

## **Sabah (and Singapore), May 2018**

*Report by Sjef Öllers*

Mammalwise our second visit to Sabah was even better than our first one eleven years ago. Again we saw three cat species, this time Leopard Cat, Marbled Cat (photo) and Sunda Clouded Leopard. Other memorable mammal sightings included Slow Loris, Colugo, Western Tarsier, Banded Palm Civet and Binturong. Birding ranged from pretty good to outrageously slow (with slow days outnumbering the better days) and inevitably I did not nearly see all my most wanted species. Nevertheless, eight broadbill species, Mountain Serpent Eagle, Crested Jay, Bornean Bristlehead, Banded Kingfisher, Oriental Bay Owl, Whitehead's Trogon, Whitehead's Broadbill, Storm's Stork and a good selection of "needed" woodpeckers and barbets were some of the highlights. A short visit to Pasir Ris in Singapore surprisingly produced Spotted Wood Owl and Sunda Scops Owl.



## Introduction

After reading half a dozen of mouthwatering reports from Deramakot Forest Reserve the lure of Sabah could no longer be resisted. Our first trip to Sabah in [2007](#) had been fabulous with sightings of Sunda Clouded Leopard and Flat-headed Cat and a superb selection of birds, but there was still plenty left to see. So we eagerly awaited our second visit to Sabah, arguably the most pleasant bird- and mammalwatching area in Southeast Asia. Work dictated that May was the most feasible option for a Sabah visit this year. May is not necessarily the best time for a visit, in particular for birds; it is at the peak of the dry season and the breeding season for birds is in full swing.

Bird activity was erratic throughout the trip; Sepilok, Mount Kinabalu, Poring Hot Springs and Crocker Range were by far the worst. The birding at Deramakot and Danum could have been better but these two sites were easily the best birding sites on this tour. Bird species/families that we had seen or heard daily in good numbers on our 2007 visit were extremely hard to find (or even hear) on this trip, in particular flycatchers, trogons, pittas, sunbirds, and partridges and allies. Nevertheless, a number of desirable lifers were eventually seen, mostly thanks to our guide Siti's tireless efforts in Deramakot and Danum; lifers included Crested Jay, Oriental Bay Owl, Thick-billed Pigeon, Long-tailed Parakeet, Black Magpie and a number of lowland babblers. I was particularly keen to catch up on barbets, of which I had only seen three species in ID-able way on our first visit; this worked out quite well with the lifers Red-crowned, Yellow-crowned, Mountain, Blue-eared and Gold-whiskered Barbet all seen well; Bornean Barbet unfortunately remained heard only. And this time we got the "better views needed" for Whitehead's Broadbill, Bristlehead, Red-bearded Bee-eater, Bornean Blue Flycatcher and White-bellied Woodpecker. We did see Large Frogmouth, but only in flight, which was cool in its own right, but still kind of a half tick. Same for Malaysian Honeyguide; we saw silhouetted views of a bird that can only have been the honeyguide, but not really tickable.



*Rufous-tailed Shama*

*Yellow-crowned Barbet*

Mammals came as a slow but steady trickle throughout the tour, and eventually we racked up an excellent list. Apart from the species mentioned above in the summary, we were pleased with good sightings of Whitehead's Pygmy Squirrel, Masked Palm Civet and Black Giant Flying Squirrel. Bornean Pygmy Elephant was another lifer that I did not count on, especially since we did not visit Kinabatangan. Inevitably we also missed a number of desirable species: Sun Bear and Banded Linsang in particular would have been nice. For Otter-civet it was far too dry but inexplicably we missed Spotted Giant Flying Squirrel in Kinabalu but spotlighting conditions were good only on one out of three nights. Sabah Giant Rat also remained elusive. All in all, it was a fabulous trip with outstanding mammalwatching, acceptable birding results, excellent guides and great food.

## Travel Arrangements

For Sepilok, Deramakot and Danum arrangements were made through [Adventure Alternative Borneo](#). They did an excellent job and come highly recommended. Our guide in Sepilok was Henry, a friendly guy and good company. In Deramakot and Danum we were guided by Siti – she was excellent: knowledgeable, works hard, sharp-eyed and great company. In Danum Siti was joined by Adi, one of their new guides. She has bionic eyes and was very good at finding all kinds of small wildlife (insects, herps, small mammals, etc.).

The last part of the trip we travelled on our own. We hired a simple four-door sedan car through [Borneo Express Rent-A-Car](#), which we picked up at Lahad Datu Airport (they drove the car in from Sandakan). Driving on the main roads in Sabah is easy but be prepared for random barrages of potholes and dogs and cattle popping up out of nowhere.

In Poring Hot Springs we stayed inside in one of the Sutera accommodation options: excellent accommodation and good value in my opinion. In Kinabalu we stayed in Rania Lovely Hut, friendly owner and good location about 6-7 km from the park entrance. The place was clean and practical, but we got a decent sprinkling of bed bug bites, probably from fleas, and barking dogs were a bit of a nuisance at night. The last two days we stayed in the excellent luxury B&B Sinurambi, southwest of Kota Kinabalu. The B&B is only a few hundred metres from the Inobong station of Crocker Range NP.



*Sunda Clouded Leopard*

## Itinerary

May 8 Flight to Singapore  
May 9 Arrival Singapore – Visit Pasir Ris – Flight to Kota Kinabalu  
May 10 Flight to Sandakan – Sepilok/Rainforest Discovery Centre  
May 11 Rainforest Discovery Centre  
May 12 Morning Rainforest Discovery Centre – transfer Deramakot Forest Reserve  
May 13 Deramakot Forest Reserve  
May 14 Deramakot Forest Reserve  
May 15 Deramakot Forest Reserve  
May 16 Deramakot Forest Reserve  
May 17 Deramakot Forest Reserve  
May 18 Transfer to Danum Valley  
May 19 Danum Valley  
May 20 Danum Valley  
May 21 Danum Valley  
May 22 Transfer to Lahad Datu – Pick up rental vehicle – Drive to Poring Hot Springs  
May 23 Poring Hot Springs / Mt Kinabalu  
May 24 Mt Kinabalu  
May 25 Mt Kinabalu  
May 26 Crocker Range NP (Rafflesia Centre/Gunung Alab/Inobong)  
May 27 Inobong station/Gung Alab/Sinurambi B&B  
May 28 Transfer to KK- Flight to Singapore/ Back home



*Marbled Cat*

## Sites visited

### Singapore – Pasir Ris Park and Mangrove Boardwalk

After an overnight flight with the excellent Singapore Airlines we had 10 hours of transit time in Singapore. We went to Pasir Ris Park, which includes a tiny remnant area of mangrove forest. Despite arriving at the park at about 7 am birding was rather slow, but it was surprisingly busy with people for such an early midweek visit. Black-naped Oriole and Yellow-vented Bulbul were common. Walks through the mangroves resulted in Common Goldenback, Oriental Pied Hornbill, White-breasted Waterhen, Olive-winged Bulbul, and Laced Woodpecker. Along canals and ponds Collared Kingfisher was seen regularly.

A friendly local birder told us that a Sunda Scops Owl had been seen and brought us to the spot, which was already surrounded by a battery of photographers. West of the mangroves we saw a couple of photographers staring intently in the canopy of a large tree; as I suspected they were looking for Spotted Wood Owls. We quickly found two adults and one juvenile. On the way back we spent some time in the birdwatching tower (also to escape the heat and enjoy the light breeze in the tower); this produced common birds such as Black-naped Oriole, Asian Koel, Common Iora and Olive-backed Sunbird. Plantain Squirrel was the only mammal seen.



*Spotted Owl (juvenile and adult)*

### Sun Bear Conservation Centre Sepilok/Rainforest Discovery Centre

We spent a couple of hours at the Sun Bear Conservation Centre in Sepilok to have a look at the bears, but otherwise spent the rest of our time in the Rainforest Discovery Centre area of the reserve. We didn't visit the Orang Utan feeding platforms in Sepilok. Birding here was downright frustrating; it was blistering hot and dry and the site hadn't had proper rain for weeks. Hence birding

on the trails was excruciatingly slow, even at sunrise. Even with our guide we struggled to see or even hear birds. We spent most of our time on the boardwalk because there was at least some activity. Best birds were Brown Barbet, Banded Kingfisher, Wallace's Hawk Eagle, Yellow-eared Spiderhunter, and Grey-and-buff Woodpecker. Pittas were barely calling (only Black-headed and Blue-headed were heard).



*Sun Bear Conservation Centre*

Mammaling was more entertaining: Red Giant Flying Squirrels performed on cue around dusk. At some point it looked like we had the flying squirrel equivalent of Monthly Python's Killer Rabbit of Caerbannog going for our jugular, but it landed (or actually crashed) in a tree right next us at eye level. Brilliant! When we got our bins on it, it turned out to be a Black Giant Flying Squirrel, more brilliant! Daytime sightings included an old and rather emaciated Orang Utan, a group of shy Sabah Grey Langurs, Pig-tailed Macaque, Long-tailed Macaque, Pale Giant Squirrel, Prevost's Squirrel and Low's Squirrel.

On the second night we did an official night walk with rangers from the reserve, but this was remarkably eventless for most of the walk. All the action on our nightwalk was towards the end: we briefly saw a Malay Civet and then had good views of a Colugo (usually nightwalks here should yield at least Slow Loris, Colugo, one or two civet species, mousedeer, often Western Tarsier and occasionally a proper rarity). Just outside RDC we saw a Common Palm Civet and heard Oriental Bay Owl. The owl appeared to be calling nearby but it eventually led us to a forest fragment next to Sepilok B&B. After some targeted searching, our guide Henry eventually located the bird in dense foliage in the canopy.



