

Fiona Reid's Wildlife Encounters – Borneo 2017 Trip Report

Pre-trip: Nov 3-6

Main trip: Nov 6-21



Participants: Stuart Barnes (SB), Gwen Brewer, Rayelene Brown (RB), Tom Fiore, Dawn Hannay (DH), Joanna Langdale, Raelene Neilson. Photos are credited with initials.

Guides: Fiona Reid (Trip Leader); CK Leong (pre-trip), Siti Salihahfarhain Saidin (Kinabalu, Poring), Mike Gordon (Deramakot) John Bakar (Kinabatangan, Danum)

I have wanted to go to Borneo for years. With reports from Danum Valley of numerous mammals, the amazing plant life, and more recently spotlighting trips for mammals at Deramakot, what was not to love? Perhaps the tales of deforestation, oil palm plantations and poaching. But it turned out that Sabah at least is doing a lot for conservation and control of logging, which was really good to see. Our trip was put together by **Adventure Alternative Borneo**.

Nov 2

Joanna and I arrived in the early hours and stayed at Hotel 63 in Kota Kinabalu (KK). We took a walk later in the day up Signal Hill, where we saw our first two mammals, **Prevost's** and **Plantain Squirrels**. Later in the afternoon, other participants arrived and we took a taxi to the KK Bird sanctuary. Saw a few egrets, Glossy Starlings and monitor lizards, a black skink (not identified) and some common birds. We all went out to Seremban Seafood Restaurant near the docks which proved to be very nice. It became our go-to place in KK.

Nov 3

We picked up a rental van (delivered to hotel). I had been deemed too old to drive in KK, so Rayelene was behind the wheel. We were headed for the Crocker Range for a two-night stay. One of the reasons for heading this way was to stop at the Rafflesia Centre, but sadly it was closed when we arrived. We doubled back to Gunung Alab where we walked some short, well-maintained trails through the cloud forest. We saw a Sunda Bush Warbler, Mountain Tailorbird, and a **Giant Stag Beetle (*Dorcus titanus*, FR)**. The plant life was great with many *Nepenthes* pitcher plants. Later we headed on to Manis Manis. Around the hotel there was a lot of bird activity (including nesting Gold-whiskered Barbets), plus several **Plantain Squirrels**, and at dusk we watched bats hunting in the lights.



Nov 4

We met our guide CK Leong at 6:30 a.m. and birded around Manis Manis, then walked the forest trail. It was a great morning for birds; Red-bearded Bee-eater, Black and Yellow Broadbill were among the highlights. We had excellent views of **Bornean Pygmy Squirrel (FR)** (tiny!) eating bark of a large tree in the forest.

Later in the day we explored the fern garden and insect garden, and Stuart arrived to join us. After dinner we went out and some saw the Sunda Scops Owl and we heard the Brown Boobook. We walked a section of the forest trail which was interesting for insects but the only mammal seen was a **Bornean Fruit Bat**. It was flying in the forest and could be seen quite well as it circled around, with very bright eyeshine. Later we watched a couple of different species of bats foraging by lights near our rooms, but I could not get an exact ID on them.



Nov 5

We took an early walk in the forest where we had very good looks at **Bornean Black-banded Squirrel**, including one feeding on fruit that we could look at through the scope. We also saw our first **Lesser Treeshrew** dashing about in the sub-canopy. Joanna saw a **Horse-tailed Squirrel** which sadly the rest of us missed. We saw Whitehead's Spiderhunter, a bird on cover of our guide and a good one to see (we had seen it the previous day, but it was new for Stuart). Many other birds were seen. We left at lunchtime and drove the long way back so that CK could show us some more spots for wildlife on the way. He pointed out a spot where he had seen Sculptor Squirrel, a rare species. We had a great lunch near the entrance for Gng Alab then back-tracked a bit to a waterfall. Sadly the rain decided to hit us hard at that point, and after a while we headed on, stopping to buy boots and waterproof shoes in a small town before continuing to KK and Hotel 63. Said bye to CK who had been really good, recommended especially for birders. The rental car people arrived very promptly and took back the van.

Nov 6



We had a snorkeling trip to Gaya Island, with a hike through the island (organized by Borneo Dream). The hike turned out to be better than expected and the snorkeling worse. On the way to the island we stopped to see bats in a sea cave, but they were absent. A bit farther along the coast of Gaya we saw a big group of **Proboscis Monkeys** feeding on herbaceous vegetation at the water's edge. It was unexpected and very nice to see. We walked a 2 km steep trail parallel to the coast. Saw some nice geckos, including Kuhl's Gliding Gecko, and lizards, and also a group of **Greater Sheath-tailed Bats (FR)** on a rock face. These were the same bats we had missed from the sea cave (according to our guides) so that was great. We also watched a group of **Long-tailed Macaques** just before we arrived at our lunch spot. The snorkeling was poor because the water was very silty and the coral seemed highly disturbed. Nonetheless we did see a good variety of fish including

Moorish Idol, Trunk Fish and some Anemone Fish. We went back to KK in late afternoon and had a good dinner at our seafood restaurant.

