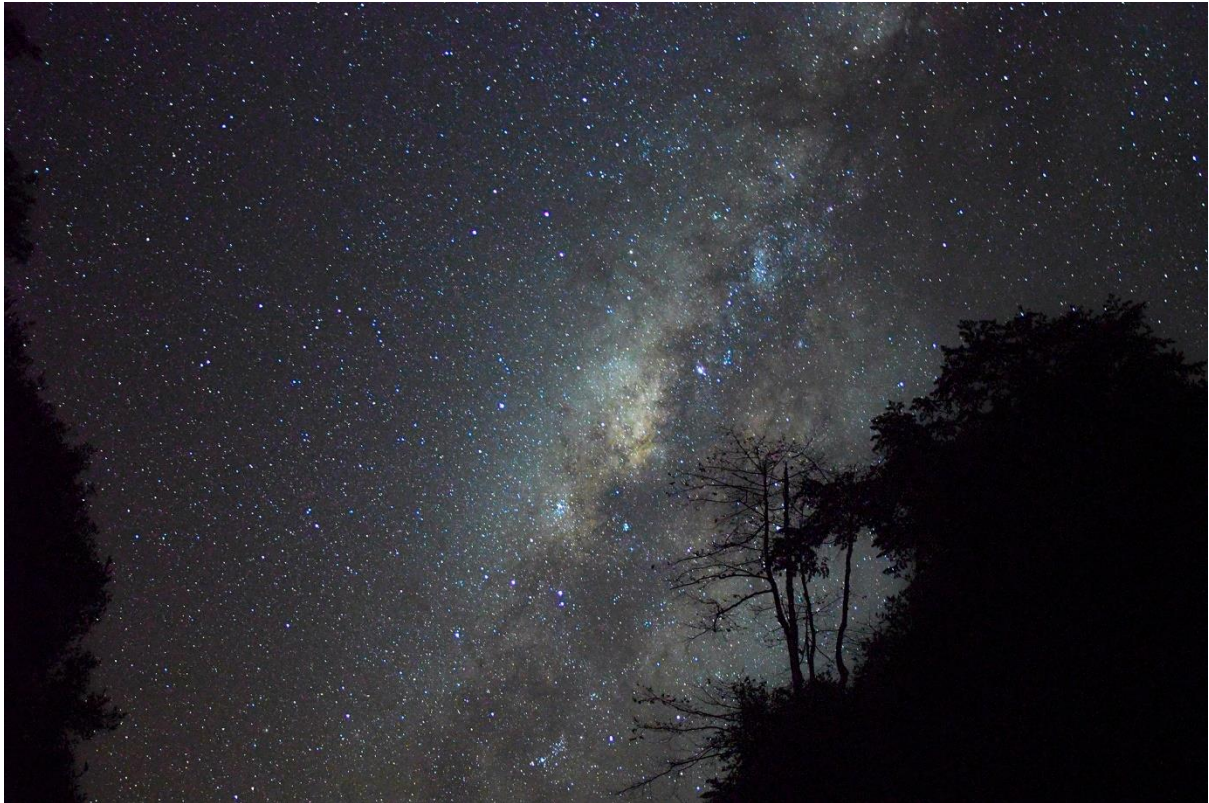


# **DERAMAKOT REVISITED**

*- The Continued Quest For Clouded Leopard and Other Elusive Nocturnal Mammals of the Bornean Rainforest*



*A clear night over Deramakot (Margarita Steinhardt)*

**Steve Morgan and Margarita Steinhardt**

**October 2017**

## **1 Background**

A group of us, (Jo Dale, Jens Hauser, Margarita Steinhardt and I), visited Deramakot earlier in February 2017 to look for, (among other things), Clouded Leopard. We got a good list of mammals, including Marbled Cat, Otter Civet, Stink Badger and Small-clawed Otter. But, sadly, no Leopard. Margarita and I were desperate to put this omission straight and so we soon set about organising a second trip. This reprise ran for ten days, from October 1<sup>st</sup> to October 10<sup>th</sup>. If this further ten nights in the field wasn't going to do it then I was ready to repeat it again and again until a Leopard finally did the decent thing and walked across the road in front of us! I was (and still am) convinced that no other site offered such a good opportunity to see Clouded Leopard.