*Black Giant Flying Squirrel*



*Red Giant Flying Squirrel*

In Sepilok we stayed in Sepilok B&B, which was remarkably nice and the location only 400 metres from the Rainforest Discovery Centre entrance was excellent. The food was okay, but a little underwhelming. The large garden is great with good birding (three munia species, several woodpeckers, the commoner bulbuls, Black-and-red Broadbill, Collared Kingfisher, etc.) and you should also be able to tick a number of squirrel species here. Ear-spot Squirrel was relatively easy to find in the garden of Sepilok B&B.



*Small-toothed Palm Civet (Deramakot)*

## Deramakot Forest Reserve

This excellent site has been described in detail in [Richard Webb's report](#). I also enjoyed reading the reports by [Jo Dale](#) and [Steve Morgan](#). Below is a table that provides an impression of our sightings (bats, a few rodents and birds are not included). Buffy Fish Owl was seen five out of six night nights (usually 2-3 birds). Brown Wood Owl was seen every other night. The flying squirrels and sambar are probably underestimated, because we did not stop for each individual after the first night. Overall, we did pretty well with the off-scale bonus of Marbled Cat tipping the balance in the right direction, but I was flabbergasted that we only saw one Leopard Cat.

Species	Night 1	Night 2	Night 3	Night 4	Night 5	Night 6
Slow Loris	1	0	1	1	4	1
Thomas's Flying Squirrel	3	>3	1	>3	>4	1
Red Giant Flying Squirrel	0	>5	4	4	>3	2
Banded Palm Civet	0	0	0	0	1	1
Common Palm Civet	3	2	2	>3	3	>2
Small-toothed Palm Civet	0	3	1	3	>3	1
Malay Civet	0	8	(1) <sup>a</sup>	2	3	2
Marbled Cat	(1) <sup>a</sup>	1	0	0	0	0
Leopard Cat	0	0	0	0	1	0
Elephant	>15	0	>7	0	>8	0
Bearded Pig	1	8	4	>3	1	>3
Greater Mousedeer	0	1	0	2	(1) <sup>b</sup>	1
Lesser Mousedeer	0	0	0	0	1	0
Sambar	>10	>20	>10	>10	>15	>10
a) untickable "nonviews"; b) poor views						
Route/Direction (see map in Richard Webb's report)	Towards Balat, then towards Western entrance	Towards Balat	Towards Balat	Towards Western entrance/White House area	To Balat and back	Afternoon White House; evening/night towards Balat
Weather during the night drive	Warm, dry (brief showers in afternoon)	Cool, foggy (1.5 hours of rain in the late afternoon)	Warm, dry (no rain or showers at all)	Warm, dry (brief showers in afternoon)	Cool, foggy (moderate showers and proper rain late afternoon)	Late afternoon very hot and humid, heavy shower in early evening, then cool and foggy

It did seem that two conditions positively influenced activity: at least one hour of heavy showers in the afternoon/early evening and early-evening temperatures that quickly decreased into the 20-25 °C range.

The first evening in particular, temperatures remained remarkably high almost up to 11 pm; most mammal activity was after 21.30 h that evening but the overall score was underwhelming – even Malay Civet and Small-toothed Palm Civet eluded us that evening. On most evenings peak activity was between 20.00 and about midnight (between 21.00 and 23.00 often being the best). After midnight the activity often decreased rather sharply. Given the low activity after midnight I am not convinced that doing allnighters substantially improves your chances to see the "megas". Our longest drive lasted until about 2.30 am.

It is hard to say what would be the best time to visit Deramakot. The cats are seen every month of the year. June to September is generally considered the best period for good allround mammal activity, but this is also the time that Deramakot now tends to be overrun by commercial tour groups. Between November and February extended periods of non-stop rain are possible and may make for an unpleasant visit and difficult driving conditions. March to May and October may be a compromise between acceptable weather and driving conditions, low(er) visitor numbers and decent activity. Having the place to ourselves was definitely one of the pleasures of the Deramakot visit.



*Common/Island Palm Civet*



*Binturong*

We made one extended morning drive in Deramakot, which was excellent with sightings of Binturong and Bornean Gibbon in the same fruiting fig tree (plus a nice selection of frugivorous birds including Asian Fairy Bluebird, Large Green Pigeon, Little Green Pigeon, and Blue-eared Barbet). Red-Bearded Bee-eater, Chestnut-backed Scimitar-Babbler, Blyth's Hawk Eagle and Dusky Broadbill were also seen on the drive. A female Orang Utan with a young was another highlight that morning.

The morning walks usually produced several primate and squirrel species and a good selection of birds, but some of my wishlist species proved elusive, in particular the rarer/shier pittas and trogons. Still, I managed to clean up on almost all my missing lowland bulbuls and babblers. On an afternoon walk to a fruiting tree we encountered several Bearded Pigs and saw two Red Muntjac scurry away from under the fruiting tree. The hoped for second Binturong was not present (although one had been seen in the tree a few days earlier) but five Helmeted Hornbills (and several pigeon species) in the same tree was not bad either.





*Maroon Langur*

### **Danum Valley Field Centre (DVFC)**

We stayed in the resthouse; the accommodation is fine if a little worn – some maintenance and repairs would be in order. The food ranged from fine to even good in my opinion (so maybe we were lucky). The trails and location are great. However, as others have reported, the main issue here is the quality of the excursions and the nightdrives in particular are mostly sheer agony.

Our first night drive was pure comedy. Already five minutes before the start of the drive they found out that the vehicle had a defect (rumours about the breaks not working properly). Of course they couldn't get it fixed at such short notice, mild chaos ensued so it looked like the drive was going to be cancelled, but after some back and forth a new vehicle materialised (unfortunately rather inadequate for nightdrives). Only four clients had signed up for the drive but they had made an improvised seating arrangement that only allowed three people to sit. The two other people wanting to join drive got so pissed off that they walked out. So it was just the two of us and Beavis and Butthead spotlighting! We were introduced to new sensational spotlighting techniques. Some peculiar swift hand action with the spotlight bouncing erratically through the star-filled sky appeared to be an art performance: rainforest air sculpture with spotlight. Interesting but not quite what I had come for. And then there was complete darkness but this was not part of the art performance: both the car and spotlights had gone black. First it looked like the car had given up but eventually the car was resuscitated and we were looking at Butthead with a dysfunctional spotlight plus about 60 cm of cable ending in a hairy copper wire end dangling from the spotlight. Fascinating! Somehow there was also something wrong with the other spotlight. Luckily another vehicle (one of the researchers) showed up shortly after this had happened and they borrowed us a new spotlight. About one quarter

into the drive they wanted to abort the drive because of the slightest of drizzles but I told them to keep going. But after 4-5 other requests to abort the drive and them clearly sabotaging the drive by barely spotlighting I gave in to the harassment. Kind of assuring us that we made the right decision Butthead claimed: "Animals not very active, sir, when rain", but literally two minutes after we turned around the homeopathic drizzle stopped. By that time we had half-seen a Red Giant Flying Squirrel and a Malay Civet. On the way back we suddenly had a better-than-usual view of a Lesser Mousedeer feeding out in the open on a grassy lawn near the reception office. I got half-excited about a photo opportunity but that lasted about 23 milliseconds because the only spotlight working literally disassembled before our eyes ending with a big bang on the roof. Somehow the tightening ring had come off and the whole thing fell apart in pieces. So that was that night drive.

For the second game drive the official game drive vehicle was used. Strangely this did not constitute a major improvement: the seats are mounted in the back of a 4x4 pickup in such a way that you can only just look over the cabin of the vehicle, which would have been okay-ish, but then the two guys spotlighting sit on top of the roof assuring all clients of cracking butt views. As others have reported or implied: the spotters talk too much, may be texting/reading their smartphone while spotlighting, miss a lot (especially the small stuff), and may not stop when they (and even the clients) can see eyeshine. Luckily one of the spotters had been replaced so it was Butthead (who was on my side) and New Guy. New Guy was actually pretty good at handling the spotlight. Almost immediately we had a Small-toothed Palm Civet. Only a couple of kilometres into the drive both I and the person behind me simultaneously had a couple of seconds of "does not compute" confusion and panic; we both saw a feline creature lounging on a tree close to the road but inexplicably the car did not stop and Butthead's spotlighting efforts were already focusing on the trees further ahead.



*Sunda Clouded Leopard*

Then the person behind me and I simultaneously pressed our panic button – I uttered "Stop, stop" while behind me "Marbled Cat, there is a Marbled Cat" resounded. It then took another minute before our star team had reversed the vehicle and another five shouts of "turn off the engine" before we could actually start looking at the cat; luckily this particular cat turned out to be utterly reasonable and hadn't moved an inch in all this mayhem. It quickly transpired that this was actually a

clouded leopard. We had about 15-20 minutes of quality time with the leopard who initially couldn't be bothered to do much other than give us a bored "talk to the paw" look. Just when I was messing with the camera settings, the leopard got up, paraded across the horizontal branch showing its spectacular cloud pattern in full splendour and then seemed to indicate that she had enough of the light; we were treated to cat booty looks for about 3-4 minutes before the cat went back to its original lounge position.

This lasted for a while, then she suddenly got up, descended down the tree and melted into the forest. Being so close to the road it was not in the realm of the impossible that the leopard would cross the road. So when this actually happened and then nothing happened, I again had to whisper-yell to Butthead "on the road, on the road". Luckily we had about 30-60 seconds of glorious views of the leopard walking and standing on the road before she slinked into the dense secondary undergrowth. The first half hour after the leopard sighting it was rather silent in the vehicle and it seemed all four of us were reprocessing this exceptional encounter. The rest of the drive almost nothing happened animalwise and we only saw a Malay Civet rather poorly. No nocturnal birds were seen.



