

Sumatran Exploration & Komodo

Destination: Indonesia **Duration:** 16 Days **Dates:** 11th – 26th Sep 2014

-  Finding and watching 9 different Sumatran Orang-utans in Gunung Leuser
-  With the help of the guide Hari in Way Kambas finding over 50 mammal species
-  Over 100 species of birds seen, including Yellow-crested Cockatoos in Komodo
-  Having an amazing encounter with a Large-spotted Civet as it patrolled its territory
-  Having our own chartered boat and crew when cruising around Komodo NP
-  Fantastic Binturong in a palm tree at Way Kambas & brief Marbled Cat sighting
-  Trekking through the rugged terrain of Gunung Leuser National Park
-  Visiting the excellent Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary in Way Kambas and meeting Bina
-  Over 50 species of mammals seen, including Flat-headed Cat & Saimangs!
-  Experiencing a temperamental 2.7m Komodo Dragon wanting us out of the way!



Tour Leader / Guides

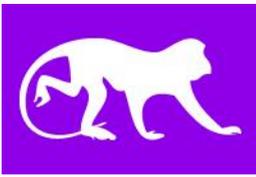
Martin Royle (Royle Safaris Tour Leader)
 Adi & Kidini (Gunung Leuser National Park Guides)
 Apil, Thomas & Satria (Gunung Leuser National Park Porter)
 Rakman & Agus (Komodo National Park Guides)
 Ambo, Juan, Egcho & Cristy (Komodo Boat Crew)
 Hari (Way Kambas National Park Guide)
 Warus & Suratno (Way Kambas National Park Jeep Driver)
 Yusuf, Fanni, Ferry, Santuri & Suril (Airport Transfer Drivers)

Participants

Mr. Tom King
 Mrs. Marie King

Overview

Days 1:	Jakarta
Days 2-4:	Gunung Leuser
Days 5:	Jakarta
Day 6:	Rinca Island
Day 7:	Komodo Island
Day 8:	Denpasar
Days 9-15:	Way Kambas
Day 16:	Jakarta



Day by Day Breakdown

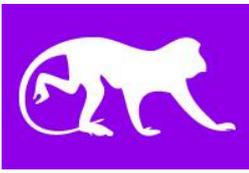
Overview

Indonesia has no fewer than 20,000 islands of which around 6,000 are inhabited; this is a land of diversity in an environmental, biological and cultural sense that is not rivalled by anywhere else on the planet. The largest muslim population in the world yet Christianity is dominate in parts of Sulawesi and the colourful island of Bali is an old Hindu kingdom where the practises of Hinduism have seamlessly blended with other local traditions to form a unique sect of Hinduism. But it is not just religion that is varied here, there are over 300 distinct and recognised cultures and over 250 languages. This is a country that includes some of the world's oldest tribal countries in New Guinea, nomadic sea faring people who very rarely if ever come ashore and also the country also boasts a booming economy and in Jakarta one of Asia's fastest growing cities. So with so much human diversity it is little surprise that the wildlife is also as varied and in many cases endemic to the country and in often to just one of the islands. However what may be a surprise you think of Indonesia's long and complex history of exploitation; first at the hands of Hindu kingdoms, then Muslims from Arabia followed by the Europeans of Holland, Britain and France as we the race to monopolise the spice industry reached a peak in the 1500's; that there is any of the wilderness and wildlife left in Indonesia. It is not just manmade problems that have led to a reduction in the forest and wildlife in Indonesia historically, the whole country is sat on 3 tectonic plates and boasts more active volcanoes than any other country in the world. This fact has led to massive volcanic eruptions (such as Krakatoa in 1886, which was so violent it shook the earth off its axis), earthquakes and tsunamis (the most recent devastating one in 2004). These natural disasters lead to loss of habitat and animal life as much as human life and recently this fact is compounded by expansions by Malaysia and China in the booming palm oil business, with millions of hectares of forest being cleared for lucrative palm oil production. So when all is taken into account it is remarkable that there are any truly wild places left, but there are and in some parts these are very well protected and the endangered species they harbour have a fighting chance to survive into the future.

This tour aims to take in some of the best wildlife watching destinations and locations that are famous for some of the countries and world's most iconic and recognisable animals. Using Jakarta as a base we will explore the large and wildlife rich island of Sumatra in the north and south as well as flying east to Bali and from there to where the old cartographers labelled their maps 'Here be Dragons' of course this is the home of the world's largest lizard, Rinca, Komodo and Flores. First we travel north from Jakarta to the last stronghold of the critically endangered Sumatran orang-utan; Gunung Leuser National Park. Home to 9 species of primates including the orange ape and 2 species of gibbon and also populations of some of the world's rarest and most elusive mammals, Sumatran tigers, Sumatran rhinos and Malayan sun bears. From here we fly via Jakarta and Bali to Flores where we will board our boat and travel to Rinca and then onto Komodo, these are two of the five islands that make up the world heritage site Komodo National Park. They are also home to good populations of Komodo dragons, which are of course the main draw card to any wildlife enthusiast visiting this part of the world. Also found here are rare rusa deer, the endemic Rinca rat and huge colonies of flying foxes. After cruising around these two islands and exploring their interiors we will leave again for Sumatra. This time the far south of the island and Way Kambas National Park, this park is probably home to more critically endangered and elusive animals that anywhere else on the planet. With Sunda clouded leopards, siamangs, white-winged ducks, false gharails, Sumatran rhinos, Malayan tapirs, Storm's storks and Sumatran tigers to name just a few. We will have a full week here to see if any of these mysterious animals decide to cooperate with us. As with any wildlife watching we can only place ourselves in the best place, at the right time and hire the best local guides and then hope that the animals appreciate our efforts.

All in all this tour has been designed to explore three locations that could result in one of the greatest sightings lists ever assembled, however in a more realistic fashion we hope to showcase the Sumatran orang-utan, Komodo dragon, Sumatran elephant, siamang and also enjoy a wonderful diverse country spending time in some of the last fully protected parks in Indonesia. With so many islands all offering unique wildlife experiences it is almost impossible to settle on a confirmed itinerary however we believe this one will be very rewarding and could become one of our most popular holidays. Read on for a day by day breakdown of our trip with a sightings log at the end of the report.





Day 1 **Jakarta**

Arrival

Today Tom and Marie arrived in the late afternoon and headed direct to the hotel, Martin arrived a couple of hours later on a flight from Sulawesi. Once we were all checked in we met up and had our evening meal at the hotel's restaurant before an early night as we would be starting the tomorrow at 4am to catch our flight to northern Sumatra.

Day 2 **Gunung Leuser National Park**

Travelling & Caving

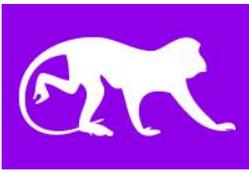
This morning we left the hotel at around 4am and heading to Jakarta airport to catch our flight to the 4th largest city in Indonesia and by far the largest in Sumatra, Medan. Medan is the port city closest to the Malaysian mainland and as a result it is a bustling centre for trade, commerce and unfortunately the illegal wildlife trade into mainland Asia. Due to its proximity to this huge city and its underworld black market it is amazing that Sumatra's largest continuous forest ecosystem is still here and only around 4 hours away from the city. This forest is dominated by the Gunung Leuser National Park; covering an area of 7,927km² and with surrounding protected forests the area is home to the vast majority of the remaining 6,600 critically endangered Sumatran orang-utans. It is of course the orang-utans that are main draw card for the park and the enterprising village of Bukit Lawang. This is our destination today and after arriving at Medan airport we were met by our driver Yusuf and taken to the village and our accommodation (after a short walk through the village and the back streets to the secluded and quiet location of the Eco-Travel Cottages located on the Lawang river and overlooking the steep sided slopes of the park. After settling into the accommodation and being briefed on the following days activities by Kembar we went on a walk with Adi to the bat cave located on the boundary of the park. Along the way to the cave we came across a troop of long-tailed macaques and the Thomas's langur which is endemic to northern Sumatra feeding on some low trees over a medical plant garden. We had some excellent views of the two species of monkey feeding, the macaques being more fruit orientated than the folivorous Thomas's langurs. There was also a couple of infants who played vigorously among the branches. After watching for a while we carried on towards the cave, the cave itself was a very interesting network of caverns (some being over 20m tall and 50m long) and narrow tunnels that required crawling and squeezing through. However balancing over the limestone rocks, ducking down under overhangs and crawling through narrow passageways was all worth it. The exploration of the cave resulted in no less than 4 different species of bats including greater short-nosed fruit bats, a solitary Horsfield's fruit bat, a small colony of arcuate horseshoe bats and many diadem roundleaf bats. The diadem bats being nicely patterned with white spots on the flanks and their pink noses looking like pig snouts. We also found various whip-scorpions and a very large cave huntsman spider. After spending around 1 hour exploring the cave system we headed back to the village of Bukit Lawang for dinner. But before we left the national park boundary we were told about a snake that had been spotted in a bush close to the pathway. We found the beautiful green, yellow and black patterned Sumatran pit viper resting at the top of a small bush. The views were very good of this usually elusive and shy snake, pit vipers are usually not seen much in the day as they spend the daytime hiding deep in vegetation, only coming out and occupying a suitable ambushing location after dark. They may stay in the same bush or tree for several days in a position hoping for an unsuspecting animal to come too close. This is one of the largest pit vipers in South East Asia and this individual measured around 3.5ft long. It looked relatively fat and had possibly fed recently and was just digesting the meal in the sunlight of the afternoon. After some great pictures of the pit viper we had some great Indonesian food before returning to the accommodation to rest after a long day. Tomorrow we would head into the forest in search of the critically endangered Sumatran orang-utans.



