

Royle Safaris ran its Borneo's Rare Mammals Tour (with optional post tour extension to Tawau Hills National Park) once again in the late summer of 2023. Borneo is a staple of our mammalwatching group tour calendar and over the years we have recorded over 110 species of mammals, 200+ species of birds, 54 species of reptiles, 29 species of amphibians and even 7 species of fish (across the various different trips we have run); and we hoped for some more fantastic success on our latest trip in August / September 2023.

Borneo is without a question one of the most biodiverse and wildlife rich locations in the world. From enigmatic orangutans to pygmy elephants and from huge salt-water crocodiles to well-endowed hornbills the tropical island has some of the world's best known species. However it is also home to animals that most people have never heard of, from the very elusive Borneo ground cuckoo to the curious looking proboscis monkey and from the secretive sun bear to the misleading flying lemur; Borneo has many species which are just down right strange.

This trip will focus on a small number of probably the most elusive, endearing and incredible mammals here. Often shy and elusive there is a wealth of life to be found after dark in the forests of Borneo. From the top predator on the forest the Sunda clouded leopard and its smaller cousins, Sunda Leopard Cat, Flat-headed Cat, Marbled Cat and the near mythical Bay Cat to the more commonly seen civet species, colugos and slow loris; this trip will aim to showcase the best of Borneo's mammals by both day and night.

There is a good probability we will not see all of our targets, that is the nature of things when looking for the rarest and most elusive. But it is very hard to spend considerable time in the forests of Borneo and not see an impressive number of species (mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians). To help us in our quest for the rarest species we have the expert help from local spotters (this tour was guided by Mike Gordon – for the main trip and then Shavez Cheema for the Tawau extension), incredibly experienced guides and even advice and information from the leading biologists in Borneo. All of this, some specialist equipment and a huge amount of luck would be needed in order to be successful. But if you do not try you will never be successful

The main trip is based around three different destinations, firstly wonderful Tabin Wildlife Sanctuary; which has a very nice lodge and also a pretty good track record for Malayan sun bears as well as other species of mammals as their proximity (neighbouring) to a palm oil plantation means that there is a good amount of rodents around and this brings in civets and leopard cats and we hoped for good sightings of these, even if the sun bears remained hard to see on this trip. Tabin is also the location of the last Sumatran rhino in Malaysia. One old was kept in a pen inside the forest, a sad reminder of how fragile the forests here are and even sadder when this animal died a couple of years ago, leaving Malaysia with no rhinos at all. We then would have a couple of nights looking for the semi aquatic flat-headed cat along the shores of the Kinabatangan River (as well as enjoying the wonderful wildlife watching along the largest river in Borneo), before finishing in the wonderful and now famous sustainably logged reserve (low-impact logging) of Deramakot, which would produce Sunda leopard cat and hopefully either or both Sunda clouded leopard and marbled cat.

All of these forests have one thing in common. They may not be around (or their inhabitants as numerous) in the near future. These forests are some of the most under threat in the world, increasing human population, coupled with poaching and illegal logging are culminating in the forests and the animals they harbour becoming increasingly rare and endangered. But the single biggest threat here is the ceaseless conversion of forest to monotonous palm oil plantations. By driving around a good part of Sabah (one of the more wildlife and conservation focused parts of South East Asia) we will see first-hand the difference between pristine forest and monoculture plantations. We aim to showcase the wildlife and forests of Sabah as well as increasing awareness of the problems it is facing.

We will also have the guidance of passionate local guides and there are some fantastic conservation groups working tirelessly to increase sustainable ecotourism here and save as many acres and species as possible.

As many of our targeted species are nocturnal we will be spending a large proportion of our time in the dark, searching the forests and river banks with a spotlight; looking for the tell-tale eye shine of an animals eyes reflecting back the light from your torch. It is always very hard to predict what animals you may see when you embark on a safari, but one thing we know for sure with this trip to Sabah, Borneo: that is that we will see plenty and what we do see will either be endemic, endangered or elusive.

After the main trip three of our clients (Dario Nessi, Olga Allen and Rahul Kumar) travelled on to explore the Tawau Hills National Park (as part of our optional post-tour extension) with the expert guidance of our guide Shavez. This was a week-long trip to this remote and seldom visited park. The problem we ran into was that not any of the large fig trees here were in fruit when we were there (a few days after this group left, one came into fruit and many species of mammal were seen), but alas on this trip it was difficult. However there were sightings of **maroon langur** (including an unusual white morph), and some nice herping; we usually get more species but the figs scuppered this trip, in fact Shavez told us that in the 50+ trips he has run to the park, this was the least mammalian activity he had ever known.