*Sunda Clouded Leopard*

We also did two nightwalks, the first one (after early-evening rain) was predominantly a fire-ant fest but we did have splendid views of a sleeping male Blue-headed Pitta. Otherwise the walk was fairly quiet. The second walk started nicely with a File-eared Tree Frog and another Blue-headed Pitta (likely the same male). Suddenly I heard Adi say the magic word: tarsier! I saw it bouncing across the trail and then into the trees but my wife hadn't seen it, so we rushed closer and Adi and Siti managed to pin it down in the spotlight almost instantly. What a bizarre and fabulous beast: the Cartman version of a Lesser Bushbaby albeit with a slightly creepy, longish and remarkably thin naked tail. We had excellent views for several minutes until we decided to leave it alone. This was the undisputed highlight of the walk, but we did see a nice assortment of other animals including among others a Huntsman spider, two tailless scorpions, a handful of frog species, four Lesser Mousedeer and a Bronzeback snake.

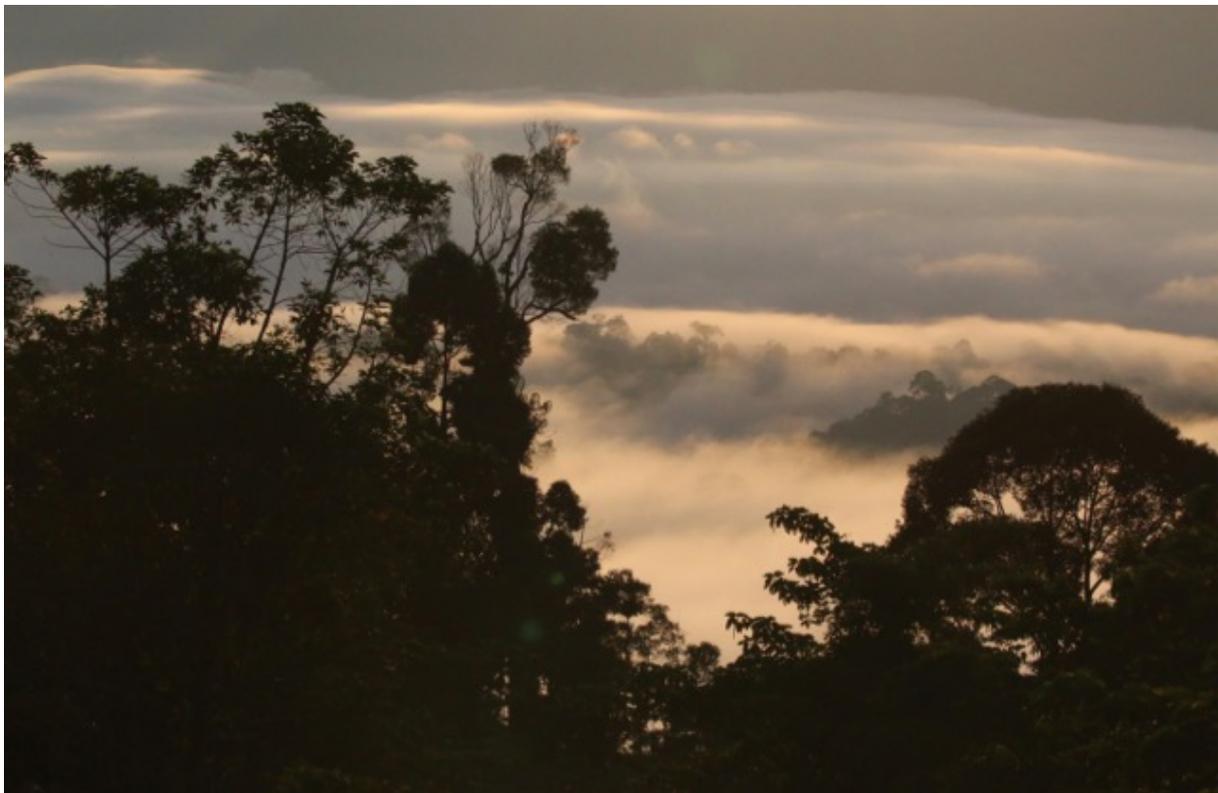


*Western Tarsier*



*Blue-headed Pitta*

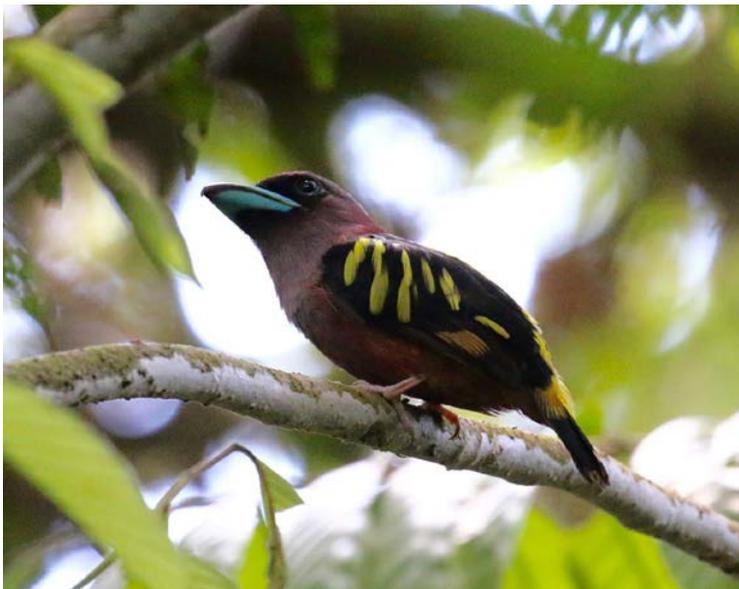
One morning we did a Sunrise Drive; the staff drives you to a tower a dozen kilometres or so from DFVC. The cloud/fog cover dissolving over the forest canopy was a beautiful sight, but the birding at the tower was unexpectedly poor; no parrots or hornbills flying by, no canopy flocks. I only saw Lesser Green Leafbird, Yellow-breasted Flowerpecker, Red-throated Sunbird and what was probably Red-eyed Bulbul. On the way back we had excellent and perfectly photographable views of two Yellow Muntjacs on the road but again the unbearably sluggish and lackluster response from the driver made sure that even this photo opportunity got wasted.



*Sunrise in Danum Valley*

On daytime hikes we had time to explore the East, Nature and Tembaling trails and the access road. We had good views of five primate species including excellent and close views of Orang Utan and Bornean Gibbon. Other mammal highlights were Plain Pygmy Squirrel and Slender Treeshrew. Birding was hard work again but eventually we did connect with goodies such as Bornean Bristlehead, Crested Jay (less my achievement and big thanks to Adi, Siti and a pair of roosting Brown Wood Owls that were mobbed constantly by the jays), Black Magpie, a good selection of hornbill species, Rufous-tailed Shama, White-bellied Woodpecker and Yellow-crowned Barbet. Our efforts to see Bornean Banded Pitta and Giant Pitta were unsuccessful not in the least because they were rarely calling. We had seen all of the lowland wren-babblers on our first visit in 2007 so we didn't spend any time looking for them. Roulroul was one of my wishlist species. Siti once heard a faint call that may have been the partridge but we didn't get to see the bird. Just like in 2007 Great Slaty Woodpecker completely eluded us again, although I actually managed to see all the remaining woodpeckers on my wishlist: Grey-capped, Banded, Buff-necked and the funky Grey-and-buff Woodpecker, plus great views of White-bellied Woodpecker.

Although we had done pretty well on "blue flycatchers" in 2007, I was a little puzzled how difficult to see they were this time. Only Bornean Blue Flycatcher was seen twice throughout the entire trip. On our first trip we had seen Malaysian Blue Flycatcher daily multiple times in Danum and Kinabatangan, but nothing this time. Same for the hill/montane flycatcher species in Mt. Kinabalu and Crocker Range. We only saw an Indigo Flycatcher once.



*Banded Broadbill*



*Lesser Green Leafbird*

Finally a note on the accommodation options in Danum: Borneo Rainforest Lodge (BRL) or DVFC? We went to BRL in 2007 and loved it, but back then price and quality (guiding, accommodation, food, trails and canopy walkway) were pretty much at an optimum but even then the nightdrives at BRL were substandard in terms of vehicles and viewing opportunities. BRL is now almost four times as expensive and for that you get more luxurious accommodation than in 2007 and better food than in DVFC, but it is my impression that the quality of guiding, excursion options and night drives have not substantially improved. If luxury accommodation is not a key factor and cost is an issue (considering the current price tag of BRL, i.e., 350-400 USD per person per night), I don't think that BRL offers significant advantages over DVFC despite the notable shortcomings of DVFC.

There now is a third accommodation option in Danum called Kawag Danum Rainforest Lodge, which is more or less in the same price range as DVFC. The habitat is slightly different, mostly secondary/logged forest. Opinions vary but in general the birding appears to be good to excellent

and mammalwatching okay but not as good as DVFC or BRL but this may be a temporary effect until animals have gotten more used to human presence. I have not been to Kawag myself, but on a potential future visit I might go for a combination of Kawag and DVFC.



*File-eared Tree Frog*

*Tail-less Scorpion species*

### **Gunung Kinabalu National Park – Poring Hot Springs**

Poring Hot Springs has a reputation for slow birding, but I think we managed a new record of birdlessness here, but just like in Kinabalu it was way too hot, dry and windy during our visit. We got up early and walked all the way up to Langanan Waterfall. The best bird was the first one, near the hot pools, a lifer Grey-headed Babbler. And then it was over for at least 1.5 hours. Zero birds apart from a few calling Large Green Pigeons. Then two Bornean Whistlers and then nothing again up to the waterfall.