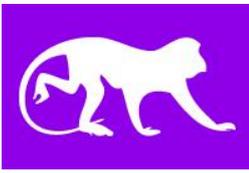
Day 3 **Gunung Leuser National Park**

Wildlife Watching

Today we had breakfast in the small garden at the accommodation, whilst we had the fresh fruit and breakfast next to the river we had a troop of Thomas's langur waking up and beginning their day opposite us. Just before we set off to walk to the park entrance we also spotted a larger troop of long-tailed macaques. At 08:30 we left and walked the 10 minutes along the river bank and took the dingy over the river to the entrance. Today we would visit the feeding platform, however since the rehabilitation centre had been moved from Bukit Lawang to a location deeper into the jungle and away from the growing population the sightings of the orang-utans at the feeding platform has drastically reduced. We waited for around 1 hour at the feeding platform but it was apparent that no orang-utans were going to make an appearance here this morning. Before we set off into the forest to find wild orang-utans we found a huge female golden orb spider in a web that must have spanned 3-4m across a clearing near the feeding platform. The large female was around 20-25cm across and on closer inspection a much smaller male was on her



body attempting to transfer the spermatophore to her in order to mate. This is a very dangerous job for the males as the females are many times larger and completely blind. So the males have to tickle the webs at a favourable frequency so that she knows he is not food. Once the sperm package has been delivered he will make a hasty retreat. The outskirts of the females webs are often full of these smaller males all waiting for their opportunity to try their luck with her. We also heard the morning calls of white-handed gibbons as we waited at the feeding platform. As we began the trek through the very hilly and rugged terrain of Gunung Leuser National Park our guide Adi (helped by our trekking assistant Kimino) showed us some of the medicinal plants that are of importance to the local people, including a diarrhoea cure and the needle flower which acts as an antihistamine. It wasn't long until we started to see evidence of orang-utans including nests some of them only 1-2 days old. Climbing further up the hill as the gibbons continued their calling we also heard the lower pitched calls of siamangs in the distance. Sumatra has three species of gibbons found in Sumatra where all high on our list to see during our tour and whilst siamangs are seldom seen in Gunung Leuser we were relatively confident of seeing the white-handed gibbons. Even though it is the dry season the forest of Gunung Leuser receives heavy rainfall nearly daily and so there was an incredible variety of different fungi along the trails and all over the trees. As we continued our hike through the dense forest we came across a playful group of Thomas's langurs. The group was around 15 strong and contained many youngsters, at first it was the youngsters running back and forth, bouncing and swinging acrobatically about the trees with incredible skill. But soon enough it seemed that all of the langurs in the group (with the exception of the dominant male who just sat quietly overseeing everything) joined in the fun. We watched for around 20 minutes as the group chased each other (play fighting when they caught one another) all over this small patch of forest. The pace that they climbed the tree trunks and jumped from branch to branch, springing off some and leaping high off others was amazing to watch. This was one of the wildlife highlights of the whole trip, it was such a nice experience as we just came across this group playing, there are many wildlife encounters that you share with a large group of people or seem too 'staged' but this was a purely wild experience sharing 20 minutes with this group of langurs as they carried out their normal bonding behaviours. We would have stayed with these intriguing langurs for longer but Kimino who had gone ahead of us had phones Adi to let us know that a mother and baby orang-utan had been spotted not too far away. We decided to leave the langurs and climb up the hill towards the orang-utans. The climb was quite hard and steep but once we got to the narrow ridge at the top of the hill we quickly found a small group of people looking up into the trees a female orang-utan and her infant (around 4 years old) looking for fruits in the tree tops. The small group of people quickly developed into a large group of people and with not every local guide being professional Martin, Tom and a couple of other tourist had to tell him not to give fruit to his clients to feed the orang-utans. This is incredibly unhelpful to the orang-utans who have gone through long processes of rehabilitation to wean them off human dependency and to become wild orang-utans again. This process is very successful when adhered to, but bad guiding practises such as this undermine the whole process and I was pleased that the other guide reactions were as negative towards this guide as ours were. Adi would later report him to the park officials, who operate a 3 strike policy for breaching the feeding rules. As the group of tourists got bigger and bigger and the mother was getting noticeably stressed we left to have lunch in a quieter part of the forest. However this was not before we had a chance to have great sightings of the mother and infant as she moved through the canopy (due to use being on a ridge the tops of these trees were not towering above us and so the orang-utans were in a good distance from us for photographs. Particularly when the mother came to the ground, this is a legacy of her interactions with people through her youth and care at the rehabilitation centre. It takes a long time for orang-utans to disassociate people with possible hand outs and with incompetent guides still feeding them, some of the orang-utans will still come down to the ground in an attempt to get food from people. It was nice to see the mother so close (only around 3m away from Marie as Marie got some fantastic close up shots), the infant also came down to the ground briefly before the mother encouraged it to climb back into the trees, where it stayed around 8ft off the ground watching and taking everything in. One of the major differences between Bornean and Sumatran orang-utans is that Sumatran orang-utans have to share their habitat with tigers (which are absent from Borneo) and as a result they tend to spend less time on the ground, build their nests higher up and also the infants have a longer dependency with their mother as they have to learn how to avoid predation. The habitat is also slightly different and there are less fruit and so the young orang-utans have to spend more time learning which plants are edible etc. Watching the infant intently watching the mother was amazing to see, their intelligence is so obvious and fascinating to watch. The infant had found a coconut husk somewhere in the forest and was carrying it around and playing with it. After the crowd got larger we left and went to have a jungle dinner, which was nasi goreng and juicy pineapple in a nice clearing. After lunch we carried on hiking around the forest in search of more wildlife. As we were eating we were joined by some of the many species of ants that inhabit the forest, including some giant forest ants. These beasts measure around 5-7cm long and seem to be solitary foragers. We watched the ants scurrying around the fallen pieces of rice and drops of pineapple juice before we all left our lunch spot and headed back onto the trail of wildlife. Most of the rest of the afternoon was spent walking up and down the steep hillsides that dominate the Gunung Leuser National Park. We came across more Thomas langur monkeys feeding in the forest and shortly after leaving the langurs we found a large troop of long-tailed macaques moving through the forest and after watching them until they were quite annoyed with us and some of the younger males started to throw sticks down at us we left and Tom spotted a very well camouflaged Malayan vine snake slithering through a bush next to the path. We then left the forest and headed back through the village of Bukit Lawang and once at the accommodation we were treated to great behaviours of a very large troop of long-tailed macaques feeding (including washing their



food), playing and grooming on the banks of the river. It was great to watch the babies and infants jumping from rock to rock and splashing around, it was very reminiscent of a typical Mediterranean beach summer scene. Before dark we headed back into the village for dinner before hitting the hay and preparing to do it all again tomorrow.

