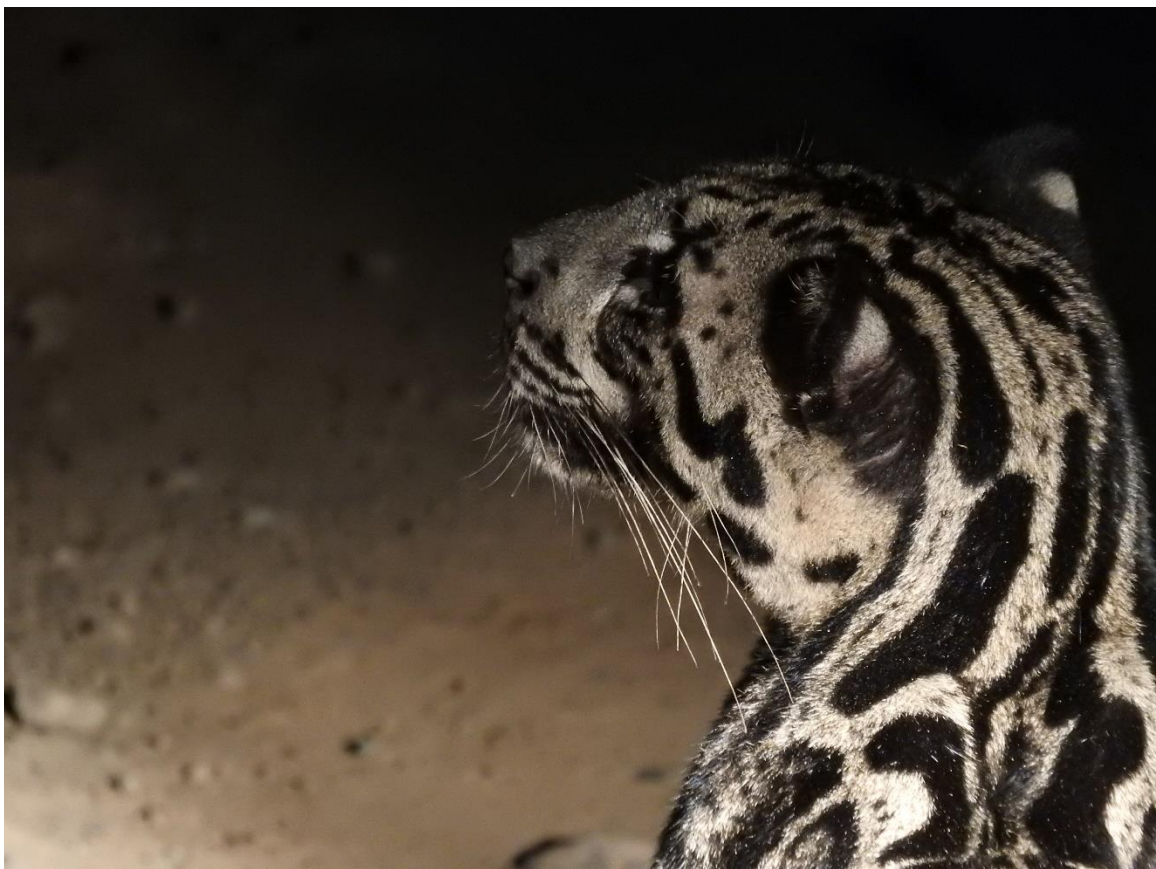


Sabah: Deramakot and Danum trip report

September 6 to 14, 2017

*With Mike Gordon (Deramakot)
and Siti Salihahfarhain Saidin (Danum)
from Adventure Alternative Borneo*



Sunda Clouded Leopard (*Neofelis Diardi*)

Introduction

My fiancée and I planned a whole trip in Borneo to see as much wildlife as we could, including my favourite animal: the Sunda Clouded Leopard, which had eluded us in our previous trip in Sumatra.

She made an excellent choice by selecting Mike Gordon as a guide in Deramakot, for what ended up being our best mammal watching experience to date. We booked only 4 nights in Deramakot, and 4 nights in Danum, with a transition in Kinabatangan river in between. While we can never plan what the jungle will allow us to see, Mike deserves the highest praise for his spotting technique, hawk-level eyesight and unwavering dedication. His coordination with our driver, Lang, was top notch and maximized our opportunities.