In one of the key zones, between about 2500 and 3100 metres, just sensational silence could be enjoyed, save brief views of two Sunda Bush Warblers once (and all this still before 7.30 am). On the way down there was at least some action: an Asian Fairy Bluebird, Black-naped Monarch and Rufous-crowned Babbler on their nests, a flushed woodpecker (almost certainly Rufous) and a male Diard's Trogon. Another flushed trogon was most likely another Diard's. On the way down I played the calls of the Poring specialties across the entire trail but absolutely no response. About halfway down we did notice some activity on a fruiting tree but we had to look up straight up into small viewing windows in the canopy. There were a few pigeons, a single barbet, bulbuls and a smaller warbler-sized species but for none of them we got conclusive views.

We ended the morning with a grand total of 8 bird species seen in an ID-able way in about six hours. I am pretty sure that this is my worst score ever for a full morning's birding anywhere. Mammals seen were two Giant Squirrels, a Brookes' Squirrel and unidentified small blackish shrew species.

## Gunung Kinabalu National Park – HQ area

The visit to this part of the park was highly anticipated (since it was one of the highlights on our previous visit) but this time it was the biggest appointment of the tour from a birding point of view. Compared to our visit 11 years ago, the place also had a lackluster and tired atmosphere with a maintenance backlog of years. Most frustrating was the fact that the Bukit Ular and Liwagu trails were still closed and have been so for ages; one does wonder where all the tourist revenue is spent on. Birding the far upper end of the Silau Silau trail after 9 am was about as pleasant as birding along the motorway near my hometown; a constant stream of SUVs and minibuses races up and down the mountain between about 8.30 and 4.30 pm. Hearing bird calls here was quite a challenge at times. And unlike our first visit, packs of feral dogs were seen marauding through the park several times.

Our first morning in the park we started at Timpohon gate (literally zero birds), a few Little Cuckoo Doves on the road, then the upper Mempening Trail (zero birds and near-complete silence along the trail). On the upper Silau Silau trail we finally encountered some signs of bird life, but even here the activity was way below average. Back on the road we ran into one of the researchers doing a survey on breeding birds. He confirmed that a storm a couple days earlier had brought very dry, hot and windy weather and since then activity had almost completely collapsed. Most remarkable throughout our visit was the absence (or more accurately non-viewability) of the common hill/montane species of the park.



*Whitehead's Trogon*

To add insult to injury, on the first morning we were ready to install ourselves for a garbage bin mammalwatching session at Timpohon gate when seconds later the garbage man showed up and removed all garbage bags from the shed. By Hercules, why! A few squirrels and one treeshrew remained in the area, but it was no comparison to the rather busy frenzy of the preceding evening. Mammal activity around the garbage bin never quite recovered to the level of the first evening (when we also had Masked Palm Civet near the garbage bin).

The second full day in the park the temperature went down a bit, but it remained windy and overall activity remained substandard. We spent most of the morning in the cooler areas (lower Liwagu Trail and Silau Silau Trail) where activity had not died completely. Highlights were Whitehead's Trogon, Whitehead's Broadbill on the nest, Bornean Laughingthrush, Bornean Flowerpecker and Bornean Forktail – total species count for the entire morning was a meagre 15. After lunch we walked the Kiau View Trail (grand total of 9 species). Best birds were a Mountain Barbet at eye level and Sunda Cuckooshrike. But late afternoon the weather changed rather abruptly when out of the blue it started raining. I first thought it would just be an extended shower but after waiting for two hours in the car I called it a day and headed back to the accommodation. In the evening the rain got even stronger so spotlighting plans had to be cancelled.



*Whitehead's Broadbill*

Note on accommodation: I still think staying inside the park would be preferable, but when inquiring about a stay in Hill Lodge Sutera quoted me 200 Euro per night for a room (that is a more than 100% price increase compared to 2007 for accommodation that essentially appeared to be the same and 11 years older). The cheaper accommodation options inside the park were sold out when I inquired.

### **Crocker Range NP (Rafflesia Reserve, Gunung Alab, Inobong Station)**

A rather frustrating park with a serious shortage of good trails. The Rafflesia Information Centre (RIC) was still closed. So we had to resort to birding along the busy road, which was downright annoying. By far the most unpleasant site of the trip. The birding here was abysmal on two visits (<5 species). There were people at the RIC but my hints to let me bird around the buildings were ignored

completely. The Mosakob Waterfall area down the road appears to be in a state of permanent neglect and the roadside birding is almost as unpleasant, but at least this area had better birding. The first visit (around 8-9 am) was practically birdless, but my second visit (between 3 and 5.30 pm) was quite productive and produced among others Long-tailed Broadbill, Bornean Leafbird, Ashy Drongo, Mountain Serpent Eagle and Mountain Barbet.

Much more pleasant though was the quiet road opposite Gunung Alab Resort that leads up to the radio tower and another ranger station of the park. The accommodation (or maybe more accurately its location) actually looked quite nice. Driving up the road is not really necessary and I would recommend walking up and down the road, although the road is easy to negotiate with a normal sedan car at least up to the station (some potholes though). Birding was exceptionally poor here on our first visit (midmorning); a local birder that was guiding a group of Indian photographers had been here all morning and he confirmed that also for them activity had been extremely bad (<10 species). On my second visit in the afternoon (2-3.30 pm) a day later, it was significantly cooler and less windy and I finally got a flock that resembled something like normal activity, but only common species were seen (see trip list).

Our last stop in Crocker Range NP was Inobong Station, which may be a little hard to find but check Google Maps and get a route description. Please note that after you turn onto Jalang Inobong Terian there are a couple of bad potholed stretches (about between about kilometre 2 and 3 from the start) but even with our simple sedan they were easy to negotiate when driven with care. The road improves significantly after the last cluster of houses and the last stretch up to the Inobong entrance gate and Sinurambi B&B is fine. The drive from Inobong Station to Gunung Alab took about 60-70 minutes in both directions, because you spend a lot of time behind slow cars or trucks and options for overtaking are limited on some stretches.



*Long-tailed Broadbill*



*Bornean Swiftlet*

The road from the Inobong entrance gate up to the actual ranger station is extremely steep! The trails around the station are all steep or very steep as well, making birding less optimal than it could be. The concept of contour trails has unfortunately never reached the Crocker Range National Park. That said, Inobong was the only site on this tour with a morning bird choir that approached something that you would expect in a tropical area. Species recorded included Red-bearded Bee-eater, Green Broadbill, Spotted Fantail, Chestnut-collared Kingfisher (responded to tape but wouldn't show), Scarlet-trumped Trogon, Yellow-vented Flowerpecker (just outside the entrance gate) and Red-crowned and Blue-eared Barbet on a fruiting fig tree.



*Maroon Langur*



*Bornean Gibbon*

### **Books and Trip reports**

For quick reference I carried the out-of-print *Pocket Guide to the Birds of Borneo* (C.M. Francis) in my backpack in Kinabalu and Crocker Range, but also had the second edition of the Phillipps guide, which is pretty good overall, but is rather poor in giving good ID tips on a number of similar looking species and for some species the description and the actual image seem to contradict each other. Siti had the most recent edition of the Phillipps guide with several plates replaced (sunbirds, flowerpeckers, and a few others). The new plates have more of an “oil-painting” style, which I thought were more confusing and less attractive than the plates in earlier editions.

For mammals I used my old guide, *A Field Guide to the Mammals of Borneo*, by J. Payne, C.M. Francis, and K. Phillipps, which still does the job. But Siti had also brought along the newer mammal guide by the Phillipps’s, *Field Guide to the Mammals of Borneo and Their Ecology: Sabah, Sarawak, Brunei, and Kalimantan*, which is excellent indeed.

Birding trip reports that I found particularly useful were the following: [Hofland \(2013\)](#), [Poulsen \(2012\)](#), [Baruah \(2015\)](#), [Grundsten \(2015\)](#), and [Lebrun \(2017\)](#). For mammals I simply read all the reports on Mammalwatching.com.