We were joined on the first seven nights by Duncan Macdonald and Pieter Wessels and on the last three by the irrepressible Seth Wong. We all got along famously and, even if we hadn't seen any mammals, the continual jokes and banter would have made the trip memorable by itself.

## **2 Logistics**

The trip was once again organised through Alternative Adventure Borneo and their top man Tom Hewitt, (aaborneotom@gmail.com). This company is extremely flexible in terms of dates and participants and often helps by putting together prospective ones and twos to form financially viable groups of four or five. They also charge very fair prices and don't ask for a big deposit long in advance of the proposed trip, as do nearly all of the big package companies. Critically, they understand the requirements of serious mammalists, in particular the need to "go nocturnal" and operate outside the hours expected by birders and casual visitors.

Our guide, as before, was Mike Gordon, who works like a Trojan and has eyes like a hawk. If you want to see difficult mammals in Borneo then Mike is your man. There is simply no-one else in his league. Our driver for most of the time was Calab, who battled heroically with roads that were either as slippery as glass or axle-deep in mud. For a few days we had Lang, who was also very safe and accomplished. Our cook was Giddi, whose cooking was fantastic, a very palatable mixture of western and Malay cuisine.

I booked the long haul flight with Malaysia Airlines, one of my favourite airlines. (The in-flight meals are pretty good and they're liberal with the booze). And the first night on arrival was spent at the very nice Sabah Hotel in Sandakan which, at about £35 per night, is such good value that there really is no sense at all in going straight into the field after arriving in Borneo. I'm too old for that lark anyway!

## **3 Deramakot**

Deramakot Forest Reserve is actively logged but the logging is selective and has won awards for its "reduced impact". There is no clear felling and harvested areas are left to recover. It does mean that some areas are missing their most impressive trees but, even after harvesting, the forest remains semi-intact and a lot of the wildlife seems to carry on as

before. The alternative, of course, is an oil palm plantation where wildlife would be minimal. And, after all, without the logging we wouldn't even have a road to spotlight along.

From the western gate, a main access road runs 41 kilometres to the Base Camp where there is a restaurant and kitchen and quite extensive accommodation for tourists and researchers. The rooms are basic and functional but clean. They boast air-conditioning (very welcome!) and hot showers.

Going further east, the Jalan Masirom extends 32 kilometres to the Kinabatangan River at Balat. There are various side roads running north and south of both these main roads, all of which are worth exploring.

During the daytime mammal activity is sporadic and you can drive or walk hours without seeing anything. There are Squirrels and Treeshrews but they do take a bit of finding, as do primates such as Orang Utan and Bornean Gibbon. At night Deramakot comes alive and there are Flying Squirrels, Civets, Deer, Colugos, Slow Loris, Leopard Cats and Bats aplenty to keep the spotter on his or her toes.

One last thing about Deramakot – the rain. Expect rain daily and expect it to be torrential. Most rainstorms only seem to last an hour or two but in that time, if you are out in it in the back of the vehicle, you will get absolutely drenched. Most lightweight rain gear seems completely unequal to the task and the heavier stuff is just too hot and sweaty to contemplate. So, I don't know what the answer is. Just expect to get wet, and I do mean *very wet!*

#### **4 Summary of Results**

We finally got our Leopard! It was brief but well seen. We also got prolonged and fairly close views of two Marbled Cats as well as three sightings of Binturong. Other notable species recorded included Malay Stink Badger, Bornean Gibbon and Hose's Pygmy Flying Squirrel. The supporting cast included Maroon Langur and Orang Utan, Leopard Cat, Bornean Pygmy Elephant, Malay Porcupine and Bornean Yellow Muntjac.

Notable birds included Black-headed Pitta, Helmeted and Rhinoceros Hornbill, Black and Yellow Broadbill, Lesser Fish Eagle, Brown Barbet and Sunda Frogmouth.

We had a couple of good snakes: Striped Bronzeback and Keeled Rat Snake, the latter briefly fooling us into thinking we'd found a King Cobra (as it has similar markings). We also found various other reptiles and amphibians, the most notable of which was possibly Wallace's Flying Frog.