Day 4 **Gunung Leuser National Park**

Wildlife Watching

This morning we once again breakfasted on the river before heading into the forest again at 8:30, this time we went to the other side of the forest near the bat cave. To enter this area of the park we walked through a rubber plantation, where every tree had been tapped and the white latex was filling the wooden bowls. As we walked into the forest Adi showed up numerous medicinal plants including the kidney plant that helps with, well kidney complaints. We were also shown some of the numerous food plants such as ferns, fruits and the narcotic and very popular betel leaf. Early on we heard close gibbon calls and so we followed the sounds to see if we could catch up with them. We spent a long time hiking through the forest and it seemed that every time we reached the ridge line the gibbons had moved to the next valley over. We searched for them for over an hour until we started to hear their calls getting quieter and quieter. It was at this point that we climbed to a narrow peak and right above us and completely unexpected was a young adult male orang-utan feeding. He was around 15m above us and we watched him feeding until more people arrived and the narrow peak began to get quite crowded and the orang-utan began to move into more and more inaccessible areas. We then left this area to see if we could maybe catch up with the gibbons or maybe find another orang-utan. It wasn't long after leaving this area when we received news that not far away 4 orang-utans had been seen in a valley; so we headed there and once we arrived Tom and Marie headed down the slope into the valley and to where a mother and baby (around 2-3 years old) and 2 sub-adult orang-utans were feeding. We all had excellent views of these 4 orang-utans as they moved through the trees, interacted with each other, using some of their distance calls for communication (despite being usually solitary the orang-utan has a wide and varied vocal repertoire for communication); hearing some of the squeaks, grunts and coughs as well as watching the infant learning from his mother how to climb safely through the trees and also how to find the best food plants to eat. As many of the rainforest plants defend themselves against predators such as orang-utans they produce toxins which start to be secreted when the plant is under attack, so a crucial element of survival for any animal that feeds on a variety of rainforest leaves is when to stop eating certain species. This is crucial so that the animal does not ingest too much of the toxins that the plant produces in response to being eaten.

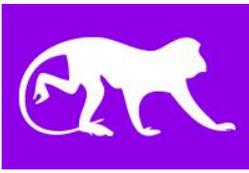
After returning to the ridge line above the valley we spotted the mother and baby as they moved higher up the slope. They were now at eye level and we could watch as they moved slowly along the slope. We moved a little further along the ridge and away from most of the people who had now aggregated around the 4 orang-utans. Also around the orang-utans were a large troop of long-tailed macaques, these much smaller primates were occupying the ground and the understorey whilst the orang-utans foraged in the lower canopy. To add to this primate cacophony Thomas langurs were also foraging around and as the mother and infant moved further along the ridge towards us we got great views of the infant feeding, and the mother bending the branches and lianas towards her and using her weight to move between trees. We could also see (in one of Marie's) pictures that the mother had a severe cataract in her right eye. Possibly she has made a conscious decision to hang around with the 2 sub-adults because her vision is getting worse and the other orang-utans will provide a little extra protection but also help in navigating between valleys and ridges. From what we could see the cataract didn't affect her movements but being around other orang-utans maybe beneficial in her condition. We walked further along the ridge to a nice section of path with a clearing in the trees that allowed for good views out over the opposite valley. After lunch we started to head back all the way down to the river and towards the entrance to the forest; this was a good hike through the forest and brought us past some huge rock formations including the Ship Cave, before getting to a nice secluded stream surrounded by smooth rocks, pebbles and a cliff face that had been worn smooth over thousands of years. After we left the forest and headed back through the rubber plantation we saw many Thomas langurs travelling along before we made it back to the village. In the evening the heavens opened and a huge storm thundered down. We ate again in the village and in the evening prepared for our return to Jakarta tomorrow.



Day 5 **Jakarta**

Travelling

Today was another travelling day and so we had a relaxing morning at the cottages with breakfast overlooking the river once again. Today though we were treated to great views of a family of white-handed gibbons who serenaded



us in conjunction with a changeable-hawk eagle. The eagle perched statically in a distant tree and the gibbons energetically brachiating from tree to tree along the edge of the forest. It was a great way to spend our last hour or so at Gunung Leuser and after a hard morning's pursuit of the gibbons yesterday it was welcome relief that they had come to us this morning. We then left the cottages and walked to the main village where our car and driver (Ferri) was waiting, we loaded up and after a few uneventful hours we arrived in Medan in time for our flight back to the capital. We checked into the same hotel near the airport in Jakarta and had dinner before retiring to the room. Tomorrow would be another early start as we headed across the islands eastwards towards the very different and internationally famous Komodo National Park.

Day 6 Komodo National Park

Travelling & Wildlife Watching

At 4am we left the hotel to catch our first flight to Denpasar, the largest city on the holiday island of Bali. From there we had a couple of hours to relax and have a late breakfast – early lunch in the airport before we caught our second flight to the largest town in western Flores and the gateway to the Komodo National Park, Labuan Bajo. Once we arrived immediately the difference in the environment struck us, the climate was much drier the air hot and dry with the land parched and without the dense tropical growth that was so abundant in Sumatra. These islands in Indonesia are very dry and very different from elsewhere, these islands have formed land bridges with the Australasia and the wildlife here is a diverse mix of both Asiatic and Australasian. There are cockatoos mixing with deer and of course the Komodo dragons themselves; however the origin of the dragons is not conclusive. Some scientists point to a huge ancestor of the monitors *Megalania* that would have grown to over 7m long and inhabited Australia up until around 10,000 years ago. They believe that monitor lizards evolved in Australia (there is very good evidence for this) and that the Komodo dragon is a direct descendant of the giant *Megalania* and that it experienced island dwarfism (a common evolutionary phenomenon that occurs when large animals adapt to smaller island habitats). However there is another school of thought (and up until recently this was the accepted theory), that Komodo dragons arrived in the form of smaller monitors that are common on many of the other islands in Indonesia and over time experienced another evolutionary phenomenon called island gigantism. This is the opposite of island dwarfism and is where the usually small animals adapt to an island habitat (usually by being the dominant species) by growing larger. Whichever direction the dragons arrived from (East or West) and whether they shrunk or grew is a moot point when you consider that the 5 islands that are encompassed by Komodo National Park are now the only places in the world where the 3,500-5,000 remaining Komodo dragons exist. Despite the largest remaining population occurring on the island of Flores these dragons are very inaccessible and tend to be quite small and shy away from people. So we would only be visiting 2 of the other islands in search of the dragons, these islands being the namesake Komodo and the very special Rinca.

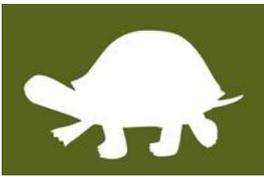
So once we arrived at the airport and had collected our bags our driver Fanni was waiting for us and took us direct to the harbour. Once we here we met Jeffry, who organised the boat and crew for us and we boarded the traditional (almost junk type) boat. The crew consisted of the captain Ambo, his 2 mates Juran and Egcho and our translator (as the crew spoke very little English – although as it turned out neither did the translator!) Cresti. We would not be able to get all of the way to Komodo Island today and it is not safe to travel in these waters at night, due to sand bars and reefs as well as strong currents and the occasional whirlpools formed by the currents and shallow waters. So we set off and planned to spend the night somewhere close to Komodo, so that in the morning we could get there in time for the dragons as they started they daily routine. Along the way we had some fantastic sightings including hunting white-bellied sea eagles, one of which swooped down and caught a fish near to us; mobula rays breaching from the surface, most likely in an attempt to rid themselves of parasites; a very lively pod of spinner dolphins who enjoyed playing and doing their typical spinning jumps in our wake and a more sedate pod of hunting common bottlenose dolphins who swam by us just as the sun was beginning to disappear beyond the horizon. We anchored and had dinner just off Papa Garam Island in between Komodo and Rinca Islands. The water being so calm here that once the sun had completely gone the boat seemed to hover in a pitch black space that was only punctuated by the odd passing light representing a small fishing boat chugging by.

But even after dark we were not done with the wildlife, the boats lights attracted many kinds of insects that in turn attracted small fish and crabs to the surface to feed on the insects as they fall and land on the water and cannot get back up. But the lights also attracted beautiful bright red squid from the deep. However as soon as we shone a torch directly on the squid they would turn ghostly white and sink back down into the gloom; making pictures impossible. But the most numerous visitor that night were the bats, dozens of Philippine horseshoe bats took to the air around the boat and skimming close to the water entertained us as they caught and fed on hundreds of small insects. It was a little strange to see so many bats over the ocean but it was also easy to forget that we were surrounded by islands and the bats had a huge supply of food here and they didn't have to travel very far to exploit it.