*Record shot of Banded Palm Civet and Malay Civet*

## Trip Lists

### Acronyms

DFR = Deramakot Forest Reserve

DVFC = Danum Valley Field Centre

GK = the Headquarters area of Mount Kinabalu National Park

INO = Inobong Station in Crocker Range National Park

RDC = Rainforest Discovery Centre in Sepilok

### Mammal List

Slender Treeshrew *Tupaia gracilis* – one in DFR on the “Fruiting Tree” Trail

Mountain Treeshrew *Tupaia montana* – fairly common in GK

Lesser Treeshrew *Tupaia minor* – one on the East Trail in DVFC

Large Treeshrew *Tupaia picta* – one in GK

Large Flying Fox *Pteropus vampyrus* – two at dusk in RDC

Spotted-winged Fruitbat *Balionycteris maculata* – several sightings in DFR

Lesser/Sunda Short-nosed Fruitbat *Cynopterus brachyotis* – one in DFR

Lesser Woolly Horseshoe Bat *Rhinolophus sedulous* – one in DFR

Fawn Roundleaf Bat *Hipposideros cervinus* – 50+ in the bat cave in Poring Hot Springs

Western Tarsier *Tarsius bancanus* – one on a nightwalk in DVFC

Philippine Slow Loris *Nycticebus menagensis* – seen on most nights in DFR

Bornean Colugo *Galeopterus borneanus* – one on the nightwalk in RDC



*Bornean Colugo*

*Slow Loris*

Maroon Langur *Presbytis rubicunda* – three sightings in DFR, five sightings in DVFC

Sabah Grey Langur *Presbytis sabana* – at least three in RDC, shy

Pig-tailed Macaque *Macaca nemestrina* – a male on the canopy walk in RDC, three sightings in DVFC around the accommodation and entrance road

Long-tailed Macaque *Macaca fascicularis* – three sightings in DFR, several sighting in DVFC, mainly around the accommodation and entrance road

Orang Utan *Pongo pygmeus* – one in RDC, a male on the Ecology Trail in DFR, a female and juvenile in DFR, big male and female on the Tembaling Trail in DVFC

Bornean Gibbon *Hylobates muelleri* – 5+ on a fruiting tree in DFR on May 14, 4+ on another fruiting tree along the road in DFR, at least three on the Nature Trail in DVFC

Pale Giant Squirrel *Ratufa affinis* – a remarkably high number of sightings; at least three different animals in RDC, 1-2 almost every day in DFR and DVFC, one in Crocker Range NP



*Pale Giant Squirrel*



*Pig-tailed Macaque*

Prevost's Squirrel *Callosciurus Prevostii* – fairly common in RDC, a handful sightings each in DFR and DVFC, one in INO

Bornean Black-banded Squirrel *Callosciurus orestes* – easiest to see at the rubbish bin (Timpohon Gate) in GK

Plantain Squirrel *Callosciurus notatus* – one in Pasir Ris Park, regularly seen at RDC and Sepilok B&B,

Ear-spot Squirrel *Callosciurus adamsi* – two seen well at close range in the garden of Sepilok B&B, two sightings in DFR

Low's squirrel *Sundasciurus lowii* one in the Sunbear Centre in Sepilok, two in RDC

Brookes' Squirrel *Sundasciurus brookei* – one in Poring Hot Springs

Bornean Mountain Ground Squirrel *Dremomys everetti* – easiest to see at the rubbish bin in GK

Plain Pygmy Squirrel *Exilisciurus exilis* – at least three sightings in DFR (Ecology Trail, Management Trail and Fruiting Tree Trail), two sightings in DVFC (Tembaling Trail), one in INO

Whitehead's Pygmy Squirrel *Exilisciurus whiteheadi* – one along the road between Hill Lodge and the entrance to the upper Silau Silau trail



*Lesser/Plain Pygmy Squirrel*



*Whitehead's Pygmy Squirrel*

Jentink's Squirrel *Sundasciurus jentinki* – just one in GK  
 Black Flying Squirrel *Aeromys tephromelas* – one at close range in RDC  
 Red Giant Flying Squirrel *Petaurista petaurista* – 2 and 4 were easy to see (also in flight) from the canopy walk in RDC on the two evenings there, 1-4 seen almost daily in DFR, one in DVFC on the first night drive  
 Thomas' Flying Squirrel *Aeromys thomasi* – 1-5 seen almost daily in DFR  
 Dark-tailed Tree Rat *Niviventer cremoriventer* – one in DFR  
 Brown Rat *Rattus Norvegicus* – one in Lahad Datu centre  
 [Rat species – seen quite well in DFR but only by me; possibly Red Spiny Rat *Maxomys surifer*]  
 [Rat species – after the nighthike in RDC I saw a rat running around in the kitchen of Café Kueling]  
 [Rat species – only my wife saw a rat-sized rodent on the observation tower in Pasir Ris]  
 Lesser Rane Mouse *Haeromys pusillus* – one seen in DFR, another one was a guide-only sighting  
 Malay Civet *Viverra zibellina* – the number of sightings in DFR varied quite a bit (see table in main text), one on both night drives in DVFC, one briefly seen on the nightwalk in RDC  
 Banded Palm Civet *Hemigalus derbyanus* – seen twice in DFR  
 Masked Palm Civet *Paguma larvata* – seen twice (possibly the same animal) in GK  
 Common (Island) Palm Civet *Paradoxurus phillippensis* – one briefly seen on the nightwalk in RDC, at least 2-3 on every nightdrive in DFR  
 Small-toothed (Bornean Striped) Palm Civet *Arctogalidia stigmatica* – one sighting in GK, seen on most nightdrives in DFR  
 Binturong *Arctictis binturong* – one on a morning drive on a fruiting tree in DFR  
 Sunda Clouded Leopard – one in DVFC on May 21  
 Marbled Cat *Pardofelis marmorata* – one in DFR on May 14 and a non-tickable “sighting” of silhouette disappearing in the undergrowth on May 13  
 Leopard Cat *Prionailurus bengalensis* – one in DFR on May 16



Leopard Cat



*Bornean Pygmy Elephant*

Bornean Pygmy Elephant *Elephas maximus* – seen on four days in DFR, once in daytime

Bearded Pig *Sus barbatus* – according to Siti activity/number of sightings in DFR (i.e., typically between 3 and 8) was above average for this species, 4-5 sightings of relatively tame individuals in DVFC

Lesser Mousedeer *Tragulus javanicus* – two and four on the night walks in DVFC, one on the first nightdrive in DVFC, one in DFR

Greater Mousedeer *Tragulus napo* – about 5-6 sightings in DFR but only twice pretty good views

Sambar Deer *Cervus unicolor* – common in DFR, lots of tame animals in DVFC in the lodge grounds

Red Muntjac *Muntiacus muntjak* – two feeding under a fruiting fig tree on the “Fruiting Tree” Trail in DFR

Bornean Yellow Muntjac *Muntiacus atherodes* – two on the sunrise drive in DVFC



*Orang Utan*

## Bird List

Red Junglefowl (*Gallus gallus*) 20+ seen in Pasir Ris  
Cattle Egret (*Bulbulcus ibis*) seen occasionally on route in Sabah  
Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*) seen in rice paddies on route in Sabah  
Great White Egret (*Egretta alba*) seen in rice paddies on route in Sabah, one in Pasir Ris  
Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*) two in Pasir Ris  
Oriental Darter (*Anhinga melanogaster*) usually 1-2 around the lake in RDC, about 2-3 on the road section with the ponds in DFR between the Western main entrance and the compound with visitor accommodation (see map in Richard Webb's report)  
Storm's Stork (*Ciconia stormi*) at least one but possibly two in DFR close to Balat station  
Crested Honey-buzzard (*Pernis ptilorhynchus*) three sightings of single birds in DFR  
Brahminy Kite (*Haliastur indus*) adult and juvenile birds at RDC and Sepilok B&B, one at Inobong  
White-bellied Sea-eagle (*Haliaeetus leucogaster*) one near Lahad Datu airport  
Crested Serpent-eagle (*Spilornis cheela*) fairly common in DFR and DVFC  
Mountain Serpent Eagle (*Spilornis kinabaluensis*) one near Rafflesia Reserve  
Besra Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter virgatus*) brief flight views of an accipiter near Timpohon Gate were probably this species  
Changeable Hawk-eagle (*Spizaetus cirrhatus*) good views twice in DFR, both the dark morph



*Crested Fireback*

*Changeable Hawk-eagle*

Blyth's Hawk-eagle (*Spizaetus alboniger*) an adult and juvenile seen in DFR, an adult in DVFC  
Wallace's Hawk-eagle (*Spizaetus nanus*) several sightings in DFR, a pair on and near the nest in RDC  
Bornean/White-fronted Falconet (*Microhierax latifrons*) one in the White House area in DFR on May 17  
Crested Fireback (*Lophura ignita*) a male seen well on the road in the White House area in DFR, a few tame ones in the lodge grounds at DVFC, a pair on the Tembaling trail in DVFC  
[Great Argus (*Argusianus argus*) heard regularly in DFR and DVFC, once tantalizingly close but no views]  
White-breasted Waterhen (*Amaurornis phoenicurus*) singles at Pasir Ris, RDC and Sepilok B&B  
Little Tern (*Sternula albifrons*) 15+ in Pasir Ris  
Red Turtle Dove (*Streptopelia tranquebarica*) about 3-4 in Pasir Ris  
Spotted Dove (*Streptopelia chinensis*) fairly common in Pasir Ris and RDC/Sepilok, also in INO  
Little Cuckoo-dove (*Macropygia ruficeps*) easiest to see in GK along the road up to Timpohon gate  
Emerald Dove (*Chalcophaps indica*) 4-5 sightings of single birds, seen in Sepilok B&B, DFR, and DVFC  
Zebra Dove (*Geopelia striata*) common in countryside/rural areas in Sabah, a few in Pasir Ris  
Little Green Pigeon (*Treron olax*) a handful of sightings in DFR and once in DVFC  
Pink-necked Pigeon (*Treron vernans*) five in Pasir Ris, seen several times on fruiting trees in DFR