#### **5 Daily Log**

Saturday September 30<sup>th</sup>

A long and exhausting journey via Kuala Lumpur to Sandakan, after which I was more than glad finally to check into the Sabah Hotel and crawl into bed. Slept for about fifteen hours!

Sunday October 1st

Margarita had also checked into the same hotel the previous day and we met up in Reception to await our driver, Melvin, for the pre-arranged pick up at 11.00am. The taxi arrived on schedule and we proceeded to another nearby hotel to pick up Duncan and Pieter. A couple of hours later we were in Telupid, where the temperature had risen to the high thirties and the sun beat down mercilessly from an azure sky. We should have perhaps enjoyed it more than we did; from then on it rained daily and, more often than not, the skies were full of heavy grey clouds. So much then for the “dry season”!

Mike and Lang duly arrived at about two o'clock and, after lunch, we transferred to Lang's pick-up truck for the rougher leg of the journey to Deramakot. When we arrived at Base Camp it was as though we'd never been away. Everything looked eerily unchanged from February. We settled into our accommodation in the Merbau block and took an early dinner so that we could get out into the field as soon as possible.

In February the four participants, (Jo Dale, Jens Hauser, Margarita and I) had been squeezed into Lang's truck for the nightly spot-lighting. But now we had at our disposal another truck, converted to carry three rows of forward-facing benches, rather like a traditional African safari vehicle. Much better! We had plenty of room to spread ourselves and our kit out and no-one would be scrambling about trying to get a view when we found something.



*Malay Civet (Margarita Steinhardt)*

It turned out to be a pretty quiet night as it happened but we re-acquainted ourselves with some familiar species. There were **Red Giant** and **Thomas's Flying Squirrels** of course and, before long, we added **Malay Civet**, **Island Palm Civet** and **Bornean Small-toothed Palm**



**Civet** to our list. Overhead, wheeling around in circles, were **Large Flying Foxes**. It threatened rain and there distant rumbles of thunder but it stayed dry and the roads looked in good shape – a state that would soon change!

Monday October 2<sup>nd</sup>

We were up early, *well* eight o'clock, to go on a Blue-banded Pitta expedition. I wasn't especially bothered about the Pitta but tagged along anyway hoping for diurnal mammals such as Squirrels and Treeshrews. The Pitta site was a familiar one. We'd walked up the same steep, muddy, leechy hill in February. The result was also familiar, namely no Pitta. But we did get a group of **Bornean Gibbons** moving through the trees and calling with their eerie and distinct whoops. Actually, since there were Gibbons both ahead of us and behind us, there might have been two groups and the intense demonstration of whooping might, we surmised, have been a territorial dispute.

Just after lunch the weather broke and it began raining. In fact it rained, torrentially, for about six hours. At eight o'clock, when we set off for the night drive, it was still drizzling though it soon stopped. The roads, dry as dust in the morning, were now ribbons of thick, glutinous mud and our driver, Calab, had his work cut out to slosh his way through the quagmire.



*Sambar Deer (Margarita Steinhardt)*

It turned out to be another quiet night. But we did get a distant view of **Binturong** in a tree. At first it was just two orange eyes amid a big amorphous blob of black. Then, it got up and we could just about see the outline of the whole animal. Not a fantastic sighting by any means but a "lifer" for me. Most of the common species appeared along the way as well as

our first **Colugo** of the trip. There were also two **Leopard Cats** and, back in camp, a **Sambar**. By the early hours of the morning it had become a cool, misty night with quite poor visibility. But at least it had stopped raining.

Tuesday October 3<sup>rd</sup>

We had by now settled into a routine – sleep all morning, eat brunch at one o'clock, laze about for a bit, then go driving in the late afternoon or evening till the early hours. In effect we had become as nocturnal as the animals we sought.



*Leopard Cat (Margarita Steinhardt)*

We went out at about seven thirty. It was raining, of course, but we set off anyway. In the open vehicle there was no escape and, as the rain got progressively heavy, we were soon all drenched. I wondered just how much of this punishment we were going to take but we ploughed on regardless.

We were rewarded with another sighting of **Binturong**, this time quite a bit closer. It stood in the fork of two main trunks about twenty metres off the ground and watched us intently, moving its head side to side in a way that I soon realised was characteristic of the species. It was still drizzling but through the bleary lenses of both glasses and binoculars it made a good sight. Another mini-success came a short while later when we stumbled upon a roosting **Black-headed Pitta**, a fluffy black, red and blue ball, hunched up against the rain in a tree beside the road.