Below is a run brief synopsis of the trip and then our species count in the following table and some pictures from the trip. The trip started in Lahad Datu with everyone's arrival and then transfer to the first wildlife watching location of Tabin Wildlife Sanctuary. Here the trip started well with great views of **north Borneo gibbons**, **oriental short-clawed otters**, a large male **Borneo orangutan**, the non mammal highlight for Tabin was undoubtedly a great Argus pheasant which flew across the road and then walked around (in view) in the oil palm and another nice bird species seen here was a Blyth's hawk-eagle. Other species seen in Tabin included the rare **Sabah grizzled langur**, **Sunda leopard cat**, **banded civet**, **Philippine slow loris**, **Asiatic elephant**, **large treeshrew** along with various rodents and civet species.

From here the group went to the largest river in Malaysian Borneo, the Kinabatangan River. Water levels were unseasonably high (which is happening a lot currently) and so trying to spot a flat-headed cat were very difficult and we failed in this, but we did see the other major targets along the river including **proboscis monkey**, **Sundiac silvered langur** and **southern pig-tailed macaque** and others.

The third and final location was Deramakot, with a week here and many long night drives we were rewarded with sightings of various bat species, rodents, many **slow loris**, **Borneo orangutans, binturong, north Borneo gibbons, moonrat,** and many more. The non-mammal highlight here was a 5m reticulated python, what an incredible species to see in the open and of a huge size too.

We also made a brief stop at Sepilok at the end of the trip as there were last minute changes to the accommodation in Deramakot (the forestry department cancelled all bookings due to having to find room for a conference (or something) that they had planned. Whilst here we had a great time and saw **western tarsier**, **Philippine slow loris**, **Sunda colugo** and Wagler's pit viper.

As well as mammals, below we have listed the birds, reptiles and amphibians seen on the trip.

We are Royle Safaris remains committed to trying to establish small-scale sustainable eco tourism centred around some of the world's rarest and little seen mammal species. So anyone who is interested in looking for such an animal (such as the elusive nocturnal wildlife of Borneo or any other animals) and cannot find a means of getting a trip together or is struggling to find like minded people to travel with; contact us (info@royle-safaris.co.uk) we have a network of local guides, researchers and conservationists around the world as well as a large following of clients and so are uniquely situated to put together pioneering mammalwatching trips and get small groups together for such trips. Or we can arrange private tours if you do not want to be in a small group. Any and all options are possible and we look forward to hearing from you and working on the next rare mammalwatching expedition.

We have filled our 2024 Borneo Rare Mammals Tour and optional post tour extension to Tawau Hills National Park, but have set some dates (and have bookings already) for our 2025 group tour if anyone is interested please get in touch.

Species List

Borneo's Rare Mammals Tour & Tawau Hills Extension – Aug/Sep 2023

Mammals

	Common Name	Binominal Name
1	Black Flying Squirrel	Aeromys tephromelas
2	Thomas's Flying Squirrel	Aeromys thomasi
3	Oriental Small Clawed Otter	Aonyx cinereus
4	Binturong	Arctictis binturong
5	Bornean Striped Palm Civet	Arctogalidia stigmatica
6	Ear-spot squirrel	Callosciurus adamsi
7	Plantain Squirrel	Callosciurus notatus
8	Prevost's Squirrel	Callosciurus prevostii
9	Western Tarsier	Cephalopachus bancanus
10	Sambar Deer	Cervus unicolor
11	Grey-bellied pencil-tailed tree-mouse	Chiropodomys muroides
12	Lesser Short Nosed Fruit Bat	Cynopterus brachyotis
13	Moonrat	Echinosorex gymnura
14	Asiatic Elephant	Elephas maximus
15	Lesser sheath-tailed bat	Emballonura monticola
16	Plain Pygmy Squirrel	Exilisciurus exilis
17	Whitehead's Pygmy Squirrel	Exilisciurus whiteheadi
18	Sunda colugo	Galeopterus variegatus
19	Greater Ranee Mouse	Haeromys margarettae
20	Lesser Ranee Mouse	Haeromys pusillus
21	Banded Palm Civet	Hemigalus derbyanus
22	Diadem Roundleaf Bat	Hipposideros diadema
23	North Bornean Gibbon	Hylobates funereus
24	Long-tailed giant rat	Leopoldamys sabanus
25	Long Tailed Macaque	Macaca fascicularis
26	Southern Pig Tailed Macaque	Macaca nemestrina
27	Indomalay spiny rat	Maxom surifer
28	Borneo Yellow Muntjac	Muntiacus atherodes
29	Sunda Skunk	Mydaus javanensis
30	Proboscis Monkey	Nasalis larvatus