Jentink's Squirrel (RB)



Mountain Treeshrew (RB)



Nov 7

Our official tour started the previous night, but in effect started today, when we met Siti, our local guide. She picked us up with two vehicles, one for luggage and one for people, and we headed off to Kinabalu Park. We had lunch on arrival then settled into very nice rooms overlooking the mountain. We had a fantastic walk around the roads near the headquarters, seeing several new mammals (**Jentink's Squirrel**, **Mountain Ground Squirrel (FR, below)** – not always on the ground – **Mountain** and **Lesser Treeshrews**) and many Plantain Squirrels too. We also enjoyed the Treepie, Sunda Cuckoo, Common Green Magpie and many other birds. We had an uninspired dinner in the park, the highlight of which was seeing the whole group (including Stuart) examining moths in the ladies washroom. The moths were excellent both in the open restaurant and in the facilities.



I'd asked Siti earlier if we might be able to go spotlighting in the pickup truck, and she had duly requested permission; not easy as it isn't legal to ride standing in the back, and spotlighting isn't allowed either, but she talked them around. We had a truly memorable night drive, with 3 inside truck and 5 in back. First we stopped for a frog that I spotted on a stream – but the frog we were looking at wasn't the eyeshine I had seen. I tracked it down and it

was the lovely **Montane Horned Frog (FR)**, with golden eyes.

It was too far to see well, so Siti climbed like a Mountain Goat and retrieved it for us to see – wonderful!





Farther on we saw eyeshine which turned out to be a **Spotted Giant Flying Squirrel (SB)**. Fabulous beast. We were moving off slowly from that sighting when Siti spotted another animal – she called out Linsang! I was really excited but it was nowhere to be seen. We all hopped off the truck and I told everyone to be silent with lights off. I squeaked in the manner I learned from Uditha Hettige in Sri Lanka, we flicked lights back on and there it was, the lovely and very rare **Banded Linsang**, staring at us, darting around a rocky slope and into crevices, climbing up small trees, then disappearing again. I summoned it back in darkness about 5 more times so we all got terrific views and some decent photos as it

stretched out its incredibly long neck and peered at us.



RB upper and left, SB below

Brilliant! On the remainder of the drive we saw 3 more Spotted Giant Flying Squirrels, and a large frog in a pond near HQ. Returned to our rooms where I had rigged my UV light. There were a good variety of moths but I for one was too tired and wired to appreciate them, still floating on a Linsang high.



Nov 8

We took an early trip to Timpohon Gate, the highest part you can reach without climbing permits. I was hoping we might see a Lesser Gymnure, but we did not. Some of us stayed at the lookout area, while others went with me to the garbage bins down the road. Here there was lots of mammal activity, including a **Kinabalu Rat** (large, dark, w. very long tail) and several rats later ID'd as **Polynesian Rats (FR)**.



Mountain Ground Squirrels and Mountain Treeshrews were plentiful, along with **Bornean Black-banded Squirrel (FR)**, and a Lesser Treeshrew. We



walked partway down, stopping to photograph the linsang area. After breakfast we walked the Tupia trail and Silau Silau trail in hopes of finding Whitehead's Pygmy Squirrel, but without luck. We did see a few new birds and the more familiar squirrels. We went out of the park for lunch – food much better. Later in afternoon we walked around the HQ area, stopping along the road where Micah Riegner had seen the Whitehead's a few months earlier. It was quite drizzly and activity was low, but we found a few new birds at least. I explored two culverts along the main road.

First was empty but second housed a group of 3 **Greater Woolly Horseshoe Bats (SB)** – really nice looking bats that stayed in one spot and were seen by all. Stuart managed to contort himself between wall and culvert to get good photos of these bats, which was needed to confirm ID.

After dinner we went out with one of the mountain guides as I wanted to do a night walk in the earlier part of the evening and a drive later. We had to have a park guide to walk around at all at night, and it was fairly expensive. The problem was that we didn't really discuss our plan, and we ended up walking the Pandanus Trail which is very steep, especially where the main trail was closed and we had to go on a very



rough, muddy and extremely steep downward section. This meant we couldn't really look around or proceed quietly. We saw a good variety of frog species and a lot of geckos (10 **Kinabalu Bent-toed Gecko, (FR)**), met with our first leeches, and found a sleeping **Bornean Stubtail (below, FR)** but saw no mammals. The hike took us over 3 hours and by the end we were in no mood to go spotlighting.