The rain finally eased off when we got to Balat on the Kinabatangan River. Here, at least, there was shelter and we all retreated, shivering, to the sanctuary of the main building



where we could stand under the eaves and gather our wits. Hot tea and cakes soon restored our spirits and half an hour later we were ready to go back out for the return leg.

We soon found a **Colugo** showing well on a bare tree trunk and it was only after careful observation that we noticed she was carrying a baby on her back. Since at one point she was hanging upside-down from a branch the infant must have had a tight grip! There were most of the usual crew around, the common Flying Squirrels, Civets and so on. But this time we were pleased to finally get a **Black Flying Squirrel**. And it obliged us by suddenly dropping off its branch and launching itself into a glide. One other notable sighting was a roosting **Tailless Fruit Bat** which was identifiable from Duncan's and Margarita's photographs back at the Camp later.

We eventually got back home and retreated to the restaurant for hot drinks and some toast, much needed refreshment since by then we were all wet and shivering in the cool night air. Three nights had passed without much unusual turning up. We had seen a lot of common species but, Binturong excepted, not a lot that would set the pulse racing. But we still had seven nights so I wasn't unduly worried.

Wednesday October 4<sup>th</sup>

We set out in brilliant sunshine at about four o'clock with the intention of driving down to the house at Balat and taking dinner there, our cook Giddi accompanying us.

At about K4 we encountered a flock of feeding birds, including Racket-tailed Drongos, Black and Yellow Broadbills and Raffles Malkohas. Then we noticed something moving with them through the foliage. **Ear-spot Squirrels!** Apparently it is common for feeding flocks of birds to accompany foraging Squirrels, the furry ones disturbing insects as they go which are then pounced on by the feathered ones. Duncan spotted something else moving which he thought might be a Lesser Treeshrew but no-one else got a clear view. On the other side of the road, high up in the foliage, were more Squirrels, this time **Plantain Squirrels**. Then, with Duncan, Pieter and Margarita all engrossed in photographic work, the inevitable happened. It began to rain! It had been a clear blue sky minutes before but now big bullets of rain swept down and for ten minutes or so we got another drenching. We scampered back to the vehicle and, with clear skies ahead, attempted to outrun the storm. It worked and moments later we were again bathed in warm sunshine.

At Balat the river looked high and a fair bit of debris was drifting down in the current. Mike enquired about the prospects for a boat cruise later in the week but this, we were told, would be problematic due to the difficulties of organising boats, fuel, boatmen and, not least, the less than ideal state of the river.

At dusk there were bats emerging, some blasting away extremely loud "chonk-chonk-chonk" calls on the bat detector at around 26KHz, the sound being reminiscent of Serotines back in England. I didn't get a clear view of the perpetrators so I couldn't attempt an identification. Frustrating!

The highlight of the evening, on the return trip, was the sighting of our third **Binturong** of the trip. This time we had it at closer quarters and right out in the open. It made a splendid

sight as it climbed up a vertical trunk and along a bare branch, its black fur silhouetted against the lighter bark of the tree. That's what you call a proper tick!

Nearer home, at around K13, we met **Elephants**, a family group of nine or ten animals that we were to encounter again on a number of occasions. One young female, afraid of our headlights but full of bravado, made a half-hearted attempt to ram us by backing into us. But she bottled out long before making contact, probably much to Calab's relief!



*Bornean Pygmy Elephant (Margarita Steinhardt)*

Driving back into Camp we found a beautiful **Leopard Cat** beside the road standing on the little white footbridge leading to one end of the Ecology Trail. And a little further along there was a Malay Civet and an Island Palm Civet close together on the grass outside the restaurant.

Thursday October 5<sup>th</sup>

A quiet day. We made a fairly late start and it was dark when we once more ventured forth along the Jalan Masirom. The rest of the crew had another crack at the Blue-banded Pitta in the afternoon but I decided on a siesta instead of toiling up the muddy slopes of Pitta Mountain again. I made the right decision as they reported seeing absolutely nothing of note either avian or mammalian.