In just 4 nights in Deramakot with Mike, we saw the following:

- 3 sightings of the Sunda Clouded Leopard (probably the same individual);
- 2 Marbled Cats and 2 Leopard Cats
- 1 Sun Bear
- 3 Yellow-Throated Martens
- 8 Orang Utans, many Bornean Gibbons and 1 Red Leaf Monkey (Red Langur)
- 1 Western Tarsier
- 1 Sunda Colugo (Sunda Flying Lemur)
- Civets, moon rats, mouse deer, sambar deer, flying foxes, and flying squirrels.

As for Danum, the highlight was a sighting of at least 8 Borneo Pygmy Elephants at night.



Detailed daily accounts

September 6 to 9, 2017 in Deramakot with Mike Gordon

- **First day, night drive** -

Adventure Alternative arranged a driver who drove us from Sandakan to Sepilok, where we stayed a few hours to visit the sanctuary. From there, we stopped in Telupid for lunch and then drove directly to the camp in Deramakot, where we met Mike.

We started by building a list of what we wanted to see, as we were in a group with a paleontologist, and ended up with a rather long list, with the Sunda Clouded Leopard clearly on top. We rested during the hot afternoon, then after a good supper, we went out for a night drive at 8:00 P.M. with an almost full moon.

In the very first hour, we drove towards the entrance of the park and saw **Mousedeer**, juvenile **Sambar Deer**, a **Moon Rat** and **Red Giant Flying Squirrels**.



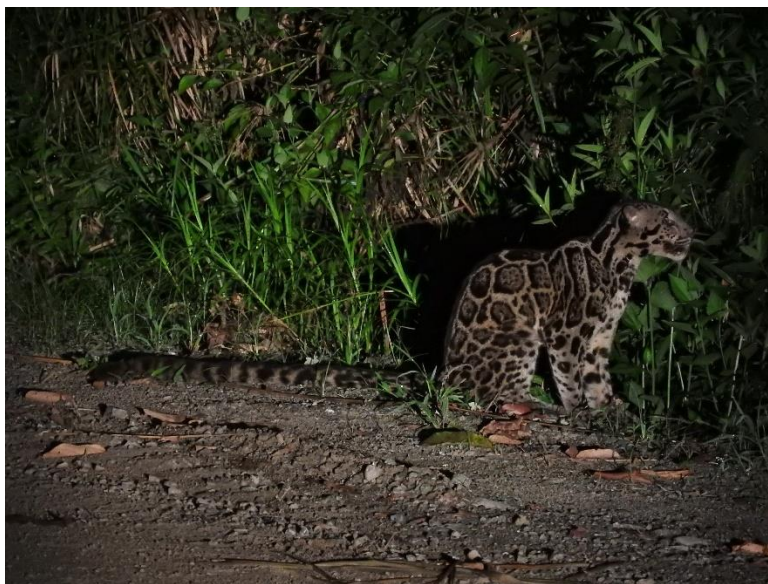
Island Palm Civet

After about an hour, we came to a sudden stop. None of us said a word, as we saw a very distinct shape on the road, aided by the moon's glow. It was unmistakable: a **Sunda Clouded Leopard!**



Our very first glimpse of the Sunda Clouded Leopard

We spent a whopping 40 minutes watching this stunning animal, which seemed not to care at all about us, staying quietly in the middle of the road, probably waiting for prey to cross.





When the Clouded Leopard vanished into the foliage, we resumed our ride and although more than satisfied, we still were in luck, seeing a **Marbled Cat** running on the road, **Malay Civets**, **Banded Civets**, **Island Palm Civets** and **Large Flying Foxes** flying overhead. After about 4 hours, we went back to camp, overwhelmed by all we saw.

- Second day, day drive and short trek -

We went on an early drive in the still misty forest, saw 4 groups of **Bornean Gibbons** and had clear view of a **Rhinoceros Hornbill**.

As we started to walk along the road, we saw Banteng scat and prints that were quite recent, a **Serpent Crested Fish Eagle** and a **Red Leaf Monkey (Red Langur)**. After this, we had breakfast and rested until the night drive.