Nov 9



We went to Timpohon Gate again in early morning, plus a visit to the garbage bins. Later we stopped at all possible locations for **Whitehead's Pygmy Squirrel (RB)**. At the area where Micah had seen one, Dawn noticed a small squirrel quite far off. Fortunately, it made its way over toward the road, crossing over and stopping to feed on bark of one of the large trees, exactly where Micah had seen it in September! We all got great looks and a few photos, definitely a mammalian highlight of the area. After a late breakfast we visited the botanical garden, which was good for

orchids and pitcher plants, but did not yield any new mammals or birds.

We left soon after, and stopped en route to visit a **Rafflesia** plant in flower (shown with Gwen behind). It was huge but as it was already 4 days old it did not stink nor show the white markings of fresh specimens. It was impressive nonetheless, and nice to see buds bursting open too. On the way out we noticed a scops owl in a cage. We managed later to get something done about this illegal capture. Hopefully the bird survived its ordeal.

We went into Poring in the early afternoon, and had the best accommodations of the entire trip – but for only one night. It is a beautiful area with towering trees, but the hot springs are a popular site and have led to way





too many restrictions. We tried out a hot bath which was nice, but all too overcrowded with people. We walked around near the rooms and saw a Rufous-winged Cuckoo and had really good looks at Bornean Pygmy Squirrel, plus two interesting lizards. **Prevost's Squirrels (SB)** were also seen by the whole group, finally, and Long-tailed Macaques were hanging around near our rooms. We ate in an open-air restaurant that attracted a lot of insects (some nice moths) and in turn a few bats. Spotlighting on our way back, the best find was a huge scorpion. It was raining so we didn't go very far. I had set up my UV light

near the room and we had a mantis-fly and a few moths of interest there, plus a lot of house geckos and many bats that sadly we could not ID.

Nov 10

We were not able to enter the park before 8, so we had an early birding session in the parking lot, and saw our first and only **Low's Squirrels** there. After breakfast we did the canopy walk before the crowd which was nice. Then we hiked up to the bat cave. Almost missed it, thinking we had gone far enough, but luckily Tom went on and found the real cave so we were all able to take a look. It is a series of large boulders with a mostly open top and one recess under rocks. You can't enter but can see the bats pretty well from the barrier area. There was a large population of **Fawn Roundleaf Bats (FR)** and probably also the closely related Cantor's Roundleaf Bat, but I couldn't tell them apart so only listed the more common species. At least 100 bats occupied this cave. We packed up and headed for Telupid, about 2 hours away. We were sad to say goodbye to Siti who had been a great guide and good company. From there we transferred to three 4WDs for the drive into Deramakot.



I was in the first car and stopped for a troop of 10-15 **Maroon Langurs**. They immediately leapt off to more distant trees. I didn't know they would be so shy, unfortunately, so only the people in my car got

decent looks. We saw Rhinoceros Hornbill and a few other big birds on our way in, along with signs of recent logging. We settled into simple but nice cabins with 3 rooms each, all en-suite, with much-needed black-out curtains, AC and hot showers.

After a late dinner we headed out with Mike Gordon for our first spotlighting drive. He promised us humane hours the first night, and inhumane hours all subsequent nights. We got back at 1:30 a.m. and wondered just how inhumane it would get! The drive was amazing. We started with **Sambar Deer** and





Thomas's Flying Squirrel (one of the 6+ we saw that night we also saw flying), followed by **Island Palm Civet**, and later a close and a distant **Malay Civet**. A bit later we saw our first and only **Banded Palm Civet (RB, above)**, and one of many **Bornean Striped Civets**.

Over the course of the drive we had great views of **Leopard**



Cat (DH), seeing a grand total of 5! The cut logs provided good spots for the cats and civets to perch on for hunting and resting. These logs and their adjacent pools were also used by **Wallace's Flying Frog (FR)**, a spectacular species that only descends to breed. We watched one (female?) massaging its fresh foamy egg mass. We saw several owls, mostly Buffy Fish Owls, but also Barred Eagle Owl, the latter being seen swooping down and grabbing a frog from a hanging vine. We found two snakes, a large Dog-toothed Cat-eyed Snake and a Painted Bronzeback Tree Snake.

Mike, a whirling dervish with his caffeinated spotlight (my spotlight in contrast was clearly on valium), later picked up eyeshine of a **Slow Loris (DH)**, which gave us spectacular views.

A second more distant Loris was also seen. We returned quite late but all very high from so many mammals, herps, and owls.

Nov 11

Some of us got up early to look for gibbons, which we heard clearly but did not see. After breakfast we took a walk on the road, and saw our first and only **Giant Squirrels (2)**. We found a few new birds and many dragonflies and butterflies. We took it easy for part of the day, and got caught up with our lists. In the mid-afternoon we drove to the river where we saw **Maroon Langurs**, though again they were quite shy.





