

JUNGLE TIMES

Independent Newspaper of Danau Girang Field Centre

August—September 2009

DGFC Established 2008

Primate Students Come to Stay

From 27 July to 16 August, 14 primatology students from US (Arizona State University, Loyola State College) and British universities (Oxford Brookes University, Oxford University and Roehampton University) were trained in primatology field work at DGFC. The field course was organised by Dr Anna Nekaris, a reader in primate conservation at Oxford Brookes University and the course tutor of the Primate Conservation Master at the same university. She also had the assistance of Rachel Munds, an MPhil student from Oxford Brookes Uni-

versity, leading the nocturnal primate project at DGFC.

The students carried out small projects on proboscis monkey survey, proboscis monkey and gibbon vocalisations, long tailed macaques behaviour, nocturnal primates ecology, and it is during this field course that the first tarsier was radio-collared. The Lower Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary and its 10 species of diurnal and nocturnal primates offers a great opportunity for primatology research and training. Hopefully, Dr Anna Nekaris will run the same field course next year. For

further information, please contact Dr Anna Nekaris or visit the Primate conservation master's website at <http://ssl.brookes.ac.uk/primat/>



New Kids on the Lot



September saw the fresh faces of the new DGFC Professional Training Year Students; Jenny Shepperson and Alice Evans introduced to Lot 6 of the Lower Kinabatangan. The Cardiff University undergraduates, chosen from 2nd year students through interviews with Mike Bruford and John Young (Bioscience staff and Cardiff University) and Benoit Goossens (Director of

DGFC and Bioscience staff at Cardiff University), will be spending 12 months based at the centre. With shiny boots and eager eyes, Jenny and Alice got straight down to business, assisting student Rachel Munds with her research project on nocturnal primates, involving developing trapping methods to catch the elusive slow loris, and night walks to survey the nocturnal biodiversity. They will be helping out with the upkeep and running of DGFC as well as concentrating on the nocturnal primate long-term research project and squeezing in some fun in the jungle in between. With midnight ex-

cursions and dawn breaking forest treks, catching up with sleep until lunch time has made them feel just as nocturnal as their furry quarry, but the trapping continues; as yet to no avail. Keep your fingers crossed for the PTY students, as it seems a bit of luck is needed to catch these not so slow-lorises.



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IN OTHER NEWS...

- Konrad Halubka, from the department of avian ecology at the University of Wrocław in Poland, stayed for 10 days scouting out the area for potential bird research.
- DGFC is getting a lick of paint and a new lease of life—look out for pictures in the next issue!
- Farina, an old friend of DG, came back to pay a fleeting visit with Benoit and saw elephants, including Gading and Bod Tai, two of the radio-collared individuals.

DID THEY REALLY SAY THAT?

“Sometimes I forget people can see what im doing” - Alice

- “It’s a crocodile!! No Alice it’s a log. But why is it moving?!?!?The current.”

Jen: “Oh look it’s a sleeping bird”

Josh: "I've seen plenty of
those love"

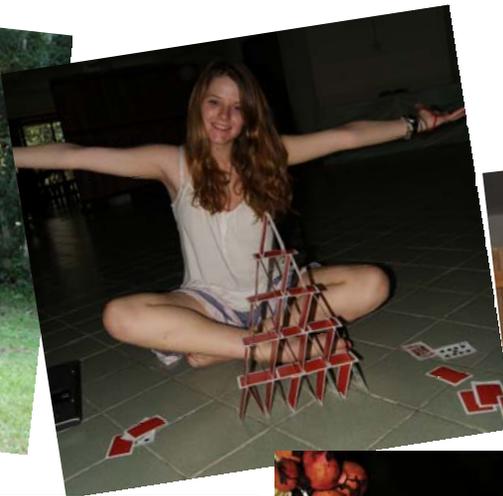
Fatty from Afar

Carmen, 18, from Qatar is adding Sabah, Malaysia, to her long list of exotic homes, volunteering with the new PTY students for 3 months. She was born in Guatemala, raised in Canada, moved to the Grand Cayman Islands, and is currently living in Qatar with her mother. Her passport has been stamped in 15 different countries—enough to make anyone dizzy! She will be starting college in January, studying Environmental Science, and is hoping to gain a place at Sante Fe College in Florida studying Zoology. She loves orang-utans and eggy bread.

Carmen says **“I am having a great time, and I’m very lucky to be able to experience all this at such a young age!!”**

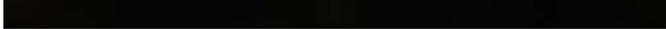


PHOTO ALBUM



Clockwise from top left: The new PTY students working hard. , Zainal and Salen in fetching DG shirts, Ficus Tree, Budin by the river, Mud elephants! Frog., Alice Jenny and Carmen getting muddy, pretty pink sunset.