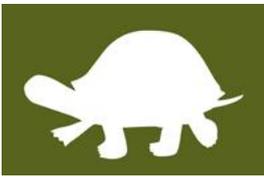
Eventually tiredness from a long day overtook us all and we headed to our cabins, tomorrow we would be on the quest for dragons and we hoped to not be disappointed.

Day 7 Komodo & Rinca Islands

Wildlife Watching



At 5am the boats engines roared into life and we started to move off towards Komodo. The morning was stunning with the sun lighting the entire sea up a beautiful red colour. We were escorted by three magnificent frigate birds as they left their roosts and started to glide and ride the thermals ready for a day chasing and harassing other sea birds in their piratical fashion. The sea was so calm (a perfect Beaufort 0) and as we skirted the coast of Komodo to get to the harbour we saw many birds including great-crested terns, wedge-tailed shearwaters, great-billed herons, grey herons, striated herons and a white-breasted sea eagle; who gave us particularly good views. We also had a brief but impressive display of 'flight' by flying fish. We arrived at Komodo harbour at around 7:30 and disembarked onto the island straight away. We actually saw one of the island's famous residents early on as Martin spotted a dragon walking along the beach whilst we were still coming into the harbour. On the way to the park headquarters we walked through a small bachelor herd of rusa deer. This species, along with the horses, water buffalo and goats that now provide major sources of food for the dragons were all introduced by people in the last 200 years. After the necessary paperwork we and our allocated guide, Rakman, started out into the island. We decided to walk along the Loh Liang walk, and very quickly we were rewarded with brown-capped pygmy woodpecker as we looked at the giant megapod nest. Rakman also told us the various tree species around the island such as the kapok, tamarind tree, cotton trees and also about the giant palms that only flower once in 30 years and then they die. The bird life was also very good with many green junglefowl feeding in the scrub and we also found a nesting pair of yellow-crested cockatoos in the top of an old palm. We arrived at a waterhole and found many rusa deer as well as green junglefowl, green imperial pigeons and Wallacean drongos. We also came across a huge male Komodo dragon sleeping next to the small waterhole. This enormous beast was at least 2.7m long and lay spread out as if begging for some unsuspecting tourist to lay down next to him to measure himself before a swift turn and snap and the tourist would be no more. This male was estimated at around 30 years old and he didn't even flinch when a much smaller (around 1.7m) female arrived and walked straight to the waterhole to drink. This female was estimated at around 15 years old and had probably not successfully raised a clutch of eggs to hatching age. Learning where to lay the eggs and how to adequately protect the nest before she abandons it, is critically important and also information that takes a few years to figure it out. Rakman also pointed out many bright green snails climbing all over a tree next to the road, seeing snails in such a dry and arid habitat is a little strange. Less strange were the skinks that scuttled in the undergrowth as we walked along the dry pathways. Beautiful purple orchids bloomed all over a kalupnag tree and we were also shown the unusual nitak tree with its large seed pods containing coffee like seeds. Up on top of Sulphurea hill we had great views out across the harbour bay and also across most of the island. The dry and desolate heart of which looked very uninviting for any animal other than the tough and hardy Komodo dragons. As we descended the hill to head to the ranger station where the very large dragons aggregate (thanks to the feed scrapes that they are fed outside the ranger's kitchen), we had a brief view of a gorgeous snake the endemic lesser Sunda bronzeback. At the ranger station we found around 6-8 very large dragons (mostly large adult males) all between 2.7 – 3.2m long. We were taking pictures of one individual who was sound asleep basking next to the pathway when he decided that Martin was stood in the exact bit of shade that he wanted to cool down in. The dragon quickly (and it is amazing how swiftly these animals can move) got up and came towards Martin, who backing off and with Rakman using his staff to fend off the dragon managed to get a safe distance away. However once again the same dragon made a bee-line for Martin a second time. Exactly why this particular dragon had taken a dislike to Martin was beyond us, but we didn't hang around to stress the animal out anymore or possibly find out what happens when a dragon evades the staff and gets too close for comfort. We stayed around the ranger station for a few more minutes getting great close up shots of the basking and sleeping dragons, watching as occasionally one would get up and move from the sun to a patch of shade to cool down or from the shade to the sun to warm up; depending on what period of their thermoregulatory cycle they were on. After a cool drink on the way back to the boat we boarded and headed out to Rinca Island. Along the way Martin spotted a green turtle breathing at the surface, but it didn't resurface and we carried on to the island. The first thing that hits you compared with Komodo was the lush mangrove forest fringing most of the shore. In the mangroves were many heron species as well as a foraging troop of the widespread and opportunistic long-tailed macaques. Walking amongst the upright roots picking out crabs, shells and other tidbits left in the mud from the high tide. We disembarked and met our new guide Agus and where taken to the small ranger station, where once again (where there is food there are dragons) a large collection of large dragons lay, hissing and jostling every now and again for space. We trekked around the Loh Buaya area, this is also called crocodile pier as a short while ago a large 4m long saltwater crocodile was seen around the jetty. Saltwater crocodiles were once very common in the waters around the Lesser Sunda islands but they are now locally extinct, or at least so people thought. However currently the crocodile has not been seen for a while. Along the walk we visited different ecosystems, there is a great range of vegetation on Rinca than on Komodo and the forest is much denser and home to a great variety of birdlife. Amongst the birds seen here were green-imperial pigeon, barred doves, black-naped oriole, great tits, blue-tailed bee-eaters, olive-backed sunbirds, Flores jungle flycatchers and black kites circling above the ranger cabin. In the forest Tom and Marie had the most amazing sighting of a young water buffalo who refused to move out of the path and it took some great 'persuasion' from Agus in order to carry on. Shortly after this they came across a small pool with a water buffalo nearby and as they waited around the waterhole a large dragon came out, walked towards them and all of a sudden caught their scent on its large yellow tongue and moved off in another direction. They hoped for the dragon to attack the buffalo but this didn't happen. However on closer inspection it may be that the buffalo has already been bitten and the dragon is just following the buffalo and waiting for the dragon's venom to weaken the buffalo sufficiently for it to be safe for



the dragon to go in for the kill. Recent scientific evidence suggests that it is not infection (as Komodo dragons mouths and saliva are no more bacteria ridden than many other animals) but instead venom injected into the animal through venom glands at the base of the jaw and delivered by the teeth. Further along they visited the sight where the BBC filmed their famous Komodo dragon capture for Sir David Attenborough Zoo Quest back in the 1950's. Before arriving back at the ranger station and heading back to the boat they spotted a wild pig and also a female Komodo dragon guarding her nest. After leaving the island we headed along to Kalong island, this small and densely forested island has become the very-safe-from-predators-home to thousands of bats of various species. We anchored and waited for sunset and on the onset of sunset the trees to one side of the forest began to erupt in a stream of silhouetted flying foxes. This stream quickly became a river that ran into a huge plume as the bats left their day roosts and travelled to the larger islands around Kalong Island. There are three species of flying foxes known from the island and due to size differences they were just about identifiable and included Island flying foxes, giant flying foxes and Sunda flying foxes. After the sun had made seeing the bats very hard we left Kalong and headed to shallower water where we would sleep tonight. After anchoring and having dinner we looked over board again for any marine life, there was not the same proliferation of life as the night before however Marie did spot a wonderfully marked young banded krait. This highly venomous snake is one reasonable for a large number of fatalities in Aisa each year and we were quite pleased when we realised it was too small to climb aboard, despite its arduous attempts to get out of the sea and find a resting place.

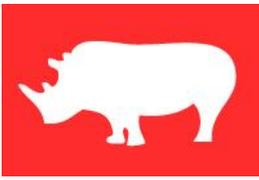
In the morning we would head back to Flores and begin our journey back to Sumatra via the bustling Bali and hectic Jakarta, so for tonight it was very nice to lie in the bed and listen to the silence of the open ocean. The stark difference between the pitch blackness and profound silence of the space like environment and the neon lit and never sleeping city of Jakarta and the tourist heavy Bali almost summing up the vast differences that can be experienced in the wonderful country of Indonesia.