Thick-billed Pigeon (*Treron curvirostra*) good scope views on a fruiting tree in DFR  
 Large Green Pigeon (*Treron capellei*) seen several times on fruiting trees in DFR, twice seen perched in DVFC but in rather poor light, also seen in flight in DFR and DVFC several times, heard in Poring  
 Jambu Fruit-dove (*Ptilinopus jambu*) frustrating flight views at Inobong, not tickable for me although I am sure it was this species  
 Green Imperial Pigeon (*Ducala aenea*) twice single birds seen perched in DFR, fairly common in DVFC, in particular when birding along the road  
 Mountain Imperial Pigeon (*Ducala badia*) brief views of two birds along the road near the upper Silau Silau trail entrance  
 Blue-naped Parrot (*Tanygnathus lucionensis*) poor flight views of four in DVFC  
 Blue-crowned Hanging Parrot (*Loriculus galgulus*) remarkably good views of a bird perched at eye level at close range in the Sunbear centre in Sepilok, a few in flight in DFR, two seen perched in poor light along the road in DVFC, twice groups in flight in DVFC  
 Long-tailed Parakeet (*Psittacula longicauda*) decent views in the White House area in DFR  
 Rose-ringed Parakeet (*Psittacula krameri*) several in flight above Pasir Ris  
 [Hawk-cuckoo species – heard in DFR, Siti called the species, but forgot which]  
 [Indian Cuckoo (*Cuculus micropterus*) heard once in DFR]  
 [Banded Bay Cuckoo (*Penthoceryx sonneratii*) a possible sighting in RDC]  
 Plaintive Cuckoo (*Cacomantis merulinus*) 1-2 usually present in DFR around the restaurant and chalets, heard regularly  
 Asian Drongo Cuckoo (*Surniculus lugubris brachyurus*) one in DFR  
 Common Koel (*Eudynamys scolopacea*) close views of a juvenile in Pasir Ris  
 Black-bellied Malkoha (*Phaenicophaeus diardi*) one in DFR  
 Chestnut-bellied Malkoha (*Phaenicophaeus sumatranus*) one in DFR  
 Chestnut-breasted Malkoha (*Phaenicophaeus curvirostris*) one pair in DVFC  
 Raffles's Malkoha (*Rhinortha chlorophaea*) a pair on the canopy walk in RDC, two sightings in DFR, one in DVFC  
 [Bornean Ground Cuckoo (*Carpococcyx radiceus*) heard in DVFC on the other side of the river from the Tembaling Trail]  
 Greater Coucal (*Centropus sinensis*) common, seen in RDC, DFR, DVFC, INO and on route  
 Oriental Bay Owl (*Phodilus badius*) one seen well in RDC



*Oriental Bay Owl*



*Raffles' Malkoha*

Sunda Scops Owl (*Otus lempiji*) one in Pasir Ris

Buffy Fish-owl (*Ketupa ketupu*) usually 1-3 every night on night drives in DFR

Brown Wood-owl (*Strix leptogrammica*) seen on three out of six night drives in DFR, a pair on a roost on East Trail in DVFC



*Brown Wood Owl*



*Sunda Scops Owl*

Spotted Wood Owl (*Strix seloputo*) a juvenile and two adults in Pasir Ris

Large Frogmouth (*Batrachostomus auritus*) seen in flight twice in DFR on our first attempt, unfortunately it always perched in dense foliage; our second attempt had to be aborted because of a heavy thunderstorm with lightning strikes relatively close to the road

Germain's Swiftlet (*Aerodramus germani*) 10+ in Pasir Ris

Giant/Waterfall Swiftlet (*Collocalia gigas*) a few at Poring Hot Springs

Glossy Swiftlet (*Collocalia esculenta*) common

Bornean Swiftlet (*Collocalia dodgei*) easy to see at Gunung Alab, both at the resort/restaurant and around the radio tower, we had good light here so the green sheen was easy to see; around Gunung Alab they were by far the commoner species, although Glossy Swiftlets were present as well

Silver-rumped Spinetail (*Raphidura leucopygialis*) fairly common throughout in small numbers

Brown-backed Needletail (*Hirandapus caudacutus*) seen at RDC and on route between Lahad Datu and Poring

Asian Palm Swift (*Cypsiurus batasiensis*) probably overlooked but remarkably few sightings

Crested Treeswift (*Hemiprocne longipennis*) only seen in flight in DFR

Whiskered Treeswift (*Hemiprocne comata*) fairly common when birding along the road in DFR near the compound, several usually around the accommodation in DVFC

Diard's Trogon (*Harpactes diardii*) heard only RDC, poor views of a male flushed in DFR on the Ecology trail, poor views of a male in DFR on the Fruiting Tree Trail, a male seen on the Tembaling Trail in DVFC, a male seen well on the Langanan Trail (Hot Springs)

Whitehead's Trogon (*Harpactes whiteheadi*) one pair seen well on the upper Silau Silau Trail

Scarlet-rumped Trogon (*Harpactes duvaucelii*) the commonest of the trogons, three sightings of males in RDC, also seen in INO, DFR and DVFC

Blue-eared Kingfisher (*Alcedo meninting*) one at the lake in RDC  
 Blue-banded (Broad-zoned) Kingfisher (*Alcedo euryzona*) seen twice in flight in DFR  
 Black-backed Kingfisher (*Ceyx erithacus*) twice in DFR  
 Rufous-backed Kingfisher (*Ceyx rufidorsus*) sleeping bird in RDC on the nightwalk  
 Stork-billed Kingfisher (*Pelargopsis capensis*) one at the lake in RDC, one flushed in the White House area in DFR  
 Banded Kingfisher (*Lacedo pulchella*) a female from the canopy walk in RDC



*Black-winged Flycatcher-shrike*



*Banded Kingfisher*

Collared Kingfisher (*Halcyon chloris*) common in Pasir Ris (7+ seen), one at the compound in DFR, a few on route in Kota Kinabalu (including one at the airport)  
 [Rufous-collared Kingfisher (*Halcyon concreta*) heard only, briefly heard but deep inside the forest in RDC, one in INO responded very well to tape but wouldn't move]  
 Red-bearded Bee-eater (*Nyctornis amictus*) one seen well at the restaurant in DFR, decent but slightly frustrating views of two birds on the morning drive in DFR on the road towards Balat, one heard tantalizingly close at INO but was then flushed by incoming pigeons



*Asian Paradise Flycatcher*



*Red-bearded Bee-eater*

Blue-throated Bee-eater (*Merops viridis*) two near Broadbill Tower in RDC  
 Dollarbird (*Eurystomus orientalis*) common in RDC and DFR, a few in DVFC  
 [Asian White-crowned Hornbill (*Berenicornis comatus*) Heard several times in DVFC]  
 Bushy-crested Hornbill (*Anorrhinus galeritus*) a group of five in flight at RDC  
 Wrinkled Hornbill (*Rhyticeros corrugatus*) a pair seen perched on the East trail in DVFC, two seen well in flight along the road in DVFC, a couple of times seen in flight in DFR

Wreathed Hornbill (*Rhyticeros undulatus*) two seen in flight from the East trail in DVFC, once a pair seen in flight in DFR

Asian Black Hornbill (*Anthracoceros malayanus*) the commonest hornbill on the tour, seen on most days in small numbers (2-6) in DFR and DVFC, a few in RDC

Oriental Pied Hornbill (*Anthracoceros albirostris*) easy to see in Pasir Ris (8+), three sightings in RDC, one along the road in DVFC on two afternoons

Rhinoceros Hornbill (*Buceros rhinoceros*) seen (almost) daily in RDC and DFR and a few times in DVFC

Helmeted Hornbill (*Rhinoplax vigil*) five on a fruiting tree in DFR, couples and small groups seen in flight in DFR about 4-5 times

Gold-whiskered Barbet (*Megalaima chrysopogon*) one in DFR

Red-crowned Barbet (*Megalaima rafflesii*) one seen well in DFR, one in INO

[Red-throated Barbet (*Megalaima mystacophanos*) heard in DFR and DVFC, but no tickable views]

Yellow-crowned Barbet (*Megalaima henricii*) one feeding at eye level on the Tembaling Waterfall Trail

[Golden-naped Barbet (*Megalaima pulcherrima*) heard only in GK]

Blue-eared Barbet (*Megalaima australis*) one seen perched from the canopy walk in RDC but rather distant, about 5-6 sightings in DFR, a couple of sightings in DVFC

Mountain Barbet (*Megalaima monticola*) one seen well at eye level on the Kiau View Trail, one high up in the canopy at the Mosakob Waterfall

[Bornean Barbet (*Psilopogon eximius*) frustratingly heard only in the Rafflesia Reserve area]

Brown Barbet (*Calorhamphus fuliginosus*) 2-4 usually present in the highest trees in the canopy in RDC, great views of birds feeding at eye level in a fruiting tree next to our chalet in DFR, a handful of sightings each in DFR and DVFC of birds feeding on fruiting trees



*Brown Barbet high on ripe fruit*



*Bornean Bristlehead*

[Malaysian Honeyguide (*Indicator archipelagus*) a bird high up in a Tualang/Mengaris tree was almost certainly this species (behavior matched), but the poor light on the bird prevented positive identification]

Rufous Piculet (*Sasia abnormis*) two near the restaurant in DFR, two along the road in DVFC

Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker (*Yungipicus canicapillus*) two seen in rather poor light in DVFC along the road

Rufous Woodpecker (*Ceelus brachyurus*) the commonest woodpecker, in total about 7-8 sightings (RDC, DFR, DVFC, Poring Hot Springs)

White-bellied Woodpecker (*Dryocopus javensis*) excellent views of one on the East Trail in DVFC  
 Banded Woodpecker (*Picus miniaceus*) one seen very well and two seen okay-ish in GK  
 [Orange-backed Woodpecker (*Reinwardtipicus validus*) poor views of one on the “Fruiting Tree” Trail in DFR]