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SPECIES IN FOCUS—Crested Serpent Eagle

A Crested Serpent Eagle has taken to perching up in a tree outside the PTY student's office at DGFC, the welcome visitor will sit for hours keeping a beady eye or two on the office window. The girls are unsure as to whether this is out of a vague interest into what us humans get up to, or whether it is sizing us up for din-



ner. The bird of prey is also known as *Spilornis cheela* or *Kanmuri-washi*. The Crested Serpent Eagle can be found nesting in tree tops near fresh water, over large geographical regions from South Asia, including Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka, to Southeast Asia, extending to southern China and Indonesia. Its nests are constructed with sticks and contain no more than a single egg at a time. The Crested Serpent Eagle is a medium large raptor at about 55-75cm in length.

Adults have dark brown upperparts and head, and have a hooded appearance when resting. The under parts and under wing areas are pale brown and the tail and underside of the flight feathers are black with broad white bars. When perched, they appear large headed and owl-like due to the shape of the face and position-

ing of the eyes. They call a lot in the late mornings from perches or as they rise on the thermals in the mornings. Sexes are visually similar, but young birds have a whitish head, under parts and under wing, the latter showing darker barring. The Crested Serpent Eagle, as its English and scientific names suggest, is a specialist reptile eater which hunts over woodland for snakes and lizards. I wonder who would win in a fight between a Crested Serpent Eagle and an angry Monitor Lizard...



HOW TO: Liberate yourself from a leech. *Nuggets of knowledge from the jungle...*

Leeches are crafty little blighters. They sneak up on you like a troop of marines as you go innocently about your business, waiting to drop from a tree above, or spring onto you as you pass by some wet leaves; so when trekking in the rainforest it's highly likely one will catch you, so you need to know how to defeat one if it decides it wants your blood.

1. Leeches don't like DEET. It doesn't do much for their general health as they absorb moisture through their skin. Give them a good spray.
2. Leeches don't like salt. In the

same way slugs and snails will shrivel up when sprinkled with salt, leeches are just as vulnerable to the drying out process. Have no mercy.

3. Leeches also seem to dislike being rubbed in a circle, it interrupts their train of thought as they are trying to suck your blood, so they generally try to wander off once you begin the circular motion, I don't know how they feel about rubbing in a square, but the circle seems to work. Give them a good flick once they get moving and they'll be on their way if you want to leave them to die

another day.

4. If you're feeling really murderous, cutting them in half with scissors also does the trick.





The Final Frontier

This month, the Danau Girang Field Centre was host to seven visitors from the expedition and adventure company; Ecology Expeditions. The spinout company from Bangor University in North Wales was recently established by a UK Biology teacher and a French myriapodologist researching the taxonomy and ecology of Southeast Asian centipedes. The primary aim of Ecology Expeditions is to provide the link to the current knowledge held by scientists in the 'front-line' of ecological and conservation research, and to access remote areas of primary rainforest by foot. Through business with scientific establishments, local skilled personnel and community-based organisations they also aim to provide worthwhile financial input into conservation initiatives and local communities. This particular expedition was a joint venture between Ecology Expeditions and Frontier, a UK-based non-governmental organisation (NGO), established in 1989, dedicated to protecting biodiversity and ecosystem integrity. The expedition entailed a 3-day ecology field course at DGFC delivered by Benoit Goossens.

Benoit led the group on their forays in and around the jungle, from their early morning croc-spotting boat trips, to their interpretive rainforest treks. The new PTY students also helped out, expertly leading a few members on silent night-walks to investigate the nocturnal inhabitants of Lot 6.

This expedition to Borneo which includes the visit to DGFC as one of the main activities, is described as "A once in a lifetime experience that blends an exhilarating jungle expedition with a tropical ecology field trip and coral reef exploration".

When the group arrived on the 8th of September, they were all relieved at the apparently 'excellent condition of the accommodation' at DGFC, after fearing that a stay in a research centre in the middle of the jungle may be more akin to 3 days

in an unusually hot, large 'bothy' or hut, in the Scottish highlands. Alex, the expedition leader was already a familiar face, after leading a previous practice expedition group to DGFC.

The current group consisted of adventurers from the UK and Denmark, all trying to get a piece of the eco-action in the Kinabatangan.