Day 8 **Denpasar**

Travelling & Sightseeing

We lifted anchor at 7am and headed back through the Lesser Sundas until we reached the busy harbour town of Labuan Bajo. Along the way we stopped over a shallow reef, some goatfish were busy feeding on the bottom of the sandy floor and a white-bellied sea eagle swooped overhead. We also had good views of a collared kingfisher on a small island and arrived back at the harbour at around 9:30, here we were taken by our driver to briefly meet Jeffry and then to the nearby Batu Cemin cave, this cave is called Mirror Cave. However as we found out from our guide Christo that it is only in the wet season when the cave is flooded (and also funnily enough off limits to people) that the light from an opening high in the cave shines down on the still dark water and looks like a mirror. We felt like we had been had a little by false advertising but the cave formations themselves were impressive and the walk to the cave went past a traditional style (although modern) hut that the indigenous Banggui people would have built, and still do further inland. However it wasn't the amazing limestone formations formed by the vast amounts of fossilised coral that were the highlight of the cave for us, instead it was the two species of bats we found inhabiting the cave. Firstly the woolly looking Lombok horseshoe bat and the smaller broad-eared horseshoe bat. We then left the cave to catch our flight to Denpasar, the flight was on time and uneventful, on arriving in Bali the 'feel' of Indonesia changed once again and this time to the all too familiar touristy (almost Brits-abroad) atmosphere. However after a few days of staying in basic accommodation the luxury of the resort was a good change. We relaxed in the afternoon and Tom and Marie explored some of the nearby streets and their shops, we ate a seafood dinner in a restaurant on the main road near the hotel and prepared for another long day of travelling tomorrow and also getting back to the forests, this time to the south of Sumatra and a park where some of the rarest animals in the world live. The wildlife list including Sumatran rhinos, Sumatran tigers, sun bears, Sunda clouded leopards, Malay tapir, white-winged duck, Sunda slow loris, Storm's stork, siamang, false gharial, binturong and marbled cat is so inviting to any wildlife enthusiast and with a week to explore the park we hoped to see many of the common species and possibly one or two of the rare and elusive species listed above.

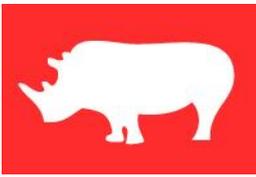


Day 9 **Way Kambas National Park** *Travelling & Wildlife Watching*

This morning was once again a very early start with our taxi driver Agus picking us up from the resort at 4:45am, we then flew from Denpasar to Jakarta and caught our connection to Bandar Lampung arriving at around 10am. We were met at the airport by our driver Roey and driven the 2 hours or so through the small villages towards Way Kambas National Park in the far south-east of Sumatra. On arrival we had lunch before meeting our guide Hari and being briefed by the lodge manager Shukan. Then at 5pm we headed into the forest for our first evening drive, shortly after entering the forest we had a male and female crested fireback cross the road. These impressive pheasants being quite common seen along the road in the mornings and evenings. We also saw red junglefowl before Hari found a very hard to spot lesser frogmouth and also the more energetic Prevost's and plentiful plantain squirrels. Once it was dark we started spotlighting along the road and had a possible lesser oriental mousedeer sighting followed by good (although quite far) views of a Sunda slow loris around 20m up a tree. The slow loris was feeding on leaves and occasionally looking at us with its saucer like eyes. We carried on down the 20km road towards Way Kanan ranger station and spotted a couple more oriental mousedeer that were identified as one greater and one lesser oriental mousedeer. We had our packed dinner at the ranger station in the presence of camouflaged large-forest geckos and wild boar feeding on the rafters and grassy lawn respectively. On the way back we had excellent views of a Malay civet walking along the road. The only other sighting we had before arriving back at the lodge was a roosting scarlet-breasted trogon. This was a fantastic start to our time in Way Kambas and tomorrow would be a relatively late start for the mammals as we had had such a long day today. So we hit the hay and prepared for our first full day in the rich and diverse forests of Way Kambas at 6am tomorrow.

Day 10 **Way Kambas National Park** *Wildlife Watching*

At 6am we started our journey down to Way Kanan station, we combined walking and driving along the road, we stopped off at a couple of small bridges, where the monsoonal run off is funnelled under the road and found a couple of species of bats roosting. The bats were identified as lesser sheath-tailed bats and lesser woolly horseshoe bats and whilst here we heard distance siamangs conducting their morning calls. Each group of siamangs calls intensely in the morning as a means of establishing their position in relation to other simang groups. This way the different groups can maintain their territories and protect their best fruiting trees. Hari is not along a wonderful mammal finder but he is bread and butter are the birds in the forest and by calling he quickly found a flock of little spiderhunters alarm calling and also allowed us to have wonderful views of a breeding pair of rufous piculet who were chasing each other back and forth across the road. We then set up one of Martin's camera traps on a well used muddy inlet, the amount of tracks was phenomenal and we were quite confident of getting something interesting. The tracks we could identify included long-tailed macques, sambar, muntjac and most interesting flat-headed cat. We then carried on driving a little further and had a brief view of a muntjac crossing the road and when we reached the point where it entered the forest the very loud alarm calls showed us clearly why the muntjac is also called the barking deer. The diversity of butterflies fluttering around the edges of the forest was incredible with yellows, whites, browns, blues and swallowtails all represented in great numbers. We then had a second muntjac sighting, this time a large male crossing the road around 50m away, this time staying in the road long enough for nice views, before disappearing into the forest. We then came across a pair of large black giant squirrels (although the colour morph most commonly seen in this part of Sumatra is more of a grizzled grey) basking on a large tree just to the side of the road. Once they noticed that we had noticed them, they climbed quickly along their pre-chosen route (we found this out as they were in the same tree nearly every morning we came this way and moved along the same route each time). We also stopped for a very persistent and bus dung beetle rolling his ball of dung in the middle of the rocky road, getting stuck every now and again on the small rocks and pebbles and having to run around to the other side of the ball and change direction. It was fun to watch the beetle at close quarters and feel its frustration at getting stuck all the time. The insect life was out in force this morning with large number of butterflies, dragonflies adding to the leaf insects, stick insects, dung beetle and of course the huge numbers of ants and termites. Near a very good tiger scraping site we found old tapir tracks and decided to set Martin's second camera trap hopeful for one of the forests' very rare inhabitants. Shortly after this we spotted some southern pig-tailed macaques, these larger cousins of the long-tailed macaques are usually found on the ground or understorey of the forest but they were outdone by the small group of siamangs we found above them. The group was made up of a male, female and one offspring. It was not the greatest views of the simangs but we did see them brachiate through



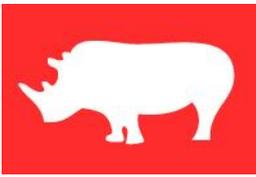
the trees as they moved deeper into the forest and away from us. We then reached Way Kanan station and before having breakfast searched some of the outbuildings and rafters for bats and found a roosting colony of greater short-nosed fruit bats and also a pair of lesser false vampire bats. After our packed breakfast we went back to the lodge for a brief rest with just a very weak and dying water monitor being the only notable sighting on the return journey, with the sun quite high in the sky now the best time for sightings had already past. After lunch we went back into the forest and quickly found a small troop of mitred langurs, these very skittish primates moved away from us very quickly into the forest and we only had brief views of them high in the trees above the road as they made their unusual and quite musical alarm call. The birding was also good again this afternoon with many scaly-crowned babblers, hairy-backed bulbuls and crested firebacks being the highlights. We were then rewarded for our neck aching spotting efforts by better views of mitred langurs as they jumped and played in the large fig trees close to the road, they were still very high up but they were visible through large gaps in the foliage. They moved from tree to tree with huge jumps that made them seem like they were glided down to the lower branches of unseen tree. We had particularly nice views of a female and her young as she carried it, the baby clinging tightly to her belly as she leaped a huge leap and away out of sight. As the sun began to sink behind the trees we saw a lesser oriental mousedeer cross the road and also found the same troop of mitred langur as they began to settle into their roosting tree for the night. We didn't hang around them this time as they are very easily disturbed and we didn't want to affect their roosting. Also going to roost were many crested firebacks who roosted in the low branches directly over the road; once the sun had completely gone we started spotlighting and after a very slow start we spotted a lesser oriental mousedeer and then Hari and Marie had brief views of the very elusive and fast PEN-tailed treeshrew in a dense tangle of vines. This is their typical habitat and as Hari had seen one here before we would come back on other nights and try and find this very unusual and cool species again. After dinner at Way Kanan station we had fantastic views of a Malay civet, close to the ranger station, this individual often forages around the rubbish dump at the station. The rangers also shared some of their jambu, this local guava was very refreshing. The rest of the journey was quite slow with some good frogmouth (both lesser and Javan) sightings, a lone female sambar a masked palm civet being the sum of our efforts. Once back at the lodge and on the way to our rooms Marie spotted dark-eared tree frog in a small pond. Tomorrow would be a much earlier start as we carried our quest to see as many of the wonderful mammal species in the forest.