The same group of **Elephants** we had seen the day before were once more blocking the road and, as before, were reluctant to let us pass. Eventually we inched our way forward and they took the hint, moving aside with a fanfare of disapproving trumpeting.



The only other incident of note on the outward leg was the very brief appearance of a Hose's Flying Squirrel. Mike screamed something about "flying squirrel" and pointed urgently at something to our right. I wondered why he was getting so excited about a creature we'd seen dozens of times before. Then the penny dropped. Frustration all round.

We stopped for tea at the river as usual whereupon it began to rain. What a surprise! For a couple of hours on the return leg we got another drenching before it finally eased off at around K10. The Elephants were back in the road at the same spot we'd seen them earlier, obviously having got over the trauma of letting us pass. They had to give way a second time but not before the precocious young female had threatened us again with a "bum first" mock charge.

At about K2 or K3 we found a **Leopard Cat** sitting on a mudbank beside the road its coat glistening with droplets of rain. My pet theory – that cats often emerge onto the road to dry off after heavy rain - seemed to have found some vindication. The others seemed strangely unimpressed!

We'd now reached the half way point. In fact, for Duncan and Pieter, it was more like the three-quarter point. It was starting to feel like a Leopard was long overdue.

Friday October 6<sup>th</sup>

With Orang Utans in mind we made a daylight start. The plan was to drive slowly down to the river, looking for Orang Utans in the K20 to K25 area (where apparently they often made sleeping nests in the late afternoon), take dinner at the house at Balat and then spotlight our way back. To this end Giddi came with us armed with cool boxes full of food and cooking paraphernalia.

We hadn't gone far when we found a sizeable snake on the road. At first we thought it might be a King Cobra but closer inspection cast doubt on this premature identification and, in the end, we had to settle for **Keelback Rat Snake**, a species with similar markings. Still a fine specimen but not the star turn we thought we had.

The Elephants were still in town and this time we had them in daylight, circumstances which greatly improved the prospects for photography. Again they were disinclined to step aside to let us pass and we had to gently press our case by edging forward. We could have sat there for hours had we not asserted ourselves.

At the river I got the bat detector out and straight away started getting thumping great "chonk-chonk" calls at around 25KHz, the same stuff I'd got a couple of evenings previously. This time, however, I made visual contact. The perpetrator was a very large, broad-winged bat flying directly and purposefully across the open area. Mike mentioned that **Lesser False Vampire** had been recorded at the site previously, so I surmised that this was what they probably were. There don't seem to be many other insectivorous bats of such a size in Deramakot so I don't see what else they could be – but, in the absence of good, publicly available data on Asian bat echo-location frequencies, I couldn't be sure.

The return leg was deadly quiet. It was cool and misty but at least it didn't rain. The only sighting of note was a **Hose's Pygmy Flying Squirrel**, which at least made up for the previous day's debacle. Otherwise, we hardly found anything. Even the common species seemed scarce. We tried the whole length of the Jalan Masirom as well as the first fifteen kilometres of the main access road the other side of camp but to no avail. We gave up at four thirty in the morning. As Mike said, there are times in Deramakot when you just feel as if you're banging your head against a brick wall. Then, something miraculous turns up out of the blue. A lot of his previous Leopard sightings, he noted, were on evenings when nothing else was happening. It was starting to look as if we would indeed need something miraculous.

Saturday October 7<sup>th</sup>

Mike's view was that we'd failed to find Orang-Utan the previous day because we'd started out too late. So we set off this time at the very early time of two o'clock. It was Duncan and Pieter's last day so we had to pull out all the stops.

It was boiling hot and very humid. As we trundled along the first few kilometres of the Jalan Masirom I wasn't expecting anything to happen. Maybe a Squirrel or a Treeshrew but certainly nothing particularly exciting. Then, Mike suddenly sprang to attention, pointed at the road ahead and said quietly "Clouded Leopard". It was so unexpected that at first it didn't register. Then, Mike was over the side of the vehicle urging us to do likewise and, before I knew it, he was already twenty yards down the road. I leapt over my side and scampered after him. Gathering my wits I saw a long tail sticking out the roadside vegetation about ten or fifteen metres ahead. A **Clouded Leopard**! But was that all I was destined to see? We crouched down to get a better view – by now Margarita, Duncan and Pieter had joined us – but the tension was unbearable. Gradually the tail disappeared and for a second or two our Leopard had de-materialised. For a moment my heart sank. Then, through a gap in the vegetation, the animal revealed itself, walking slowly up the slope and into the forest beyond. For a few precious moments the vivid cloud markings of its coat were gloriously visible. Then it was gone. It had been brief but, at last we'd done it. We'd actually seen a Clouded Leopard.