Bornean Gibbon

- Second day, night drive -

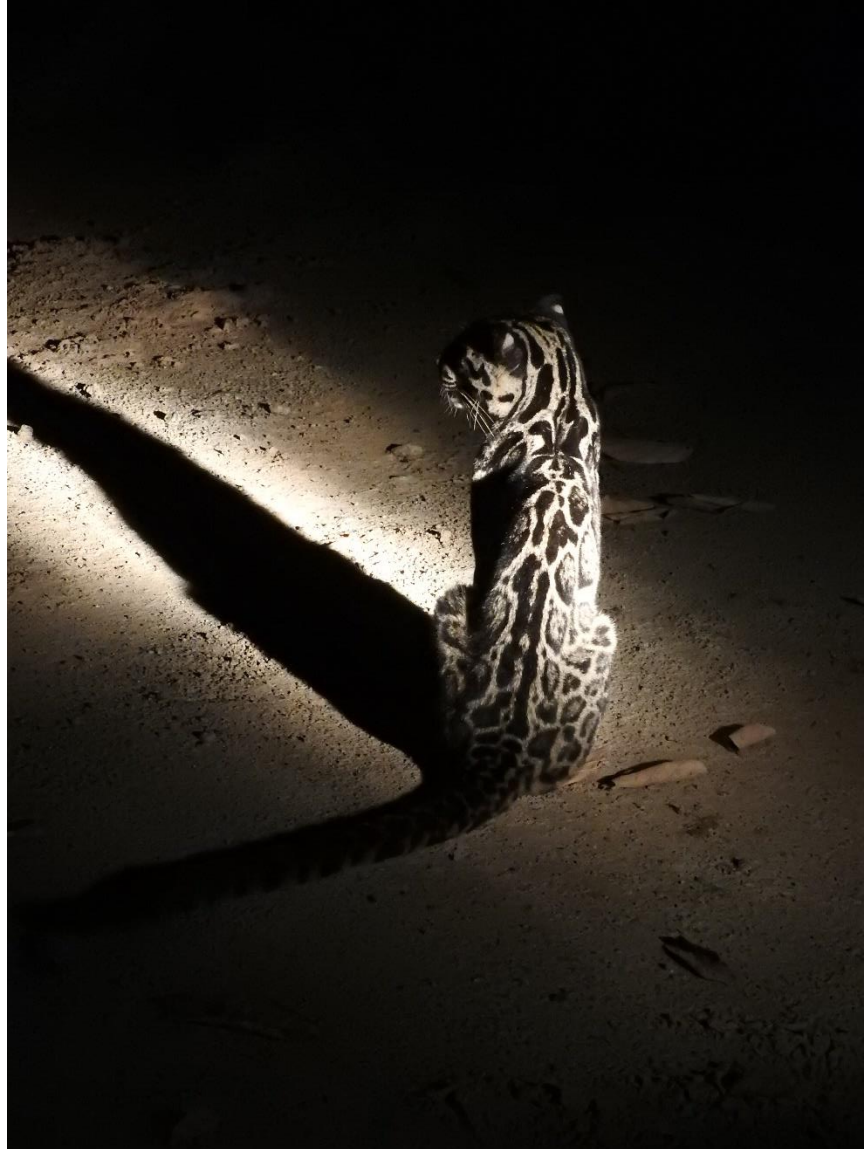
In the first 10 minutes of our ride, Mike spotted a **Leopard Cat** hiding under a bridge. We then saw a **Palm Striped Civet**, an **Island Palm Civet**, a **Black Flying Squirrel** gliding gracefully and a **Giant Thomas Flying Squirrel**.

A little further along the same road we followed the day before, we once again came upon the **Sunda Clouded Leopard**! It was most probably the same individual, as it was also laying down on the road in approximatively the same area. This sighting lasted 30 minutes and left us speechless.



We drove another few hours, our luck didn't run out, as we came upon a **Yellow Throated Marten** climbing up a tree and what we think was a **Sunda Short-Nosed Fruitbat** sleeping in dense foliage.

Our third and last sighting of the **Sunda Clouded Leopard** was just as exquisite as the first and lasted at least 15 minutes, after which we left it in peace not to overstay our welcome.



Sunda Clouded Leopard

- Third day, short drive, day trek and night trek -

The third day stood apart in that we did treks rather than drives, both along the same trail, which was evidently filled with leeches, so don't forget your leech socks. While we did not see much on the day trek, the night trek was memorable. Near the beginning of the trail, we got real close to a **Moon Rat** resting under a fallen tree, a tortoise, a bat which I could not identify for sure and last but not least: a **Western Tarsier**.