Common Flameback (*Dinopium javanense*) one in Pasir Ris Park  
 Laced Woodpecker (*Picus vittatus*) two sightings of likely the same bird in Pasir Ris Park  
 Maroon Woodpecker (*Blythipicus rubiginosus*) one in GK – views could have been better, heard in DFR on the Ecology Trail  
 Buff-rumped Woodpecker (*Meiglyptes tristis*) a female in Sepilok B&B, a male in DVFC  
 Buff-necked Woodpecker (*Meiglyptes tukki*) a female near the accommodation and a pair on the East Trail seen well in DVFC  
 Grey-and-buff Woodpecker (*Hemicircus concretus*) a subadult at the Sunbear Centre in Sepilok, a pair in DFR, a pair in DVFC along the road  
 Dusky Broadbill (*Corydon sumatranus*) three sightings (twice at relatively close range) in DFR, twice in DVFC  
 Black-and-red Broadbill (*Cymbirhynchus macrorhynchus*) usually a few along the road or near the accommodation in DVFC, two near the Management Trail in DFR and usually 2-5 on or near the compound in DFR, 3-4 feeding on a fruiting tree at Sepilok B&B  
 Banded Broadbill (*Eurylaimus javanicus*) singles seen twice on the Tembaling Waterfall Trail, heard several times in DVFC and DFR  
 Black-and-yellow Broadbill (*Eurylaimus ochromalus*) fairly common, 1-3 seen on most days in RDC, DFR, DVFC, and INO  
 Long-tailed Broadbill (*Psarisomus dalhousiae*) at least five near Mosakob Waterfall  
 Green Broadbill (*Calyptomena viridis*) a male seen well in DFR, heard several times in DFR, DVFC and INO  
 [Hose’s Broadbill (*Calyptomena hosii*) not seen and not a hint of this species in Poring]  
 Whitehead’s Broadbill (*Calyptomena whiteheadi*) a male on the upper Silau Silau Trail and a female on the nest on the upper Silau Silau Trail  
 [Giant Pitta (*Hydrornis caeruleus*) not seen, heard several times in DVFC and DFR but caution is required because Black Magpie and White-rumped Shama expertly mimick the call, the latter especially on the trails in DVFC close to the accommodation]  
 Black-crowned Pitta (*Erythropitta ussheri*) one in DFR in the White House area, one in DVFC on the East Trail, the most commonly heard pitta on the tour  
 [Bornean Banded Pitta (*Hydrornis schwaneri*) not seen, heard only once fairly close but would not come closer, generally very unresponsive]  
 Blue-headed Pitta (*Hydrornis baudi*) twice a sleeping male seen on a nightwalk in DVFC, a pair seen well on the Nature Trail in DVFC  
 [Hooded Pitta (*Pitta sordida*) heard in DVFC and DFR, generally unresponsive]  
 Pacific Swallow (*Hirundo tahitica*) common, seen daily  
 Lesser Cuckoo-shrike (*Coracina fimbriata*) a female at DFR on May 14, a male at DFR, a male in DVFC  
 Fiery Minivet (*Pericrocotus igneus*) at least three pairs high in the canopy along the road in DVFC  
 Scarlet Minivet (*Pericrocotus flammeus*) a male at close range on the canopy walk in RDC  
 Large Woodshrike (*Tephrodornis virgatus*) one in DVFC  
 Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike (*Hemipus picatus*) at least four (males and females) in a flock in DFR  
 Black-winged Flycatcher-shrike (*Hemipus hirundinaceus*) a pair in RDC, fairly regular sightings in DFR and DVFC  
 [Straw-headed Bulbul (*Pycnonotus zeylanicus*) frustrating non-tickable flight views in DVFC]  
 Black-headed Bulbul (*Pycnonotus atriceps*) a pair on the canopy walk in RDC  
 Scaly-breasted Bulbul (*Pycnonotus squamatus*) superb views of one feeding on a fruiting tree near our chalet in DFR  
 Grey-bellied Bulbul (*Pycnonotus cyaniventris*) this attractive bulbul was seen 4-5 times in DFR, once at the chalets in DFR

Yellow-vented Bulbul (*Pycnonotus goiavier*) very common (15+) in Pasir Ris, INO/Sinurambi, RDC/Sepilok; also seen in DFR  
 Olive-winged Bulbul (*Pycnonotus plumosus*) two in Pasir Ris, several seen in RDC, at least once in DVFC  
 Cream-vented Bulbul (*Pycnonotus simplex*) three in RDC, two sightings in DVFC  
 Red-eyed Bulbul (*Pycnonotus brunneus*) common, seen in Pasir Ris and all sites in Sabah where seen almost daily  
 Spectacled Bulbul (*Pycnonotus erythrophthalmus*) about 5-6 sightings in total in DFR and DVFC, twice seen very well at close range  
 Ochraceous Bulbul (*Criniger ochraceus*) common and easy to see in GK, only a few in the Crocker Range NP  
 Grey-cheeked Bulbul (*Criniger bres*) seen in RDC, DFR and DVFC  
 Yellow-bellied Bulbul (*Criniger phaeocephalus*) about 7-8 sightings in total, seen in DFR and DVFC, once seen on a stop between Ranau and Tambunan  
 Buff-vented Bulbul (*Hypsipetes charlottae*) about 4-5 sightings in total, seen in DFR and DVFC  
 Hairy-backed Bulbul (*Hypsipetes criniger*) three sightings, all in DVFC  
 Streaked Bulbul (*Hypsipetes malaccensis*) several seen well in RDC, poor views in DFR



*Scaly-breasted Bulbul*



*Streaked Bulbul*

Common lora (*Aegithina tiphia*) several seen in Pasir Ris, one at KK airport, regular sightings in DFR  
 Green lora (*Aegithina viridissima*) one male seen well in RDC on the canopy walk, regular sightings in DFR, a few sightings in DVFC  
 Greater Green Leafbird (*Chloropsis sonnerati*) a pair once in RDC, a male in DFR  
 Lesser Green Leafbird (*Chloropsis cyanopogon*) common, seen almost daily in RDC, DFR, INO, DVFC  
 Bornean Blue-winged Leafbird (*Chloropsis cochinchinensis*) a group of at least five birds at Mosakob Waterfall in Crocker Range NP  
 Asian Fairy-bluebird (*Irena puella*) one on the Langanan Trail (Poring), a handful of sightings in DFR (typically on or near fruiting trees) and once at the restaurant in DFR  
 Bornean Bristlehead (*Pityriasis gymnocephala*) good views on the Nature Trail in DVFC, also heard on the East Trail, not a hint of them in RDC  
 Oriental Magpie-Robin (*Copsychus saularis*) at least two in Pasir Ris, usually 2-3 around the accommodation in DVFC, a handful seen at INO, a few seen on route between Ranau and Tambunan

White-rumped Shama (*Copsychus malabaricus*) fairly common, seen in DVFC, DFR, RDC and INO  
 Rufous-tailed Shama (*Copsychus pyrropygus*) one seen well on the Tembaling Trail  
 Chestnut-naped Forktail (*Enicurus ruficapillus*) heard only in DFR and DVFC  
 White-crowned Forktail (*Enicurus leschenaulti*) one in DFR on the Trail, at least two in DVFC in Tembaling Trail  
 Bornean Forktail (*Enicurus borneensis*) fairly common along the Silau Silau Trail and Liwagu Trail



*Yellow-vented Flowerpecker*



*Bornean Forktail*

Sunda Whistling Thrush (*Myiophonus glaucinus*) surprisingly common, at least eight seen on the first day in GK, a pair on the lower Liwagu Trail  
 Black-capped Babbler (*Pellorneum capistratum*) two in RDC, one seen very well at close range in DFR on the Ecology Trail



*Buff-vented Bulbul*



*Black-capped Babbler*

Short-tailed Babbler (*Trichastoma malaccense*) seen only once on the Ecology Trail in DFR  
 White-chested Babbler (*Trichastoma rostratum*) two on the Management Trail in DFR, a small group seen well on the Tembaling Trail in DVFC  
 Ferruginous Babbler (*Trichastoma bicolor*) once on the East Trail in DVFC  
 Moustached Babbler (*Malacopteron magnirostre*) fairly common, regularly seen in DFR and DVFC  
 Sooty-capped Babbler (*Malacopteron affine*) fairly common, seen regularly in DFR and DVFC  
 Scaly-crowned Babbler (*Malacopteron cinereum*) fairly common, seen in DFR and DVFC  
 Rufous-crowned Babbler (*Malacopteron magnum*) fairly common, seen regularly in DFR and DVFC, a pair in Poring Hot Springs  
 Chestnut-backed Scimitar-babbler (*Pomatorhinus montanus*) good views twice in DFR, heard quite regularly in DFR and occasionally in DVFC

Grey-throated Babbler (*Stachyris nigriceps*) common in GK and Crocker Range NP

Grey-headed Babbler (*Stachyris poliocephala*) one seen well in Poring Hot Springs

Chestnut-rumped Babbler (*Stachyris maculata*) seen quite regularly in DFR and twice in DVFC

Black-throated Babbler (*Stachyris nigricollis*) suboptimal views on the "Fruiting Tree" Trail in DFR

Chestnut-winged Babbler (*Stachyris erythroptera*) two in RDC, 6-7 sightings in DFR

Bold-Striped Tit-babbler (*Macronous gularis*) a group of about 5-6 seen well in a tree in front of our chalet in DFR

Fluffy-backed Tit-babbler (*Macronous ptilosus*) excellent very close views of 2-3 called in by Siti along the road in DFR

Sunda Laughing-thrush (*Garrulax palliatus*) common in GK, once on the Gunung Alab Radiotower Rd

Black Laughing-thrush (*Garrulax lugubris*) at least 2-3 seen well on the lower end of the Liwagu Trail

Chestnut-capped Laughing-thrush (*Garrulax mitratus*) common in GK, also seen on the Gunung Alab Radio Tower Road and near the Mosakob Waterfall

Brown Fulvetta (*Alcippe brunneicauda*) small groups once on the Tembaling Trail in DVFC, twice in DFR

White-bellied Erpornis (*Erpornis zantholeuca*) one on the canopy walkway in RDC, one in DFR