Reserve (DER) / Sepilok (SEP) / Tawau Hills National Park (TAU)				
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31	Phillipine Slow Loris	Nycticebus menagensis
32	Island Palm Civet	Paradoxurus philippinenis
33	Hose's Pygmy Flying Squirrel	Petaurillus hosei
34	Red Giant Flying Squirrel	Petaurista petaurista
35	Borneo orangutan	Pongo pygmaeus
36	Maroon Langur	Presbytis rubicunda
37	Sabah grizzled langur	Presbytis sabana
38	Sunda Leopard Cat	Prionailurus javanensis
39	Large flying fox	Pteropus vampyrus
40	Cream-coloured Giant Squirrel	Ratufa affinis
41	Acuminate horseshoe bat	Rhinolophus acuminatus
42	Trefiol Horshoe bat	Rhinolophus trifoliatus
43	Silvery Langur	Trachypithecus cristatus
44	Lesser Mouse Deer	Tragulus kanchil
45	Greater Mouse Deer	Tragulus napu
46	Long-tailed porcupine	Trichys fasciculata
47	Slender treeshrew	Tupaia gacilis
48	Large treeshrew	Tupaia tana
49	Malay Civet	Viverra tangalunga

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Note: Some bats identified 100% at roosts or with good views. Others identified with spectrograms in combination with sightings (no spectrograms without visual confirmation are recorded as a sighting), behaviour and habitat – so not 100% but best educated guesses. For more information please email me.

‡ - Animals where signs were seen but not the animal

Birds

	Common Name	Binominal Name
1	Crested goshawk	Accipiter trivirgatus
2	White Crowned Hornbill	Aceros comatus
3	Wrinkled Hornbill	Aceros corrugatus
4	Wreathed Hornbill	Aceros undulatus
5	Javan mynah	Acridotheres javanicus
6	Common Mynah	Acridotheres tristis
7	Common sandpiper	Actitis hypoleucos
8	Common iora	Aegithina tiphia
9	Mossy-nest swiftlet	Aerodramus salangana
10	Eastern crimson Sunbird	Aethopyga siparaja

Key: Tabin Wildlife Sanctuary (TAB) Kinabatangan River (KIN) / Deramakot Forest Reserve (DER) / Sepilok (SEP) / Tawau Hills National Park (TAU)						
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11	Temminick's sunbird	Aethopyga temminckii
12	Blue Eared Kingfisher	Alcedo meninting
13	Finsch's bulbul	Alophoixus finschii
14	Yellow-bellied bulbul	Alophoixus phaeocephalus
15	White-breasted waterhen	Amaurornis phoenicurus
16	Oriental Darter	Anhinga melanogaster
17	Bushy Crested Hornbill	Anorrhinus galeritus
18	Oriental Pied Hornbill	Anthracoceros albirostris
19	Asian Black Hornbill	Anthracoceros malayanus
20	Red-throated sunbird	Anthreptes rhodolaemus
21	Plain sunbird	Antthreptes simplex
22	Asian glossy starling	Aplonis panayensis
23	House swift	Apus nipalensis
24	Streaky-breasted spiderhunter	Arachnothera affinis
25	Yellow-eared spiderhunter	Arachnothera chrysogenys
26	Thick-billed spiderhunter	Arachnothera crassirostris
27	Long-billed spiderhunter	Arachnothera robusta
28	Little spiderhunter	Aracthothera longirostra
29	Intermediate egret	Ardea intermedia
30	Purple Heron	Ardea purpurea
31	Great argus	Argusianus argus
32	White-breasted woodswallow	Artamus leucorynchus
33	Maroon Woodpecker	Blythipicus rubiginosus
34	Barred Eagle Owl	Bubo sumatranus
35	Rhinoceros Hornbill	Buceros rhinoceros
36	Helmeted Hornbill	Buceros vigil
37	Striated heron	Butorides striata
38	Brown Barbet	Calorhamphus fuliginosus
39	Green Broadbill	Calyptomena viridis
40	Large-tailed nightjar	Caprimulgus macrurus
41	Greater Coucal	Centropus sinensis
42	White-winged tern	Chilodonias leucopterus
43	Lesser Green Leafbird	Chloropsis cyanopogon
44	Greater Green Leafbird	Chloropsis sonnerati
45	Violet cuckoo	Chrysococcyx xanthorhynchus
46	Storm Stork	Ciconia stormi
47	Olive-backed sunbird	Cinnyris jugularis
48	Feral Pigeon	Columba livia
49	Oriental Magpie Robin	Copsychus saularis