The rest of the drive down to Balat went by in a contented haze. We found a group of **Maroon Langurs** moving rapidly through the trees overhead and then, at last, several **Orang Utans**. Not that any of this seemed to matter much!

Over tea at Balat I asked Mike how many drives his company had done so far this year and how many sightings of Leopard they'd scored. The answer was 26 sightings in around 270-300 drives. (There are often two vehicles in operation). So, statistically, the odds on seeing a Leopard on any given night are about one in twelve. Our sighting had come on the fifteenth attempt, so I suppose our return was about par for the course. For Marbled Cat we calculated slightly longer odds with a cat on average once in around every fifteen drives. On a ten night trip, therefore, your odds are not bad and you'd expect to see one or the other. You might even see both.....but more on that in a while!

We had one last treat in store on the return leg. A **Banded Palm Civet** obligingly strolled across the road in front of us. Otherwise, we just had all the usual suspects: Civets, Slow

Loris, Flying Squirrels and so on. We got back to camp at a reasonably civilised hour and turned in. Several **Sambar Deer** were grazing on the grass below the researchers' chalets but we didn't stop to look. We had already fried bigger fish.

Sunday October 8<sup>th</sup>

We set off fairly early in the afternoon for a drive down to the White House. Duncan and Pieter had left us that morning and now it was just Margarita and me, though Seth Wong (who is doing research into Stink Badgers) joined us on this and most of our subsequent drives.

A large male **Bearded Pig** was in the road but soon spooked at our approach. This was our first sighting of what I expected to be a common species. Perhaps the unusually high rainfall so far this year had caused them to disperse? Even in February, on our previous visit, they had been a lot more numerous. Another first for the trip list was **Prevost's Squirrel**, the local morph being black with a chestnut red belly. There were also quite a few good specimens of **Pitcher Plant** by the roadside.

At the White House we stopped for a tea break and I had a look round for roosting bats under the eaves of the building and in a nearby tool shed. Nothing doing unfortunately. The little stream close by was also quiet though it looked a likely spot for Small-clawed Otter.

We drove back at dusk and finally found an animal on the previously sterile access road. And it was a good find too – a **Malay Stink Badger** wandering about from one side of the road to the other. Seth was delighted of course, admitting that this was only his second sighting “in the flesh”. Of course he had seen many Stink Badgers on camera trap photographs in the course of his work but actual live sightings are infrequent. Just before reaching camp we found a **Leopard Cat** by the roadside. Common as these little jewels might be I am always pleased to see them. And this, the **Sunda Leopard Cat**, is now generally recognised as a distinct species in its own right.

The first spots of rain were just starting to fall as we got back to camp. By the time we had dinner the shower had deteriorated into a deluge. This actually worked to our advantage. Another group, who had also just returned from an early evening drive, had reported seeing a Marbled Cat in a tree. Mike thought that, if it kept raining, it might sit tight for the time being, thereby giving us a chance to make its acquaintance.

We set off again in a steady drizzle which I knew would soon overwhelm my “rain-retardant” mac. In fact, the drizzle soon degenerated further into something resembling a power shower and in no time I was soaked to the skin. By the time we got to K10 on the Jalan Masirom, (where the cat had been seen), it was raining so hard that Mike gave up spotlighting altogether. We took refuge under the “bus stop”, the drumming of the rain on the roof so loud that it was difficult to keep up a conversation. Eventually the gaps between the flashes of lightning and claps of thunder became longer, indicating that the storm was moving off. With the rain now reduced to a light drizzle we emerged, wet and shivering, to see where this cat might be. Mike's information was that it had been in a tree just before K10 so we spun the vehicle round and doubled back. Bingo! We had very bright orange eye-



shine straight away, on a horizontal branch a hundred metres ahead of us. Closer inspection through binoculars revealed that, yes, it was the **Marbled Cat**, still in exactly the same position the others had seen it earlier. Mike's theory about the rain had been proven correct. Seth claimed he could see more eye-shine beyond but nobody else could see it and we uncharitably wrote it off as reflections from water droplets.