On our way back to camp, we saw a **Sunda Colugo (Sunda Flying Lemur)** hanging upside-down high in a tree.



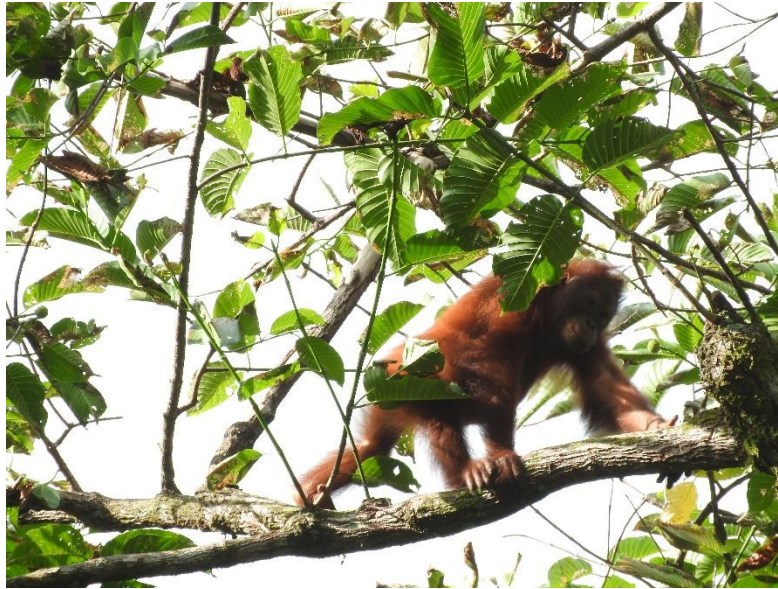
Western Tarsier



Sunda Colugo

- Fourth day, day drive -

On our last day in Deramakot, we set out at 2:30 PM in order to get all the way back to the river. As we drove, we saw **Bornean Gibbons** and **Orang Utans**. Mike decided we should walk along the road to try and see more of the latter species and again, he outclassed himself, as we saw up to 8 **Orang Utans** in about an hour, a very beautiful juvenile **Serpent Crested Fish Eagle**, 2 **Yellow-Throated Martens** playing in a tree for about 10 minutes and **Bornean Bristleheads** flying over our heads!



Orang Utan



Yellow Throated Marten

We supped near the river and embarked on our last night drive in Deramakot. Things start strong with a **Marbled Cat** in a tree, a **Black Flying Squirrel**, **Sambar Deer**, **Island Palm Civet** and a 20-minute-long sighting of a **Leopard Cat**. The highlight though, was undoubtedly the **Sun Bear**, which we saw for 20 minutes while it rested, got up and ate fruit in a tall tree, a formidable conclusion to our 4 day stay, thanks to Mike's absolutely first class talent!



Leopard Cat



Sun Bear

September 10, 2017 in Kinabatangan with Afiq

We spent one night in Tanjung Bulat Jungle Camp on the Oxbow Lake. As it rained quite heavily in the afternoon and early evening, we were unable to go for the afternoon boat ride, but we did go for an evening ride. We saw plenty of **Saltwater Crocodiles**, a few **Blue-Eared Kingfishers** and **Stork-Billed Kingfishers** and a **Buffy Fish Owl**.

We also went for a boat ride the next morning, before departing for Danum. We saw a **White-Throated Fantail**, **Oriental Darters**, a **Grey-Headed Fish Eagle**, a group of **Long-Tailed Macaques** and, our favourite in Kinabatangan, two groups of **Proboscis Monkeys**.