Mike spotted a baby **Orangutan (FR)**, and while we were all gawping at it, Lang our driver went and found its mother nearby. She was not at all impressed with us, and raced vertically down her tree, breaking off branches and hurling them at us (with pretty poor aim). We went on to the river for tea and cakes and a break. We headed back at about 7 with some sporadic rainfall. Mike said his aim for that section was Colugo, but after a couple of Thomas's Flying Squirrels and our first **Red Giant Flying Squirrel**, Mike found us a **Marbled Cat (RB)**,

posed on a branch near the road. Awesome animal. It was mostly looking away, so Mike spished at it, but this had the wrong effect as it disappeared down the back of the tree and off into the forest. We had all had a good look at this rare cat so were well pleased. Shortly after, Mike found another rarity, an **Otter Civet, below (DH)**, mother and young that were catching frogs in a large puddle made by the loggers. We were a bit too far away for good photos, especially as flash was not allowed until all had had good looks, but it was a tremendously exciting find and one of my top 3 wanted mammals. On the remainder of the way back we saw 6 Thomas's and 5 Red Giant FS's, 3 Malay Civets, 3 Island Palm Civets (one with a baby seen near the admin area), 2 Bornean Striped Palm Civets, and 3 Leopard Cats, as well as numerous frogs. It was an excellent night, and we decided to quit a bit early so we could go for gibbons the next morning.



Nov 12

We started at 5:30 a.m., with Mike less energetic than usual! Within a km or two of the base, we saw leaves moving as 3 troops of gibbons moved off, but only Stuart saw a gibbon. We did see some Maroon Langurs, Wreathed Hornbill and a Racket-tailed Drongo as well as Prevost's Squirrel and later a Rhinoceros Hornbill. We continued to a quarry, stopping on the way to watch a squirrel gathering strips of bark for its nest. This was our first **Ear-spot Squirrel (RB)**, a species very similar to the Plantain Squirrel which we'd seen at each location.



At the quarry, the menfolk took off to climb to the top while the rest of us watched a **Slender Treeshrew** sunning itself and carefully grooming its tail. On our way back we stopped for Leafbirds etc. We had a late breakfast then a rest before afternoon outing. Headed out at 4 p.m. toward the White House, stopping at an area where there were a lot of Nepenthes. The road was

littered with elephant dung, which gave us hope, but no luck, though we did see our first **Bornean Yellow Muntjac**. After a break for sunset, we headed back. Mike seemed to have turned his attention to sleeping birds and Dawn started counting prinias, along with bulbuls and flycatchers. Our first serious stop was for a very pretty, small black and white banded snake, which later Raelene identified as a young Brown Wolf Snake. Soon after, I spotted our first **Colugo (RB)**. I thought at first it was sitting on a fungus, then realized it was its membrane-encased tail – so bat-like! We



watched it for a while and saw it climb up into the tree out of view. We also spotted a very small nectar bat – definitely a flying fox based on bright eyeshine. This was determined to be a **Long-tongued Nectar Bat**, based on size and behavior. After this the two species of flying squirrels (Thomas's and Red Giant) emerged – Joanna was in charge of counting them both (final count for night – 13 Tommies and 4 RGs). A bit later Mike spotted a roosting flying fox – one of the *Cynopterus* species which are quite similar. I later ascertained that it was the **Forest Short-nosed Fruit Bat**.

We saw the three species of civets we had seen on previous nights (3 Malay, 2 Island Palm and 2 Bornean Striped in total), and a couple of Leopard Cats. Mike spotted eyeshine in a fig tree, and there it was, a **Binturong (SB)**, my first and highly sought after, snoozing on a branch using its thick tail as a chin rest. So nice! I really wanted to see it move around but it wasn't in any mood to get up. We were close to camp and headed back for dinner in great



spirits. The food at Deramakot had been pretty good and this particular dinner was excellent – sambal eggplant, stir-fried veggies and sweet/sour fish. It was all prepared by Gidi and Kiki who also took care of beer bills and even did our laundry for a very low price.



We went back out after dinner and headed back to the quarry we had visited in the morning. On the way we watched a Tommie take flight – lovely. Dawn counted Prinias (8) and Joanna kept up her flying squirrel count. At the quarry we focused on frogs – Rough Guardian, **File-eared (FR)**, Dark-eyed, and Harlequin Treefrog; Wallace's Flying Frog was seen on the way as well. After the quarry we had nice views of Slow Loris, did a bit more frogging, added a few civets, and Mike spotted the tiny **Lesser Raneë Mouse** on a head of grass. Nice to see a small rodent, but we didn't get photos as it scurried down the grass fairly swiftly. We headed back and I asked if we could check on the Binturong – it was only 2:30 a.m. anyway – which we did, but it had left. All in all it had been another fantastic night and great day.