Day 11 Way Kambas National Park

Wildlife Watching

This morning we started at 4am and headed down a different road, this road skirts the boundary of the national park and the agricultural land to the east. The road also leads to the elephant sanctuary and the crops attract the wild herd of elephants out of the forest. Hari knows a man who works on the elephant patrol and he had not reported the elephants being near the fields but you never know and we hoped for elephant sightings alongside other wildlife. We firstly came across a sleeping troop of long-tailed macaques and left them in peace before Martin spotted a flat-headed cat trotting along down the road ahead of us. As we moved closer the elusive cat moved off into the forest and we couldn't find it closer. Further along a female sambar deer with her fawn crossed the road with the baby staying on the road and trying to find an easy place to cross the drainage ditch on the side of the road. As the youngster made his mind up we had some great views. Then as we reached the gateway to the elephant sanctuary we had great views of a hunting leopard cat, this common small cat gets its name from the yellowish coat covered in black spots and they often walk along the side of the forested roads and roads that dissect crop fields in search of rodents that leave the safety of cover and try to cross the road. On our return to the national park entrance we had great views of long-tailed nightjars, both flying and also perched on the ground and branches. We then entered the park and drove down towards Way Kanan station once again, as usual in the morning we had many crested firebacks on the road and also Hari spotted a red-naped trogon. This beautiful bird was revealed his location thanks to the mimicry of Hari. All along the road this morning we heard siamangs, we were able to identify at least 3 different groups but none of them seemed to be close enough to the road for us to try and find them unfortunately. We enjoyed some great birding with Hari finding species such as emerald doves, rufous-winged philentoma, little-green pigeons, greater-racket tailed drongos, red-billed malkoha, fluffy-backed tit-babbler, black-throated babblers and yellow-crested flowerpeckers to name but a few. We then passed the black giant squirrels in the same place as yesterday and watched as they followed the same route as yesterday and away into the forest, we also heard agile gibbon calling further down towards the river but never did see this elusive ape. The only highlight from this morning drive were some more nice bats in some of the small drainage bridges under the road and we identified this species as the small-disc roundleaf bat. We then returned to the lodge and waited out the hottest part of the day



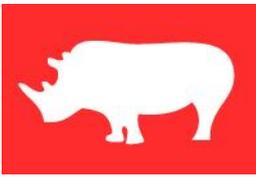
before heading back into the park at around 4pm. This time we drove a little quicker towards Way Kanan as we would take a boat ride along the Way Kanan River. The only animal we saw of note along the road to the station was a lesser adjutant stork that Martin spotted in the muddy pool where the first camera trap was set up. After arriving at the station and boarding the boat we set off along the Way Kanan River towards the coastline, we would not go that far and instead stick close to the dense sections of forest, mangroves and also grassy pastures that skirted the river. Along most of the river were long-tailed macaques, these very versatile primates have another common name, the crab-eating macaque, a name they get from their preferred habitat of mangroves where they forage at low tide for crabs and other morsels left by the retreating water. The macaques were very prominent along the river, feeding, playing, fighting and resting in many of the trees and bushes. We also saw a nice troop of silvered langurs, these monkeys also stay close to the river around here but are no opportunistic foragers like the macaques. Instead these monkeys live in smaller family groups and feed on leaves and some fruits. Also along the river we saw many species of birds including stork-billed kingfishers, white-breasted waterhens, oriental magpie robins, blue-eared kingfishers and blue-throated bee-eaters. As we approached one particularly large troop of long-tailed macaques we were singled out for some abuse from an adolescent male who climbed high above us and started shaking the dead tree he was in until many bits of bark and branches rained down on us. This strong display led us to take notice and slowly move on away, as we did so we noticed a beautifully coloured Prevost's squirrel moving quickly amongst the same tree as many of this troop of macaques. After another group of silvered langurs moving quickly through the trees, jumping widely between the different trees; Hari found a hatchling reticulated python curled up in a tree overhanging the river. When he is fully grown he could be amongst the longest snakes in the world but at only around 75cm he was not long out of his egg and instead of a super predator was himself potentially food for many species, so he made full use of his camouflage and made it very hard for us to see him well. As the sun began to set we watched as another troop of macaques started to settle down for the night in their roosts over the river. By choosing small and thin branches over the river they reduced the chances of being picked off by clouded leopards and marbled cats, even if one of the cats did brave the thin branches the macaques have a quick escape plan as they can just drop into the river and being good swimmers escape to safety. When it was fully dark the waters started to bubble as hundreds of small fish started to jump out of the river, these fish come upstream from the sea to spawn and they create a great spectacle as they all fight for mates and prime egg laying locations upstream. We also spotlighted various salt-water crocodiles between 30cm and 1.5m long as well as a buffy-fish owl who posed nicely for us on an overhanging tree trunk. After we arrived back at the station we had dinner and then spotlighted our way back to the lodge. Tonight we were treated to incredible views of a large-spotted civet walking down the road just ahead of us (around 10-15m distance) for 15 minutes. The civet foraging along the forest edge as well as scent marking occasionally, to see this often secretive species for so long this close was incredible and spend the time just slowly following and watching as he went about his normal routine was a privilege we all felt honoured to have. The civet was so relaxed with our presence that we even got out of the car and followed him on foot until we were about 1.8m away, this was just an incredible and amazing sighting and when we went into the forest we carried on, leaving him to his business on his own. Before we made it make to the lodge we also spotted a lesser oriental mousedeer, a pair of brown hawk owls and a Sunda slow loris very close to the lodge, in fact in the village, but this sighting was very distant.



Day 12 Way Kambas National Park

Wildlife Watching

This morning we started at 5am and headed into the park and once again towards Way Kanan station, there was very little very early this morning but as the sun began to rise a little we did find a lesser tree shrew running about in the trees in the same area as many understory birds such as Raffles malkoha, rufous piculet, hairy-backed tit-babbler and scarlet minivets. As we continued, half by car and half on foot we came to a huge and perfectly circular golden orb spider's web, we stopped here for pictures as the enormous female glistened in the morning sunlight and the web glittering in the morning due. Right above the road we also found a female siamang with her offspring, we watched as they hurriedly woke up (after they had noticed us watching them) and they moved powerfully yet gracefully through the trees, presumably towards the male of the family group who must have moved away earlier. It was quite quiet this morning and apart from the varied array of butterflies the rest of the drive to the station was uneventful, we then had breakfast and started our return journey. Along the way there was some heavy rainfall so we cut short the walking sections of the journey and drove back to the lodge. Amongst the lodge grounds the sunbirds and resident population of common tree shrews were always entertaining. After dinner at the lodge we left for our evening spotlighting session at around 6pm and around half way towards the rhino sanctuary junction we

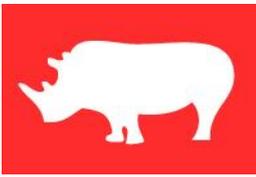


had a very good albeit brief leopard cat view. The leopard cat was just sat on the side of the road and once we stopped it jumped onto a nearby log and stared at us for a couple of second before slinking off into the forest in the way that only cats can do. We also had a muntjac in the undergrowth and a masked palm civet high the branches of a large fig tree before we reached Way Kanan station and turned around. Once again we had great views of a large-spotted civet, it was in the same general area as the one we followed for 15 minutes yesterday and in all likelihood was the same individual. We decided not to disturb him again for very long today and left to see what else we would find further up the trail. The only other animal we saw along the this road was a red giant flying squirrel very high in the canopy and then before we returned to the lodge we drove up and down the road to the elephant sanctuary, but the night mirrored the day in being very quiet and only one common palm civet was seen along this road.