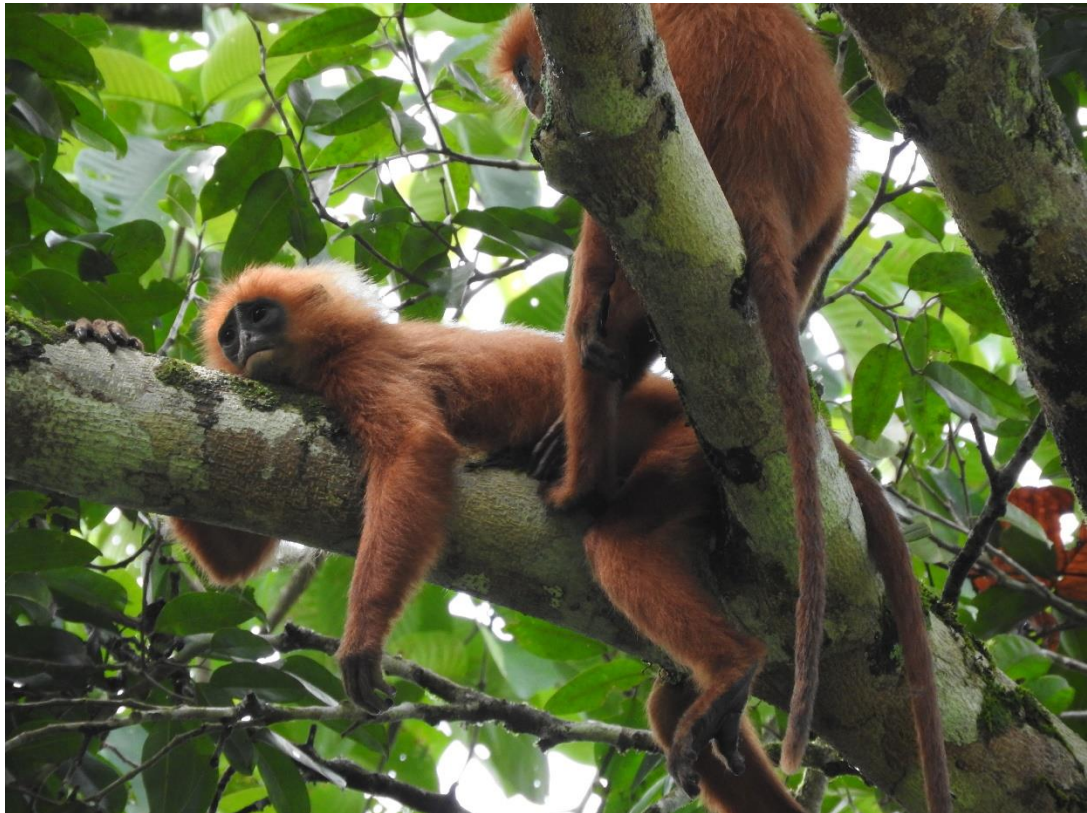


Proboscis Monkey

September 11 to 14, 2017 in Danum with Siti Salihahfarhain Saidin

We arrived in Danum fresh from our experience in Deramakot and the only large mammal we still had on our list was the Borneo Pygmy Elephant. During our treks in Danum, Siti was great for providing very extensive information of every interesting animal, insect or plant in the ecosystem that we came across.

While our account is not as detailed on what we saw on each day, I will separate the day treks from the night drive sightings. As always, don't forget to bring your leech socks.



Maroon Leaf Monkey (Red Langur)

- Night drives -

We saw **Bearded Pigs**, a **Malay Civet**, a **Small Tooth Palm Civet**, **Sambar Deer** up close, **Flying Squirrels** and an **Indian Muntjac (Red Muntjac)**.

Our second night drive was the most memorable moment in Danum, as we got to see two groups of **Borneo Pygmy Elephant** (8 or 9 individuals in total) while driving in direction of the park's entrance. Siti noticed elephant scat as we arrived in Danum, which was useful to plan our night drives accordingly.

On the third night drive, we saw a **Brown Wood Owl**.



Long-Tailed Macaque



Sabah Slender Skink

- Day treks -

Near our room, we saw a **Crested Serpent Fish Eagle**, **Long-Tailed Macaques**, **Bearded Pigs**, **Maroon Leaf Monkeys (Red Langurs)**, **Sabah Slender Skink** and a **Water Monitor**.

On the trails, we also saw a female **Scarlet-Rumped Trogon**, a female **Diard's Trogon**, a **Crested Jay**, a **Greater Racquet-Tailed Drongo**, a **Rhinoceros Hornbill**, a **Brown Mabuya**, **Pig-Tailed Macaques** and **Maroon Leaf Monkeys (Red Langurs)**.



Water Monitor



Bearded Pig

Report by: Laurent Morin & Émilie Day Cayer
Photo credits: Émilie Day Cayer & Laurent Morin