When asked how they found their stay at DGFC the enthusiastic explorers said: "Any Biology based university student or A-level student would find this (course) incredibly beneficial" – Josh Pendergast; "(The

field course was) very good – giving you a first hand experience of field work and an understanding of the amount of time and patience needed to complete projects"; "I had an amazing experience at the Centre – seeing wildlife I had previously only seen on TV, zoo's etc... Benoit's passion for his work is obvious and inspiring. To be able to walk through and sleep in the tropical jungle is a wonderful thing to do" – Anita Gatherole; "...I can't think of anyone who wouldn't benefit from this or enjoy it..." – Rob Appleby. "Very impressed with what you have got up and running, good effort and good work! Really enjoyed the place, talks and wildlife" – Helle Enderby – "Fantastic time, all staff were awesome, learned a lot and found it very enjoyable" – Josh Pendergast.

DGFC looks forward to future visits planned with Ecology Expeditions for 2010, so this is yet to be the Final Frontier.





Happy Birthday to Jen

PTY student Jen turned 22 on the 23rd of September, a lovely BBQ was organised by Research Assistant Budin and Manager Zainal, big thanks to them for a fantastic evening! Jen, Alice and Carmen also made a birthday trip to Sandakan, taking a look at the orang-utans at the Sepilok Sanctuary before making a visit to the English Tea House for a jolly good game of croquet after some spiffing scones and tea, followed by an evening of singing their hearts out at Encore Karaoke Bar. Thanks again to Zainal for making Jen's 22nd in Sandakan special!



Japanese keep it Short and Sweet



A group of 21 Japanese students had a fleeting visit to DGFC for one night only. The group who were from a variety of Japanese Universities studying a mix of Phd courses, from Microbiology to Tropical Oil Palm Economics, arrived on the night of Friday 25th, and left early the Saturday morning. DGFC facilities allowed the group to have a lecture on oil palm economics, the environmental impact of oil palm agriculture and how it can be used sustainably. As the Kinabatangan wild life sanctuary is unfortunately situated among hundreds of thousands of acres of oil palm plantations, DGFC was the perfect place to give the Phd students a taste of the minimal amount of rainforest being protected from the encroaching oil palm, and the importance of environmental research in the fight against losing the rainforest.

Singapore visitors shoot DG wildlife!

A group of four "amateur" photographers from Singapore enjoyed three nights stay at DGFC this month, snatching shots of the local wildlife in and around the centre. The visitors, who have a personal interest in photography, were lucky enough to see Crocodiles and River Otters along the Kinabatangan between Batu Puteh and DGFC, as well as getting an up close and personal shoot with an orang-utan that happened to be passing by the main path through the centre. The group were able to get snaps deeper into the rainforest with help from PTY Jen and volunteer Carmen who guided them along the jungle trail where they saw a range of flora and fauna that the jungle has to offer. Good work guys.



UMS Student Continues PHd Research at DGFC

A UMS graduate currently studying for her PHd at the University of Birmingham spent three days at DGFC to gather and analyse water samples of the surrounding Kinabatangan rivers and tributaries. Sahana (28) was able to make use of the lab facilities at DGFC to check the cleanliness and sediment content of the water for part of her research. Water quality is an essential element of environmental management as all biodiversity begins with the availability of clean water. Unfortunately, human action such as waste tipping, deforestation and sewage treatment has contributed to water pollution in the Kinabatangan, research such as that being undertaken by Sahana is an important factor in assessing the need to improve water quality and begin the necessary environmental management schemes to limit pollution, and clean up the rivers of the Kinabatangan.

Danau Girang Field Centre

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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.

DGFC is welcoming a mammoth group!

On Saturday 19th of September, a rather large group in both size and numbers made their arrival loud and clear. DGFC was lucky enough to experience a visit from a group of Bornean elephants. The three volunteers; Jenny, Alice and Carmen who are based at DGFC first heard their calls the night before. The following morning their uncertainty was confirmed; both research assistant Budin and manager Zainal heard their calls, waking the three girls to venture out in search of these gentle giants. Along the riverside the elephants chowed down on their breakfast slowly making

their way up river. 32 elephants were sighted that morning, however Zainal, manager of DGFC suggests there were roughly 60 elephants roaming the Kinabatangan riverside. The group of adventurers took another boat ride that afternoon and were able to witness the simple pleasures nature has to offer, watching the elephants bathe and play with one another before the sunset.

Unfortunately, due to palm oil plantation development in surrounding areas, the elephants are being forced to change their usual path along the river, and are now hav-

ing to cross more often than they would like. Along with stealing their land, oil palm plantation workers scare the elephants away to avoid damage to agricultural land.

Luckily for these magnificent creatures there is always room at DGFC.

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**Danau Girang Field
Centre**