Day 13 Way Kambas National Park

Wildlife Watching

This morning Shukan had arranged for us to visit the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary deep inside the park, the Sumatran rhino is one of the worlds most endangered species with only around 250 thought to remain in the wild and with deforestation and poaching still rife throughout its entire range. This project has established itself at the top end of rhino conservation in South East Asia and since 1997 has had unprecedented success in breeding this rare and notoriously difficult species. In fact the Sumatran rhino had been kept in captivity for over 100 years at various institutions around the world, including the very zoo that Tom works at. It is a great coincidence that the last rhino that the Aspinall family owned was given back to Sumatra and lived out his days in the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary. Unfortunately he did not breed successfully but he was such a magnificent specimen that when he died his skeleton was kept and mounted in the small museum at the sanctuary. We paid a visit to Tore Gamba whilst we were at the sanctuary and the Sumari the head of the sanctuary spoke very highly and affectionately about Tore Gamba and how he died of kidney failure in 2011. Tore Gamba was born in November 1985, he was given back to Sumatra in January 1998, when he died in April 2011 he had reached the age of 26, which is not very old for a rhino. But before we made it to the sanctuary we did some wildlife spotting along the forest road and watched as a very lonely long-tailed macaque foraged on the road in front of us. He would pick up pieces of fruit, plant or insect matter from the floor, carefully cleaning it and picking off various bits before eating it. He has a fresh wound on his head and is probably a male who has fallen out of favour with the dominant male of the troop and is now in the process of finding a new troop who will accept him. Once we arrived at the sanctuary we were introduced to Sumari and told that the reserve currently has 5 rhinos. The sanctuary is built in the middle of the forest, so that the rhinos have access to all of the same plants and conditions as the wild rhinos in the national park, it is possibly this very wild habitat that has contributed to the breeding success here. The pens are all 20 hectares each and arranged in a circle, the rhinos have one section each but are rotated around so that they have in affect a home range of 100 hectares and also get the added enrichment of different rhinos scent marking. This is as close to a natural environment as it is possible to have and still afford full and comprehensive protection for this very vulnerable species. Each of the sections has its own cleaning and veterinary section, whilst the rhinos are free to feed on the plants in the forest they are supplemented each morning by fruits and vegetables that they love, this enables the scientists and keepers (each rhino has a dedicated keeper) to check for any illness or other problems. They are screen for diseases such as foot and mouth by making everyone one walk through an anti-bacterial dip before you get close to the animals. Tom was astounded by the level of professionalism here and coming from someone who has worked on the rhino section at one of the UK's leading zoos this is high praise indeed. Out of the 5 rhinos here there are 2 males (one of which was born here) and 3 females and one of these females Bina was a wild caught rhino who started to wander out of the forest and into the local villages near another national park further north from Way Kambas. She completely lost her fear of people and would walk along side people and almost look for their attention. This was a dangerous situation for both her and the local people, as she is still a big and powerful animal and also poachers could have heard about this and killed her. So the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary where called to take her to the sanctuary, her age is estimated at 32 years old and so she most likely has a good 10-15 years left and hopefully will produce 2-3 calves in that time. When we arrived Bina was having her medical check and we had incredible close views of this seldom seen animal as it walked out into the forest, ate some of the food provided, rubbed her horns on a tree, urine sprayed and then wandered off into the dense forest and away. The urine spraying and horn rubbing was particularly interested to see as these are very wild behaviours and used to establish territories and pass on information about the individual rhino such as receptiveness to breeding etc. As Bina walked off into the forest we too returned to the base camp of the sanctuary, also around the sanctuary we saw a Prevost's squirrel, mitred langur and long-tailed macaques. We had a very interesting talk with Sumari about the rhinos here, their plans for the future, reintroductions, wild rhinos that had been seen (one of which with a new born calve which is incredibly good news), camera trap data and also the plight of the even more endangered Javan rhino, that makes the Sumatran rhino look common! After we returned from the sanctuary it was during the heat of the mid-afternoon, so we just rested and relaxed this afternoon before heading back to the forest with Hari in the last afternoon. We would have another boat safari along the Way Kanan River, on the way down to the station we saw a high number of emerald doves feeding on the road, whether the rains yesterday had released some of the salts from the clay based soil we didn't know but the emerald doves were out in force this afternoon. However the emerald doves were pretty much the only animals we did see along the drive to the station. As we boarded the boat



we were shown the dead body of a 2m long saltwater crocodile that had been found upstream and brought her to see if there was any evidence of poaching, however it appeared that the animal had died of natural causes. Once again along the river we saw many troops of long-tailed macaques and also the hatchling reticulated python in the same bushy tree over hanging the river. Having clearly found a good and safe place this young snake will most likely spend most of its time in the same area until it has grown enough to feel more confident to move about the forest in the open. The sunset was beautiful over the river and in the fading light we also found a mangrove snake, once again in an overhanging tree, this species is venomous but a back-fanged snake. This means that in order for the venom to be injected the snake has to 'chew' on its prey and get the venom-loaded fangs at the back of the mouth into contact with the prey. We also found a sounder of wild boar foraging along a grassy meadow on the river bank and also had nice views of a greater oriental mousedeer feeding in the forested river bank. When we started to spotlight we once again saw many crocodiles but the rest of the evening was quiet, even when we returned to the station and after dinner, drove back to the lodge we only found the same large-spotted civet as previous days, a common palm civet and 2 unidentified animals deep in the forest, most likely oriental mousedeer but we couldn't be sure.



Day 14 Way Kambas National Park

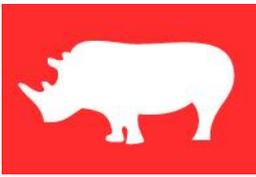
Wildlife Watching

This morning we started at 4:30am and drove down the road towards the elephant sanctuary, the forest was very quiet this morning with only a long-tailed and a savanna nightjars being spotted. We breakfasted in the forest with a pair of Malaysian blue flycatchers busily catching their breakfast around us. We found a pair of silvered langurs just waking up and also nice views of Prevost's squirrel in the same tree. The morning light was stunning for photography and the butterflies and dragonflies were once again out in force. We also had some great birding with many different malkohas including chestnut-billed, chestnut-crested and Raffles all being seen. We also had sightings of Malaysian honeyguide, crested treeswift, black-naped monarch, black-and-yellow broadbill and black magpies. We headed as far as the second camera trap and swapped over the memory card to see if we had anything (we didn't) and along the way to this point we had excellent views of a Diard's trogon as well as a 4 saimangs over the road. We watched them moving quickly through the trees for around 10 minutes, this being by far the best views we had had of the world's largest gibbon species. We heard another group of saimangs calling off in the distance and watched at this group of 4 moved off quickly yet silently towards the rival group. The fact that they remained silent is a probable sign that the other group is larger than theirs or at least sounds it, so they would want to see if they can get close enough to see the size of the group before making their position known as they may be vulnerable to a challenge. The only other sighting of note this morning was a nice male muntjac who came out and crossed the road close by us. This afternoon we drove back down to the elephant sanctuary road and found a couple of large wild boar running across the road and a common palm civet climbing a tree. Then we tried the road down to Way Kanan station and as this morning and last night the road was very quiet. It is strange how the same roads at the same times can be so busy with wildlife and then so quiet, the reasons for which we just do not understand. Close to Way Kanan station we had great views of a beautifully patterned banded civet around 3m into the forest and walking parallel with us for around 30 seconds before running off deeper into the forest. We then had dinner at the station and Tom and Marie found a large black scorpion. We took some pictures of the thick tailed scorpion before heading back out along the road towards the lodge. As was becoming usual now we found our large-spotted civet along the road and the only other mammal we saw was a female sambar crossing the road and then feeding on leaves just inside the forest and allowing for great views.