Nov 13

We had the morning free, but I got up at 7 a.m. anyway, on another gibbon search and a check of the Binturong tree by day – no luck on either, but I did find a lovely bright green flying lizard and various birds and butterflies. After a late lunch we set out, but not a lot was seen as it was raining heavily, so we hoofed it back to HQ. After supper we set out again, around 8:30 p.m. At first we saw the usual civets and Thomas's FS. I got a Colugo, but a bit far off, and soon after, Mike spotted our first **Black Flying Squirrel**. It was new for us and we even watched it take flight which was amazing – it took off from one tree then arced back in mid-air to land on another trunk, changing route and doubling back on itself. It showed incredible control for a gliding mammal. After more civets, Lang spotted a mouse crossing the road. We all saw it climbing up the bank and had a good look at the tail – a **Large Sunda Tree Mouse** – another new species!



Malay Civet (DH)



Island Palm Civet (RB)

Not long after, Mike had us all get off the truck to look at tracks on the road – very recent marks of a Clouded Leopard that was heading back the way we had come. Mike checked the tracks in a state of great excitement, but decided we should go forward a bit before turning around to the area the leopard had moved into. We saw a Slow Loris, and after a bit headed back, with Mike focusing on the tracks along the road and stopping to check periodically. The cat had not spent all that long on the road, and we didn't encounter it. After the tracking ended, Mike saw a large bat hanging from a vine. It was twirling around and twitching its ears – a **Diadem Roundleaf Bat** flycatching – waiting for a large bug to pass and then sallying out to get it. Very nice. We continued, seeing another Slow Loris, other common species, and two uncooperative mouse deer. Mike said they were **Greater Mouse Deer**, but our views were not satisfactory. We got back a little before 2 a.m.

Nov 14

I got up early as the gibbons were calling right outside my room. I didn't have any luck locating them at first, but was enjoying other wildlife. A while later I finally saw a **North Borneo Gibbon (RB)** feeding in a tree close by.



I grabbed Stuart who is an insomniac like me and was out wandering, and woke up people in both cabins – about half the group got to see it before it backed off into the forest. Later some of us went for a walk to the 2 km mark and back, but didn't record any new mammals. We headed out after a late lunch, and continued monkeying around – I found a young male Orangutan, then we watched a group of Pig-



Tailed Macaques, followed by several **Maroon Langurs (SB)**, which were much more cooperative than usual, and beautiful to see in the late afternoon light. We also saw some Asian Black Hornbills. We continued on to the river, and just before we got there we had great views of a Leopard Cat at dusk, munching on something. We hung out at the river watching



bats forage in lights – these had been identified by previous visitors as False Vampire Bats, but based on their loud echolocation calls and behavior, I wasn't convinced of this – and sadly I couldn't provide an ID. We headed back, watching the Leopard Cat again, and I continued my Colugo-spotting, with 3 seen and one even watched



launching into flight, with its amazing pentagonal membranes extended. Mike spotted lots of **Red Giant Flying Squirrels (DH, above)**, and we stopped to see this lovely beast taking flight. We saw a few **Thomas's Flying Squirrel (DH, left)** as well. Our best sighting was a **Reticulated Python (FR, below)** stretched across the road. It wasn't huge by python standards, but still a good 2.5 to 3 m long. I really wanted us all to see the head so I jumped into the brush to head it off. It came to a standstill and I had a bonding moment with the snake. Some compensation for getting fine spines of some noxious plant embedded in one leg that was irritating for a week (shorts and sandals not ideal dashing-into-brush clothing). Everyone could see the head well from the road, which was really nice. We headed back slowly, stopping





for the usual mammals. By this time even Slow Loris was a common sight for us. We saw the same bat twirling from the same vine as the previous night too. We had a very late supper and Mike was pretty subdued, bummed we had not seen a Clouded Leopard, although the rest of us were really amazed and happy with what we had seen.

Nov 15

We headed out from Deramakot, back to main road where we met our bus with our friendly drivers Eric and Ian again. We stopped at roadside

stall for the worst lunch of trip – cold and tasteless. We also met John Bakkar, our guide for the rest of the tour. We arrived at Greenview Inn during the afternoon. The lodge is located right by the Kinabatangan River, but quite basic and not exactly squeaky clean. After a rain squall we took a boat trip on the river. The trip was great as we saw a lot of monkeys including one new species, the **Silvered Langur (RB, above)**. Out of a group of 4 females, one had a small bright orange baby – lovely contrast with its dark gray mom. We saw a lot of Pig-tailed and Long-tailed Macaques and **Proboscis Monkeys (FR)**, several hornbills and other water birds. After dinner we went out for a night boat trip – I thought to look for elephants that had been reported earlier and/or flat-headed cat localities, but we seemed to just be heading to the village and looking at sleeping kingfishers. Got that sorted out and headed to elephant area, but no luck. One very interesting sighting, though was of bats sailing by, low to water, just like fishing bats. These bats were trawling with enlarged hind legs. By size and shape they had to be **Grey Large-footed Myotis**, the largest of several *Myotis* that fish, all of which are rare. We saw one Island Palm Civet, but no other medium/large mammals.

