

Brunei, July 2019

Six nights at Meriuk farmstay, hoping to see Hose's grey langur. Jungle Dave was the guide and collected me from Brunei airport. We arrived early afternoon and saw pied hornbills, changeable hawk-eagle, and blue-throated bee-eater on the drive in. A paradise flying snake crash landed to the ground from the tree right next to the porch within moments of landing for a pretty quick start. We did a quick walk around and saw garnet pitta and the family of pygmy squirrels which have set up home in the roof of the farmstay. They actually run over your arms and feet if you sit on the porch beneath their home. I couldn't quite believe it after having seen much more skittish individuals in Sabah.



The accommodation is situated at the edge of a durian farm with a forest with a few trails on the other side. I chose to go mid-July as I was told the chances of finding the Hose's gray langurs was higher before the durian fruited as the monkeys were more likely to come to the Terap trees inside the camp. We spent the late afternoon/early evening staking out the Terap but there was no sign of the langurs. Plenty of the black and white Prevost's squirrel and a couple of giant squirrels.

Around 8pm we went for a night walk and found a very low down Phillipine slow loris in the second tree we checked. Two more sharing a nearby tree, still within 40 metres of the camp. There were three more that night mainly around the farm but none along the trails in the forest.



A couple of lesser mouse-deer and some nice tarantulas followed. On the way back Dave took me to a tree very close to the camp that Colugos regularly frequented and sure enough there was one there, quite low down, licking the bark, though I can't remember whether it was the fungus or the sap Dave said they were after. There were two different colugos in the same area five out of the six nights.



Two island civets were making a lot of noise in the tree directly to the right, after which one came down sporting a fairly gruesome face wound and walked straight down the path at us until it was less than two metres away.

The second morning we staked out the Terap again until 9-ish but were drawn away by the calls of the Bornean grey gibbons and helmeted hornbill from up on the hill. We tried to locate them but failed and returned around 1pm with a group of long-tailed macaques and bushy crested hornbills our only spoils.

We were just about to leave the farmstay to visit the small restaurants at its perimeter for dinner when we got our first sightings of the Hose's gray langur. A group of five including a mother with a baby started to come down the hill almost into the farmstay grounds, but turned around and left, after giving some nice but fairly distant views.



We saw them again later that evening on the other side of the fruit farm. The male having come all the way to the ground to take the Durian seeds from some of the fallen Durian the pig-tailed macaques had opened up. We followed them as they made their way along the edge of the farm until they disappeared into the forest about ten minutes later.



Rain put a halt to any more night time activities. Striped palm civet could still be seen demolishing the Terap in the tree directly from the porch. Black flying squirrels were also about most nights, even in the rain.

Heavy mist and fog meant the following morning was very quiet. And the heavy rain that followed meant there wasn't much to report aside from a twin-barred flying snake that crash landed in almost exactly the same place as the paradise flying snake on the first day.

Day four brought silvered langurs behind the restaurant and a variety of squirrels, giant, Horse-tailed, and Prevost's. Pig-tailed macaque at the far side of the farm, and longtailed macaques. Then just as the rain was starting around 5.30, a different group of hose's langurs made an appearance and raided the Terap tree just metres from the porch. It was pretty much perfect. I'm not sure where else you can get such views of a wild hose's langur. They hung around for about twenty minutes then disappeared into the forest. Night time was more rain, and having just lucked out in Sabah with some of my main nocturnal targets I wasn't as eager as usual to trudge through the downpour.

Day five, we tried for gibbons all morning but gained just fleeting glimpses. We did manage to see White-crowned hornbill and Bornean-keeled pit viper though. Night time, we checked the tarsier trail up the steep hill behind the camp generator but didn't have any luck. Some large wild boar nests directly on the path put an end to our journey and we returned, finding another Keeled-pit viper for our troubles.

Another group of Hose's langurs that came to feed on the rapidly diminishing Terap in the late afternoon was the highlight on the penultimate day. They roosted in the tall trees close to the camp virtually assuring more views on the final morning. They were pretty much directly over the path to the tarsier trail so we canceled out plans to try for the tarsier again that night, not wanting to disturb them. We saw the usual suspects, loris, civets, colugo, mouse-deer. Interestingly the trees alongside the road that cuts through the farm seemed much better for mammals than the trails inside the forest. Silvered langurs in the daytime were also most common along the road just outside the farmstay.



The last morning, we had more views of the hose's langur then Dave took me back to the city for my flight home. Dave was great, with a deep knowledge of all the species and the best locations to find them and totally committed to getting the best sightings as possible.