Chestnut-crested Yuhina (*Yuhina everetti*) common in GK and Crocker Range NP

Sunda Bush Warbler (*Horornis vulcanius*) two sightings along the Gunung Alab Radio Tower Road, one sighting on the Silau Silau Trail, two on the Langanan Trail (Poring)

Mountain Leaf-warbler (*Phylloscopus trivirgatus*) only two sightings of singles in GK and one in a flock on the Gunung Alab radio tower road

Yellow-breasted Warbler (*Seicercus montis*) not seen in GK! And just one in a flock on the Gunung Alab radio tower road

Yellow-bellied Prinia (*Prinia flaviventris*) fairly common when birding along the road in DFR and DVFC

Dark-necked Tailorbird (*Orthotomus atrogularis*) one along shrubs along the road in DFR

Red-head (aka Ashy) Tailorbird (*Orthotomus ruficeps*) common in Pasir Ris and RDC, occasional sightings in DFR

Red-tailed Tailorbird (*Orthotomus sericeus*) one in the garden of Sepilok B&B, a pair and a single bird in DFR

Mountain Tailorbird (*Orthotomus cuculatus*) one in a flock on the Gunung Alab Radio Tower road  
[Asian Brown Flycatcher (*Muscicapa daurica*) poor views in DFR]

Rufous-tailed Jungle Flycatcher (*Cyornis ruficauda*) one in DFR on the morning drive on May 13

Verditer Flycatcher (*Muscicapa thalassina*) 1-2 usually seen when walking the canopy walk in RDC, a pair at Sinurambi B&B

Snowy-browed Flycatcher (*Ficedula hyperythra*) a pair in GK on the Silau Silau Trail

Little Pied Flycatcher (*Ficedula westermanni*) a male seen at in GK, a pair at Mosakob Waterfall

Bornean Blue Flycatcher (*Cyornis superba*) male on the Ecology Trail, male on Tembaling Trail DVFC

Indigo Flycatcher (*Eumyias indigo*) just one in a flock along the road between Hill Lodge and the upper Silau Silau trail entrance

Rufous-winged Philentoma (*Philentoma pyrrhopterum*) one seen very well on the East Trail in DVFC

Asian Paradise-flycatcher (*Terpsiphone paradisi*) fairly common on the trails in DFR, also a few sightings along the road in DFR

Black-naped Monarch (*Hypothymis azurea*) fairly common in DFR and DVFC

White-throated Fantail (*Rhipidura albicollis*) one in a flock in GK, two in a flock on the Gunung Alab Radio Tower road

Pied Fantail (*Rhipidura javanica*) fairly common to common, seen in Sepilok B&B, RDC, Sepilok, DFR, and DVFC

Spotted Fantail (*Rhipidura perlata*) one on the Tembaling Trail in DVFC, remarkably common at INO

Bornean Mountain Whistler (*Pachycephala hypoxantha*) only a few seen at GK, two in a flock at the radio tower road in Gunung Alab, two on the Langanan Trail (Poring)

Velvet-fronted Nuthatch (*Sitta frontalis*) ok views of three along the DVFC entrance road

Yellow-breasted Flowerpecker (*Prionochilus maculatus*) one seen very well behind the chalet in DFR, twice decent views along the road in DFR

Crimson-breasted Flowerpecker (*Prionochilus percussus*) three sightings (males and females) in DFR, once a pair in DVFC

Yellow-rumped Flowerpecker (*Prionochilus xanthopygius*) three sightings of four birds in RDC, fairly common in in DFR and DVFC

Yellow-vented Flowerpecker (*Dicaeum chrysorrheum*) seen well twice in INO/Sinurambi

Orange-bellied Flowerpecker (*Dicaeum trigonostigma*) about 5-6 sightings in DFR

Bornean Flowerpecker (*Dicaeum monticulum*) a male seen well in GK on the Bukit Tupai Trail

Red-throated Sunbird (*Anthreptes rhodolaemus*) at least one male (probably more) from the “sunrise drive” tower in DVFC

Brown-throated Sunbird (*Anthreptes malacensis*) about 4 (two seen well) in Pasir Ris, 4-5 in RDC

Ruby-cheeked Sunbird (*Anthreptes singalensis*) a pair seen in RDC, excellent views in DFR near the chalet, also a few sightings while birding along the road in DFR

Purple-naped Sunbird/Spiderhunter (*Hypogramma hypogrammicum*) two sightings in DFR, one on the Langanan Trail (Poring), one on the East Trail and one on the Tembaling Trail in DVFC

Van Hasselt’s Sunbird (*Nectarinia brasiliana*) a pair in RDC, a few in Poring Hot Springs

Olive-backed Sunbird (*Cinnyris jugularis*) two seen well in Pasir Ris, males and females seen in GK and Gunung Alab

Crimson Sunbird (*Aethopyga siparaja*) a male at the RDC entrance

Temminck’s Sunbird (*Aethopyga temminckii*) a male in Gunung Alab, a male and female at RIC

Long-billed Spiderhunter (*Arachnothera robusta*) one seen well in DFR on the Ecology Trail, one in DVFC on the Tembaling Trail

Little Spiderhunter (*Arachnothera longirostra*) two at Sepilok B&B, regular sightings in DFR and DVFC

Yellow-eared Spiderhunter (*Arachnothera chrysogenys*) one on the canopy walk in RDC, one seen well on the East Trail in DVFC

Bornean Spiderhunter (*Arachnothera everetti*) fairly common in DFR but the birds were very flighty, a few seen in DVFC, of which two were seen well



*Bornean Spiderhunter*



*Grey-bellied Bulbul*

Eurasian Tree Sparrow (*Passer montanus*) common in urban areas and open countryside, but also in the compound in DFR and at DVFC

Scaly-breasted Munia (*Lonchura punctulata*) – two seen well in the garden of Sepilok B&B

Chestnut Munia (*Lonchura atricapilla*) regularly seen in and around Sepilok B&B

Dusky Munia (*Lonchura fuscans*) common roadside bird throughout Sabah, seen in all reserves visited  
Asian Glossy Starling (*Aplonis panayensis*) two juveniles in Pasir Ris, fairly common around INO and RDC/SEP

Common Mynah (*Acridotheres tristis*) occasionally seen in Singapore

Hill Mynah (*Gracula religiosa*) fairly regular, especially along the road, in DVFC, a few sightings in DFR, one at the Sunbear Centre in Sepilok

Crested Mynah (*Acridotheres cristatus*) seen in Sepilok B&B, RDC and in cultivated areas on route

Javan Mynah (*Acridotheres javanicus*) abundant in Singapore

Black-naped Oriole (*Oriolus chinensis*) common and easy to see in Pasir Ris Park

Dark-throated (aka Asian Black-headed) Oriole (*Oriolus xanthornus*) 1-3 daily in DFR

Ashy Drongo (*Dicrurus leucophaeus*) two in the Mosakob Waterfall area

Bronzed Drongo (*Dicrurus aeneus*) a handful of sightings in DFR

Spangled (aka Hair-crested) Drongo (*Dicrurus hottentottus*) two sightings in GK on the Liwagu and Silau Silau Trail

Greater Racket-tailed Drongo (*Dicrurus paradiseus*) regular sightings in DFR, a few sightings in DVFC

White-breasted Woodswallow (*Leucorhynchus*) fairly common and easy to see around

INO/Sinurambi, a handful of sightings of birds on wires on route

Crested Jay (*Platylophus galericulatus*) two seen well on the East Trail in DVFC

Black Magpie (*Platysmurus leucopterus*) heard several times and finally seen well along the DVFC entrance road

Short-tailed Magpie (*Cissa thalassina*) adult and juvenile birds were regularly seen in flocks at GK; at least 25 individuals seen

Bornean Treepie (*Dendrocitta cinerascens*) fairly common in GK, two at Mosakob Waterfall, one on the Gunung Alab Radio Tower road

Slender-billed Crow (*Corvus enca*) three sightings in DFR

Large-billed (Jungle) Crow (*Corvus macrorhynchos*) two in Pasir Ris



*Crested Jay*



*Short-tailed/Bornean Magpie*

## Other Wildlife

We only saw two snakes, a Bronzed Keelback in Danum and what was possibly a Bornean Black Snake in Kinabalu. Herps seemed less conspicuous than on our 2007 visit but we still saw a couple of dozens skinks and lizards.

Other interesting animals seen included a whiptail spider species in DVFC (page 15), a huntsman spider species in DVFC (photo bottom left), Wallace's Flying Frog in DFR, File-eared Tree Frog in DVFC (page 15), Cricket Frog in DVFC, a spiny-backed stick insect species in DVFC (photo bottom right), several flying lizard species, Band-toed Gecko and a bunch of other remarkably colourful geckos including the exquisite Peters's Bow-fingered Gecko (*Cyrtodactylus consobrinus*).

May appears to be an excellent month for butterflies and dragonflies with dozens of truly spectacular species seen but I did not keep notes on them. The lights around the chalets and restaurant in DFR and DVFC attracted a lot of spectacular moths and other nocturnal insects.

Insects were overall manageable. Leech socks (or good-quality football socks) are handy in most nature reserves and essential on the trails in DFR and DVFC. Leeches were not as bad as I expected. We encountered leech hot spots only a few times. Mosquitoes were present in lower numbers than you would expect and were rarely a nuisance, except for one area: at Sinurambi, Inobong station and the Inobong access road they were exceptionally active, persistent and voracious in the early morning and late evening. Inside the forest in Inobong mosquitoes were less of an issue. The low to moderate mosquito numbers in DFR and DVFC were compensated by at times unrelenting horseflies and other biting insects.