Day 15 Way Kambas National Park

Wildlife Watching

We started our last full day in Way Kambas at 4am and headed down to Way Kanan for a morning river cruise. We drove quickly down to the river to be there pre-dawn and so didn't spotlight hard into the forest and as nothing came out to cross the road we didn't have any sightings before boarding the boat and chugging down the river. As usually there were many crocodiles around and we had good views of one individual around 1.5m long until it dived under the chocolate brown water and out of sight. We also had nice albeit brief views of a greater oriental mousedeer along the mudflat. As the sun began to rise the primates began to stir and we watched as troops of silvered langurs and long-tailed macaques awoke and started their morning grooming sessions before heading out to their feeding trees. We had good sightings of a female silvered langur carrying her bright orange baby, the babies are born



orange and within 3 months start to turn greyish-silver like the adults. So this baby was very young as its bright orange few stood in stark contrast to its mothers coat. The morning birdlife was very good with lots of striated herons, stork-billed kingfishers, white-breasted kingfishers, purple herons, brahmyny kites, crested serpent eagle, cattle egrets and a stunning grey-headed fish eagle of which we watched for a while as it flew ahead of us perching on branches and then as we approached taking off and moving further down the river to the next perch, only until we approached once again. Hari took us to a small tree hollow where a small water monitor was living, poking his nose out and flicking his tongue to smell us before retreating to cover and safety deep in the hole. We also approached a small crocodile (around 30cm long) floating at the surface and not afraid unlike its larger cousins, in fact allowing us to get within 1m of it before he submerged and disappeared. We breakfasted at the Way Kanan station and during breakfast had great views of a Prevost's and pale-coloured giant squirrel. Both of these species beginning their day and climbing along their pre-chosen pathways through the trees towards their preferred foraging trees. As we headed down the road back towards the lodge we saw a large mixed feeding flock of birds which also included a pair of plantain squirrels and a Prevost's squirrel, the birds following the squirrels as the larger and clumsy mammals stir up many insects that the bird snap up. Back at the lodge Marie got some great pictures of the common tree shrews around the lodge grounds and then after lunch we were back in the forest and this time heading to the elephant sanctuary. Along the way to the sanctuary we spotted many long-tailed macaques and some wild boar and then on entering the sanctuary we spotted a pair of very large and well fed (on the sanctuaries rubbish dump) wild boar. We drove around some of the grassland area, despite looking like mostly forest around 30% of Way Kambas is grassland and the herd of domesticated elephants (used for anti-poaching patrols) prefer the habitat here and feed on the long grass during the day when they are not out on patrol. The Australian Zoo has also recently funded the building of a huge elephant hospital (the first of its kind in Asia) with the aim of helping, rehabilitating and providing refuge for the poor working elephants that are still kept and abused in South East Asia. We had dinner here and enjoyed some great birding with many new species recorded from the grasslands and large water holes such as sooty-capped bulbul, small blue kingfisher, lesser coucal and lesser whistling ducks. We also met one of the large male elephants called Toni as he came back from his patrol with his mahout and enjoyed a bath in the water hole before retiring for the night. When we left we drove back down the road and straight away found 2 female sambar with a fawn and a little further down Martin spotted a binturong in a palm tree, this is the largest of the civet family and with a prehensile tail they are the most arboreally adapted. The binturong looked very sleepy and as the sun had only just gone down it had very possibly only just woke up and he didn't move whilst we watched him. A great find and such a cool and unusual species, but this would be just the start of a good night for rare mammals. The next spot was another PEN-tailed tree shrew, this was the same individual Hari and Marie had seen the other day and as it ran around in the dense tangle of vines and branches that it calls home we got some fleeting glimpses of this very seldom seen species. Nearer Way Kanan we once again had great views of the large-spotted civet and on our return to the lodge we had good and prolonged views of a greater oriental mousedeer who was lying down under a fallen log. Thinking it remained invisible we had great views. We also had good views of lesser oriental mousedeer before a very fleeting view of a marbled cat (its tail being the most viewed part of the animal) as it crossed the road and disappeared deep into the forest. With great views of wild boar, long-tailed macaques, sambar, large-spotted civet, greater and lesser oriental mousedeer, a binturong and fleeting glimpse of a marbled cat this was a great way to end our time in Way Kambas. And tomorrow we would see what the camera traps had caught. But for tonight we headed to bed, Tom and Marie would be flying back to the UK late tomorrow so a good night's sleep was the order of the night and a relaxed morning tomorrow. Only Martin and Hari would leave the lodge and collect the camera traps in the morning.

Day 16 **Home**

Departure

This morning Hari and Martin went down into the forest to collect the two camera traps and then Martin checked the pictures. From the one positioned in the muddy pool we had muntjac, sambar, lesser adjutant and long-tailed macaque. All very interesting but nothing incredible, we also held little hope of anything incredible on the second one as we had changed the memory card only 2 days ago and had gotten nothing from the previous 5 days. However we did have something and to the delight of everyone, it was a beautiful sun bear. This amazing animal is so rare throughout its range it is very rarely seen and Hari was over the moon to get the species captured and at 11:30am in the middle of the day and when we were out of the road, we probably just missed him as he crossed the road and it was only 2.5 hours after Martin and Hari had changed the memory card.

After looking at the pictures and videos and having breakfast we left the lodge and were taken to the airport in Bandar Lampung, our flight was in the early afternoon and we had lunch at the airport before flying back to Jakarta. We freshened up in the hotel and then after dinner Tom and Marie were taken to the airport to catch their return flight home.

Species List

Sumatran Exploration & Komodo Extension / September 2014

Mammals (* = heard or signs only / CT = camera trap only)

	Common Name	Binominal Name
1	Sunda flying fox	<i>Acerodon mackloti</i>
2	Binturong	<i>Arctictis binturong</i>
3	Water buffalo	<i>Bubalus bubalis</i>
4	Sunda black-banded squirrel	<i>Callosciurus nigrovittatus</i>
5	Plantain squirrel	<i>Callosciurus notatus</i>
6	Prevost's squirrel	<i>Callosciurus prevostii</i>
7	Sambar	<i>Cervus unicolor</i>
8	Horsfield's fruit bat	<i>Cynopterus horsfieldii</i>
9	Greater short-nosed fruit bat	<i>Cynopterus sphinx</i>
10	Sumatran Rhino	<i>Dicerorhinus sumatrensis</i>
11	Asiatic elephant	<i>Elaphus maximus</i>
12	Lesser sheathtail bat	<i>Emballonura monticola</i>
13	Sun bear	<i>Helarctos malayanus</i>
14	Banded civet	<i>Hemigalus derbyanus</i>
15	Diadem roundleaf bat	<i>Hipposideros diadema</i>
16	Small-disc roundleaf bat	<i>Hipposideros orbiculus</i>
17	Agile gibbon	<i>Hylobates agilis</i>
18	White-handed gibbon	<i>Hylobates lar</i>
19	Long-tailed macaque	<i>Macaca fascicularis</i>
20	Southern pig-tailed macaque	<i>Macaca nemestrina</i>
21	Whitehead's mouse	<i>Maxomys whiteheadi</i>
22	Lesser false vampire bat	<i>Megaderma spasma</i>
23	Red Muntjac	<i>Muntiacus muntjak</i>
24	Sunda slow loris	<i>Nycticebus coucang</i>
25	Sumatran tiger	<i>Panthera tigris sumatrea</i>
26	Masked palm civet	<i>Paguma larvata</i>
27	Common palm civet	<i>Paradoxurus hermaphroditus</i>
28	Marbled cat	<i>Pardofelis marmorata</i>
29	Red giant flying-squirrel	<i>Petaurista petaurista</i>

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107	Black-throated babbler	<i>Stachyris nigricollis</i>
108	Great-crested tern	<i>Thalasseus bergii</i>
109	Collared kingfisher	<i>Todiramphus chloris</i>
110	Little green pigeon	<i>Treron olax</i>
111	Hairy-backed bulbul	<i>Tricholestes criniger</i>

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Reptiles (* = heard or signs only / CT = camera trap only)

	Common Name	Binominal Name
1	Malayan vine snake	<i>Ahaetulla mycterizans</i>
2	Mangrove cat snake	<i>Boiga dendrophila</i>
3	Banded krait	<i>Bungarus fasciatus</i>
4		<i>Carlia sukur</i>
5	Green turtle	<i>Chelonia mydas</i>
6	Estuarine crocodile	<i>Crocodylus porosus</i>
7	Lesser Sunda bronzeback	<i>Dendrelaphis inornatus</i>
8	Many-lined sun skink	<i>Eutropis multifasciata</i>
9	Large forest gecko	<i>Gekko smithii</i>
10	Tropical house gecko	<i>Hemidactylus mabouia</i>
11	Reticulated python	<i>Python reticulatus</i>
12	Sumatran pit viper	<i>Trimeresurus sumatranus</i>
13	Komodo dragon	<i>Varanus komodoensis</i>
14	Water monitor	<i>Varanus salvator</i>

September															
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Amphibians (* = heard or signs only / CT = camera trap only)

	Common Name	Binominal Name
1	Fanged river frog	<i>Limnonectes macrodon</i>
2	Sumatran puddle frog	<i>Occidozyga sumatrana</i>
3	Dark-eared treefrog	<i>Polypedates macrotis</i>

September															
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