Nov 16

We left at 6 a.m. for a boat trip, which yielded good views of Proboscis Monkeys and hornbills. After breakfast we went to



Gomantong Cave

Gomantong Caves. This is an excellent area and would be worthwhile bringing a lunch and staying for most of the day, as the forest around is productive as well as the cave itself.



Fortunately we brought the scope, not for the habituated Orangs or Maroon Langurs, but for bats clinging to high ceilings, well beyond good viewing range with binoculars. There is a nice boardwalk that passes numerous Fawn Roundleaf Bats, two or more horseshoe bats, (two ID'd were **Philippine** and **Creag's Horseshoe Bats**) and small clusters of very dark **Lesser Bent-winged Bat, FR** (other members of the genus are known from the cave but this is the only one I identified). As you round the corner and head back there is a high group of flying foxes, some of which were

clearly **Dusky Flying Fox**; other species may have also been present. John told us the best bat area was a cavern higher up, so Gwen and I set off up "guano mountain" – walking through 2-3 feet deep guano, with nothing to grab but slimy fluorescent green cave wall (Gwen had a stick, lucky her). Along with the solid masses of roaches on the non-slimy surfaces, the whole area is fascinatingly repulsive. When we reached the top we were extremely close to thousands of Fawn Roundleaf Bats and above us were 200,000 – 1 million (estimates vary, I have no idea how many) **Wrinkle-lipped Bats**, which started zooming in and out in our lights. The ammonia was a bit overwhelming so we headed down quite promptly. Emerging extremely dirty but victorious, we joined the rest of the group **Orang**-watching, and all got nice views of a Black-headed Pitta.



After lunch and a break we went out by boat and had some good monkey watching. Most of the group saw a Yellow Bittern, and we had a nice view of White-crested Hornbill. We saw the rare **Storm's Stork (DH)**, which we had seen at a distance before, but this time got good looks at it. After dinner we did a boat trip to a creek beyond Sukau where flat-headed cats have occasionally been sighted, but we saw little other than





Buffy the Fishing Owl (DH). Later we went out on a night drive with Ian, driving the main roads at high speed until we reached the turnoff for Bilit. John had suggested this route, but as the area was solid oil palm, we only saw 3 Island Palm Civets. Just before we headed back I found a Long-tailed Nightjar, which was at least our first real sighting of the bird.

Nov 17

We took an early trip to the creek we had visited the previous night. It was a productive outing for birds and we had nice views of Bornean Falconet among others. Apart from the usual monkeys, we saw a Plantain Squirrel, and Prevost's Squirrels were seen at Greenview. We left after breakfast, stopping in Lahad Datu for lunch and permits. The permits were very slow to arrive, so we continued to Mount Silam and sent Ian back for them while we explored. It started to rain so our sightings were limited, but the area seemed quite interesting for plants and birds. We found a huge black and white earthworm and I reflected on how nice it was to be with a group that were as delighted by a big worm as a colorful bird. Eventually the permits were completed, Ian rejoined us, and we continued on

to the famous Danum Valley. Partway in, the first vehicle and some in second bus saw two **Yellow-throated Martens** running along the roadside – very nice for those who could see them. They reminded me a lot of Tayras. On arrival we saw several Sambar Deer and our first **Bearded Pig (FR)**, both of which were seen daily at Danum. We stayed at the Danum Valley Field Centre, which is mostly a research facility. The rooms were large but very hot, the ceiling fan not all that effective. The place is quite run-down and many of the trails really need some repairs to broken and rotting boardwalks. But what was most annoying from our perspective was the complete lack of interest in our goals and outings. I was told we had two Sunrise Drives, out to a tower and back, but each ride was for only 4 people, so in effect we only had one ride. Night drives were only an hour long and no other drives were permitted. It took me three days to work out how to bend the rules slightly – pay drivers direct, forget the admin.



Overall it was very disappointing after wonderful Deramakot and wonderful Mike, but in retrospect it did give us a chance to walk in the forest and get close-up views of some of the mammals we had only seen fleetingly.

After settling in and eating dinner, we headed out to look for tarsiers. No luck with them, but we did get reasonable views of two **Lesser Mouse Deer**. The rains started so we returned to our rooms as the rain got increasingly heavy and continued throughout the night.

