

IN OTHER NEWS...

- A pen lost by Elke Zimmerman, Hannover, has been found near the site of last month's small mammal trapping. The pen has now been retrieved from the forest and resides at DGFC.
- Stephanie Stowell, Director of Education at Woodland Park Zoo in Seattle, U.S.A., visited the centre to explore the site as a possibility for future involvement with an Earth Expeditions project, a graduate programme which involves community work and an intensive element of field experience.

DID THEY REALLY SAY THAT?

"You're so tall that if you reach up really high, birds can nest in your hands." - Seven-year-old girl to João Alves at the KIS bazaar.

"My father and I don't have the same taste in men." - Rachel Munds.

PHOTO ALBUM

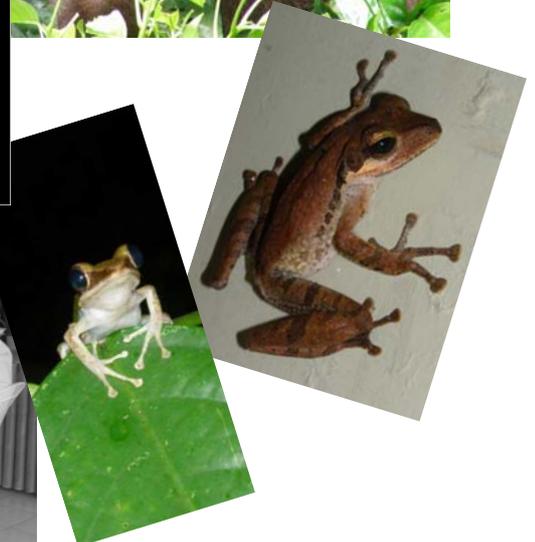
Photo: R. Munds



Photo: R. Munds



Clockwise from top: making a new transect, music in KK, Phoebe and baby Pisang, two frogs, breakfast in Kota Kinabatangan, HUTAN's model elephant, a Stork-Billed Kingfisher



Ecology Expeditions!

The first group from Ecology Expeditions visited Danau Girang Field Centre this month.

The trial science-based adventure took place over three days and is part of a longer, twelve day, course aimed at increasing knowledge and understanding of the ecology of the area and conservation of tropical forests.

The participants attended a series of lectures and talks using local case studies to illustrate the main ideas and information. Dr. Benoit Goossens delivered the majority of these, covering tropical diversity, global conservation threats and a more focused look at the Bornean orangutan and elephant as examples of flagship species in the Kinabatangan. Resident nocturnal guru,

Rachel Munds, also gave a talk about the work being undertaken at the centre after the lights go out. Concepts introduced in the classroom were further nurtured during guided walks in the forest and a river excursion.

Andrew Tang, U.K., described the trip as 'a truly once in a lifetime experience', and Sarah Zentner, France, said that she 'loved the place!' Alex Hinchliffe, director of Ecology Expeditions, hopes to return later in the year with another group.



Photo: C. Parker

The group listening to a lecture about slow lorises.

SPECIES IN FOCUS: The Western Tarsier

By Rachel Munds and Rachel Henson

Common Name: Western Tarsier

Scientific Name: *Tarsius bancanus borneanus*

Distribution: Borneo

Tarsiers are one of the two nocturnal primates that can be found in the Kinabatangan.

Despite the large size of their eyes, torchlight isn't reflected in the same way as the slow loris and other nocturnal animals. This is because the tarsier lacks the part of the eye known as the tapetum lucidum.

Tarsiers are only known to feed on live animals, particularly insects. The Western tarsier is the only tarsier known to eat birds, snakes and small mammals. They hunt for prey by looking down and jumping to the ground to catch it.

Many researchers trap tarsiers using mist-nets or by hand, but it causes much distress to the animal. Munds and Ali hope to develop a more humane method of trapping them.

They are vertical clingers and leapers (V.C.L.). They jump between saplings and small trees as their primary mode of locomotion. Tarsiers are commonly found at heights of 1-3 metres. The tail is used to stabilize the animal by lying flat against the tree for balance. There is a tuft of fur at the end of the tail which can be used to distinguish between species.

Threats to the tarsier include deforestation, human consumption and the pet trade. Individuals taken for the pet trade often do not survive to be sold due to their specialized diet.