*Marbled Cat (Margarita Steinhardt)*

The cat turned out to be amazingly obliging. We had stopped almost beneath it and only about thirty or forty metres separated us. But it sat there watching us patiently while we studied it and attempted to take photographs. After about fifteen minutes we figured that we might as well brew up some tea. It was obvious that the cat wasn't going anywhere! And so, for the best part of an hour, we stood there with our hot drinks and cake in the company of one of the world's rarest cats. We made no particular attempt to keep quiet but the cat didn't seem to care. Once they are safely ensconced in their tree it seems that they feel invulnerable.

Eventually, we decided to move on and see what else we could find. But, on turning the vehicle, we noticed a second cat higher up in the thicker foliage. Incredibly, there were *two* Marbled Cats. Seth had been right all along though that didn't protect him a barrage of mischievous banter!

The night was now cool and misty, as is often the case after a downpour. We pressed on and found another **Bearded Pig**; (they were coming thick and fast now!). There was also a **Lesser Rane Mouse** with its exceptionally long, thin tail and another Hose's Pygmy Flying Squirrel.

These are generally thought to be rare but given that we had seen three already I began to suspect that they might be frequently overlooked as opposed to actually being scarce.

We had a fairly early finish given that we were all cold and wet. But our mission had been accomplished and in some style.

Monday October 9<sup>th</sup>

We made another early afternoon start, our plan being to take a river trip on the Kinabatangan in hope of species such as Proboscis Monkey, Grey Langur and Smooth-coated Otter. But, on arrival at Balat, it was obvious that this wasn't going to happen. The recent rain had left the river in full flood. Piles of debris were careering downstream on a torrent many feet above its normal level. Going out in such conditions was completely out of the question.



*Bornean (Three-striped) Small-toothed Palm Civet (Margarita Steinhardt)*

Instead, we lazed about and had an extended tea break, waiting for it to get dark to make profitable use of the return leg at least. This brought us a **Flying Lizard** and a lone bull **Elephant** but, otherwise, nothing particularly noteworthy. We had a very late dinner back at camp and tried the main access road on the other side of camp. But despite driving as far as K24 and taking a lengthy excursion into a side road, (the Tangkulang Road I believe), we were rewarded only with birds. These did include **Sunda Frogmouth**, **Lesser Fish Eagle**, **Rhinoceros Hornbill** and **Helmeted Hornbill**, at least some of which would have had core birders celebrating wildly. But, from a mammalian perspective, we more or less drew a blank.



Tuesday October 10<sup>th</sup>

Our last day in the field and, because of a desperately early start the following day, a fairly short one. I feared we might go out with a whimper but, as things turned out, the drive was actually quite eventful.

We only had time to drive up to K20 and back on the Jalan Masirom. But it was a pleasant, mild night and it didn't even rain. There seemed to be some activity and the usual Flying Squirrels, Civets and Slow Loris were in evidence. Mike tried to photograph **some Large Flying Foxes** in flight, with Seth holding the spotlight which, miraculously, seemed to produce at least a recognisable image.

There was a **Wallace's Flying Frog** perched on a low vantage point overlooking a puddle which Margarita, Seth and Mike got out to photograph. The mud was ankle deep but it didn't seem to deter them! Apparently it isn't a rare species in particular but one which usually only occupies the canopy – so a chance to photograph it ground level is unusual.



*Malay Porcupine (Margarita Steinhardt)*

At around K20 we turned a corner in the road and there in front of us was a **Malay Porcupine**, a species which had somehow eluded us up to now. It came scuttling towards us and I thought it might even walk past us but at the last minute it veered off into the forest. I was surprised we hadn't seen one before as they aren't uncommon.

We found a few bats on the way back. The first was hanging upside down from a branch with its wings encased like clingfilm around its body. The white markings, which were clearly evident, marked it out as a **Diademed Roundleaf Bat**, a species I had seen before in Way



Kambas in Sumatra. The second was a **Sunda Short-nosed Fruit Bat**, another species which is easy to identify with its bright reddish throat markings and dog-like face.