Nov 18

We did some early birding in the open areas, and after breakfast set out for a forest hike. We saw some good birds including Red and Black Barbet, and I found a roost of three **Lesser Woolly Horseshoe Bats (FR)** in a large fallen log. We got up close and personal with many leeches, despite leech socks. After lunch and a break we went on a longer hike. I saw what I thought at first was a tiny snake but turned out to be a **Hammerhead Worm (FR)** – a very interesting planarian that dissolves its earthworm prey before consuming.



We ended up at a stream that was too high to cross after the rain the previous night. This turned out to be a good thing, as when we retraced our steps we saw a group of Bristleheads



along with other birds of interest. On the way back we stopped by a huge tree where 3-4 Red Giant Flying Squirrels were known to roost. John knew which holes they were likely to emerge from and we were able to see 3 emerge at dusk and take flight. Shortly beforehand, we watched a group of bats flying out from below an epiphytic fern high on an emergent Koompasia tree. I'd read that this is a typical roost of Spotted Flying Fox, but we had bat detectors and could hear the bats calling as they emerged, so I was uncertain of their ID.

After dinner we had a short night drive – very lame compared to our drives with Mike. The vehicle wasn't well set up for viewing and the guides were too busy chatting to look out for mammals. We saw a Leopard Cat, but having already seen 11 in Deramakot this wasn't too exciting, especially as it was behind a fence for a rhino sanctuary (that hadn't actually been completed). We saw two **Greater Mouse Deer**, but most people got poor views, and some interesting eyeshine that the guides didn't bother to investigate. We packed in after this short trip as we had an early start planned for the morning.

Naked Bats (DH)

Nov 19

We set off at 5 a.m. for the “sunrise drive” taking two trucks, all inside, except John who was the only one allowed to spotlight from the back of the pickup. He wasn’t too happy as it was raining and he didn’t spot any eyeshine. We arrived at a tower and the mist started to clear. The views of forested mountains all around were impressive, showing the extent of the Danum Valley. We found a few birds then headed back. After breakfast we hiked in

the forest, stopping for a flying lizard and lantern bug near the campsite. A little farther in we were admiring a big tree when Rayelene heard movement in the brush. She turned just in time to see a **Malay Weasel** dash across the path. Unfortunately nobody else saw it, despite efforts to spish it back into view. Later we saw Orangutan and Blue-headed Pitta. After lunch we went out for a walk along the road. Traffic was bad, with a lot of heavy vehicles passing. We had a close encounter with a fearless crab, and also had very good views of Orangutans and Maroon Langurs. Raelene spotted a nervous squirrel, which sadly was just a Plantain Squirrel, but she also saw the reason for its alarm – a large snake climbing through the trees. I spotted it too, but most of the group didn’t manage to see it. We only saw the venter which was pale blue-green with no sign of patterning. It was most likely the Brown-tailed Racer (also known as Red-tailed Racer or Red-tailed Green Ratsnake).

We ended up back at the bat roost tree and watched as 32 bats emerged, all echolocating (at about 30kHz). Dawn managed to get pretty good pictures of the bats in flight and I was really delighted to see that they were Naked Bats! Their size, large separate ears and free tail can be seen in above photo. I thought these bats were limited to caves, but apparently they also use hollow trees. Roosting under a plant on a tree has not been described for this poorly known species. We returned in semi-darkness but didn’t see anything crossing the road. After dinner we walked the trail across from the station and I set up my moth light near the start of the trail. Although we passed through the territories of 3 tarsiers, we didn’t see any. We did get good looks at a Greater Mouse Deer and a sleeping **Blue-headed Pitta** that looked like a Christmas ornament!

We were planning on walking another trail for tarsier, but it started to rain and John cancelled the walk. I went back for my light, the rain stopped, so I wandered around for a bit and found a sleeping **Bornean Angle-**

headed Lizard and sleeping bulbul.





Nov 20

This was our last full day in the forests of Borneo. We woke to gibbons calling nearby and went out to locate them. They were much easier to observe than those at Deramakot, and finally the whole group got good looks at them. Later we walked a longer loop beyond the nature trail. We had excellent views of a Blue-headed Pitta catching worms along the trail. On our way back we had very good looks at Maroon Langur and also saw a Bornean Pygmy Squirrel. After lunch it rained hard and so we packed up. In the late afternoon we had a nice walk around the roads, with good views of gibbon, langurs, bearded pig and Asian Pied Hornbill. I had finally worked out how to get a bit more driving time – pay more and talk to the right people – and so we had a sunset drive plus an after-dinner drive. On the sunset drive we saw two Malay Civets. The guides were sitting together on top of the cab, blocking everyone's view and chatting, really annoying. After a best-forgotten dinner (the food in general was pretty bad) we set out again. John was on top with another guide. Not far out I saw a mammal on the road – my view being the 3-inch space between the two guides' bums. The two spotters and driver all failed to see it and responded really slowly – total bummer as it was a **Long-tailed Porcupine**, my first, and only glimpsed by one other person (Joanna saw its tail). At that point I insisted that John move and give me the spotlight. We saw a few civets but more intriguing was very recent elephant sign – droppings and pulled up canes and ginger plants. The driver said he would go a bit further if paid more, which I agreed, then said – one more bridge – which was really close. We were almost on the elephants! Luckily he agreed to go a bit farther, and we came across our first **Borneo Pygmy Elephants**, which took off quickly into the forest. Mostly butt-view, but nice all the same.