Photo: R.Munds

A tarsier found at Danau Girang by Rachel Munds and Ridzwan Ali

Catch me If You Can...



Rachel Munds and Ridzwan Ali using the Big Shot

Three trapping grids are being constructed in advance of attempts at capturing nocturnal primates.

The grids have been measured to host thirty traps in each and spaced out to include a range of different vegetation types. At each of the ninety points, ropes are fired into the trees using a 'Big Shot' catapult. Eventually a trap will be raised at each point in the hopes of catching the Slow Loris or Tarsier.

Several problems have had to be overcome before completion of the first grid. The home-made weights have broken in flight, the lines have been tangled and a large tree full of wasps was in use as a target before the team realized where the 'angry buzzing sound' was coming from. A different tree was later chosen at that spot



Tying the rope in preparation for a shot

after locating the source of the buzzing and observing the swarm, the large numbers of which gave the tree bark a moving appearance. The second trapping grid has also been prepared.

HOW TO: Fire a Big Shot

Nuggets of knowledge from the jungle...

Sometimes it's necessary to shoot ropes into tall trees. If you ever find yourself in such a situation, here's how it's done...

1. Assemble Big Shot
2. Choose appropriate tree and decide on a suitable branch to aim at
3. Tie the weight to the fishing line and place the weight into the pouch
4. Aim both the slingshot and the fishing rod at the target
5. Release safety catch
6. Pull back on the slingshot, keeping the pole aimed at the target point
7. Check that appendages are clear of the fishing line
8. If safe to do so, release!
9. The weight should soar over the desired branch and land nearby. If not, retrieve the weight and try again.
10. Untie the weight and attach a durable rope to the fishing line. This can then be reeled up and over the branch with the fishing rod.
11. Secure the ends of the rope to something within easy reach
12. Now you can use the ropes to hoist anything up into the tree!



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JUNGLE JOKE

Did you hear about the musical macaques that moved to Greenland?

They wanted to be the Arctic Monkeys!

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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.

When There's Something Strange In The Neighbourhood...

By Nurzafarina Othman

When we hear the word GHOST, we start to imagine an invisible creature that only some people can see.

Usually, the ghost is related to a restless spirit with a horrible face, the ability to fly and disappear, and wants to take revenge for the bad things that other people have done to them (at least that is what I imagine). At one point it was a world-wide phenomenon that attracted huge audiences. Hollywood's 'The Sixth Sense', 'Nang Nak' in Thailand, 'Anak' in Malaysia and 'Kuntilanak' in Indonesia received among the highest numbers of audience in their respective countries. Although I haven't researched this matter in detail, I believe that every culture and civilization must have a story that somehow relates to the existence of ghosts, and many people try to connect their presence in aspects of their lives.

I arrived in Sukau for another two weeks of fieldwork and I was welcome not only by my foster family but also by their relatives and neighbours, which was unusual. I started to think that somebody might be ill and I was told that my foster brother, Tom, was 'taken over' by an evil spirit the previous night. His voice had become louder and harsher as he yelled his friend's names that were fishing with him the previous week using someone else's voice. Tom and his friends had been to a small river to catch fish and swim during their school holidays. He soon began to feel weak and had a high fever which continued to worsen after being taken to hospital for treatment. When Tom unconsciously said that he was forced by the spirit to eat rats, his parents realised that it wasn't something that could be cured using technologies and modern medicine.

The Shaman, or 'pawang' was called, and by using Quranic verses he helped Tom to overcome his fear of the spirit. As he recovered he told of how the spirit tortured him after he refused to eat rats and pigs. The family held a ceremony to encourage the spirit to leave Tom. The ceremony involved using free-range chickens, four different colours of sticky rice and twenty eggs served in three trays. The pawang recited verses from the Quran whilst moving the food in circles above the heads of Tom, his parents and his friends. Some of the food was eaten and some thrown into the river to ask the ghost to release Tom's spirit so he could return to normal.

Many scientists do not support the existence of ghosts, but I think it is important to respect other peoples' beliefs and cultures. As a science student and a Muslim I believe that we share the world with 'something', although I have no proof to show its existence. But if we can believe Albert Einstein's theory that energy cannot be created or destroyed, I don't see why we shouldn't believe the possibility of ghosts. The truth is out there...



The Shaman encourages uninvited spirits to leave.

Photo: F. Othman