There was a **Leopard Cat** near camp, our last significant mammalian sighting and a good way to finish.

Wednesday October 11<sup>th</sup>

We were on our home at seven o'clock, bleary-eyed and half asleep. I had half hoped we might find something on the road back to the main gate but a succession of vehicles coming the other way dampened my expectations and so I dozed off.

At Telupid we transferred from Lang's pick-up truck to a conventional taxi and completed the drive back to Sandakan. Margarita had another couple of nights rest and recuperation at the comfortable Sabah Hotel but I continued on my marathon homeward journey via Kuala Lumpur and London. About a year later (or so it seemed!) I was back in the familiar surroundings of Burton on Trent.

## 6 Mammals Recorded

We recorded 35 species of mammal as follows:

Species	Latin Name	Notes
Sunda Clouded Leopard	<i>Neofelis Diardi</i>	One sighting on Jalan Masirom at K4.
Marbled Cat	<i>Felis marmorata</i>	One sighting (two cats) at K10.
Sunda Leopard Cat	<i>Felis javanicus</i>	Seen almost nightly, often at close range.
Malay Civet	<i>Viverra zangalunga</i>	Common. Seen nightly.
Bornean Small-toothed Palm Civet	<i>Arctogalidia trivirgata</i>	Common. Seen nightly.
Island Palm Civet	<i>Paradoxurus philippensis</i>	Common. Almost nightly.
Banded Palm Civet	<i>Hemigalus derbyanus</i>	One sighting of individual on Jalan Masirom.
Binturong	<i>Arctitis binturong</i>	Three sightings on consecutive nights.
Malay Stink Badger	<i>Mydaus javanensis</i>	One individual at K3 on Access Road.
Orang Utan	<i>Pongo pygmaeus</i>	Three sightings.
Maroon Langur	<i>Presbytis rubicunda</i>	One brief sighting of small group.
Long-tailed Macaque	<i>Macaca fascicularis</i>	One sighting near Base Camp.
Bornean Gibbon	<i>Hylobates muelleri</i>	One sighting of group calling near K4 .
Phillippine Slow Loris	<i>Nycticebus menagensis</i>	Almost nightly.
Sambar	<i>Cervus unicolor</i>	Nightly. Common.
Greater Mouse Deer	<i>Tragulus napu</i>	One sighting.
Bornean Yellow Muntjac	<i>Muntiacus atherodes</i>	One daytime sighting of two animals.
Giant Red Flying Squirrel	<i>Petaurista petaurista</i>	Abundant.
Thomas's Flying Squirrel	<i>Aeromys thomasi</i>	Abundant.
Hose's Pygmy Flying Squirrel	<i>Petaurillus hosei</i>	Three sightings, all brief and in flight.
Black Flying Squirrel	<i>Aeromys tephromelas</i>	Several sightings, once in flight.
Plantain Squirrel	<i>Callosciurus notate</i>	One sighting of two animals.
Ear-spot Squirrel	<i>Callosciurus adamsi</i>	One sighting of two animals.
Prevost's Squirrel	<i>Callosciurus prevostii</i>	Two sightings of single animals.
Lesser Rane Mouse	<i>Haeromys pusillus</i>	One seen by roadside.
Colugo	<i>Cynocephalus variegatus</i>	Several sightings of 1-2 animals.

Malay Porcupine	<i>Hystrix brachyura</i>	One seen on Jalan Masirom at K25.
Bearded Pig	<i>Sus barbatus</i>	Several sightings of lone individuals.
Bornean Pygmy Elephant	<i>Elephas borneoensis</i>	Group of ten animals seen four times on road.
Large Flying Fox	<i>Pteropus vampyrus</i>	Seen nightly, often in large groups.
Tailless Fruit Bat	<i>Megaerops ecaudatus</i>	One roosting individual.
Short-nosed Fruit Bat	<i>Cynopterus brachyotis</i>	One roosting individual.
Diademed Roundleaf Bat	<i>Hipposideros diadema</i>	Several roosting individuals.
Lesser False Vampire	<i>Megaderma spasma</i>	Two individuals at Balat at dusk.
Trefoil Horseshoe Bat	<i>Rhinolophus trifolius</i>	One roosting individual.
<b>Total Species</b>	<b>35</b>	