Nov 21

We left the station fairly early, and had similar views, slightly better for some people, of the elephants in the same area as the previous night. We also saw both Bornean Yellow and **Red Muntjac**. We flew back from Lahad Datu to KK at 11:10 a.m. and had the afternoon to visit the bookstore and prepare for long flight home. We met up for dinner, enjoying a great sunset over the water before tucking into a sumptuous seafood feast along with much-needed adult beverages! We departed at different times during night or the next day. In my opinion at least, we had had a brilliant trip. We recorded over 200 bird species (not listed here), 66 mammal species, about 40 herps (more if anyone ever identifies all the skinks), and numerous butterflies that Stuart is working through.

Borneo Mammal List

Order Scandentia

Mountain tree shrew *Tupaia montana*

Lesser treeshrew *Tupaia minor*

Slender treeshrew *Tupaia gracilis*

Order Chiroptera

Forest short-nosed fruit bat *Cynopterus minutus*

Dusky fruit bat *Penthetor lucasi*

Bornean fruit bat *Aethalops aequalis*

Long-tongued nectar bat *Macroglossus minimus*

Greater sheath-tailed bat *Emballonura alecto*

Creagh's horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus creaghi*

Philippine horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus philippinensis*

Great woolly horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus luctus*

Lesser woolly horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus sedulus*

Fawn roundleaf bat *Hipposideros cervinus*

Diadem roundleaf bat *Hipposideros diadema*

Grey large-footed myotis *Myotis adversus*

Lesser bent-winged bat *Miniopterus australis*

Naked bat *Cheiromeles torquatus*

Wrinkle-lipped bat *Chaerephon plicata*

Order Dermoptera

Bornean Colugo *Galeopterus borneanus*

Order Primates

Slow loris *Nycticebus coucang*

Maroon langur *Presbytis rubicunda*

Silvered langur *Trachypithecus cristatus*

Proboscis monkey *Nasalis larvatus*

Long-tailed macaque *Macaca fascicularis*

Pig-tailed macaque *Macaca nemestrina*

North Borneo gibbon *Hylobates funereus*

Bornean Orangutan *Pongo pygmaeus*

Order Rodentia

Giant squirrel *Ratufa affinis*

Prevost's squirrel *Callosciurus prevostii*

Plantain squirrel *Callosciurus notatus*

Ear-spot squirrel *Callosciurus adamsi*

Bornean black-banded squirrel *Callosciurus orestes*
Horse-tailed squirrel *Sundasciurus hippurus*
Low's squirrel *Sundasciurus lowii*
Jentink's squirrel *Sundasciurus jentinki*
Bornean mountain ground squirrel *Dremomys everetti*
Plain pigmy squirrel *Exilisciurus exilis*
Whitehead's pigmy squirrel *Exilisciurus whiteheadi*
Black flying squirrel *Aeromys tephromelas*
Thomas's flying squirrel *Aeromys thomasi*
Red giant flying squirrel *Petaurista petaurista*
Spotted giant flying squirrel *Petaurista elegans*
Kinabalu rat *Rattus baluensis*
Polynesia rat *Rattus exulans*
Large pencil-tailed tree-mouse *Chiropodomys major*
Lesser Rane mouse *Haeromys pusillus*
Long-tailed porcupine *Trichys fasciculata*

Order Carnivora

Yellow-throated marten *Martes flavigula*
Malay weasel *Mustela nudipes*
Malay civet or Tangalunga *Viverra tangalunga*
Banded linsang *Prionodon linsang*
Island palm civet *Paradoxurus philippinensis*
Binturong *Arctictis binturong*
Bornean striped palm civet *Arctogalidia stigmatica*
Banded palm civet *Hemigalus derbyanus*
Otter-civet *Cynogale bennettii*
Short-tailed mongoose *Herpestes brachyurus*
Marbled cat *Pardofelis marmorata*
Leopard cat *Prionailurus bengalensis*

Order Proboscidea

Borneo Elephant *Elaphas maximus*

Order Artiodactyla

Bearded pig *Sus barbatus*
Lesser mouse-deer *Tragulus javanicus*
Greater mouse-deer *Tragulus napu*
Red muntjac *Muntiacus muntjak*
Bornean yellow muntjac *Muntiacus atherodes*
Sambar deer *Rusa unicolor*

Total 66 species