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50	White Crowned Shama	Copsychus stricklandii
51	Lesser Cuckooshrike	Coracina fimbriata
52	Slender Billed Crow	Corvus enca
53	Red and Black Broadbill	Cymbirhynchus macrorhynchos
54	Fulvous-chested jungle flycatcher	Cyornis olivaceus
55	Asian palm swift	Cypsiurus balasiensis
56	Scarlet-backed flowerpecker	Dicaeum cruentatum
57	Orange-bellied flowerpecker	Dicaeum trigonostigma
58	Bronzed Drongo	Dicrurus aeneus
59	Greater racket-tailed drongo	Dicrurus paradiseus
60	Green Imperial Pigeon	Ducula aenea
61	Great Egret	Egretta alba
62	Little Egret	Egretta garzetta
63	White Crowned Forktail	Enicurus leschenaulti
64	White-bellied erpornis	Erpornis zantholeuca
65	Dollarbird	Eurystomus orientalis
66	King quail	Excalfactoria chinensis
67	Zebra dove	Geopelia striata
68	Hill Myna	Gracula religiosa
69	White-bellied sea-eagle	Haliaeetus leucogaster
70	Cinnamon-rumped trogon	Harpactes orrhophaeus
71	Whiskered treeswift	Hemiprocne cornata
72	Pacific Swallow	Hirundo tahitica
73	Purple-naped sunbird	Hypogramma hypogrammicum
74	Black-naped monarch	Hypothymis azurea
75	Lesser fish eagle	Ichthyophaga humilis
76	Indian Black Eagle	Ictinaetus malayensis
77	Charlotte's bulbul	Iole crypta
78	Asian fairy-bluebird	Irena puella
79	Streaked bulbul	Ixos malaccensis
80	Buffy Fish Owl	Ketupa ketupu
81	Purple-throated sunbird	Leptocoma sperata
82	Lesser Adjunctant	Leptoptilos javanicus
83	Chestnut Munia	Lonchura atricapilla
84	Dusky Munia	Lonchura fuscans
85	Scaly-breasted munia	Lonchura punctulata
86	Crested Fireback	Lophura ignita
87	Short-tailed babbler	Malacocincla malaccensis
88	Sooty-capped babbler	Malacopteron affine

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89	Rufous-crowned babbler	Malacopteron magnum
90	Blue Eared Barbet	Megalaima australis
91	Red-throated barbet	Megalaima mystacophanos
92	Buff-rumped woodpecker	Meiglyptes tristis
93	Blue Throated Bee Eater	Merops viridis
94	White-fronted falconet	Microhierax latifrons
95	Rufous woodpecker	Micropternus brachyurus
96	Bold-striped tit-babbler	Mixornis bornensis
97	Great Slaty Woodpecker	Mulleripicus pulverulentus
98	Blyth's hawk-eagle	Nisaetus alboniger
99	Red Bearded Bee Eater	Nyctyornis amictus
100	Dark-throated oriole	Oriolus xanthonotus
101	Ashy Taìlorbird	Orthotomus ruficeps
102	Rufous-tailed tailorbird	Orthotomus sericeus
103	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	Passer montanus
104	Stork Billed Kingfisher	Pelargopsis capensis
105	Fiery Minivet	Pericrocotus igneus
106	Scarlet minivet	Pericrocotus speciosus
107	Oriental Honey Buzzard	Pernis ptilorhynchus
108	Chestnut-breasted Malkoha	Phaenicophaeus curvirostris
109	Rufous-winged philentoma	Philentoma pyrhoptera
110	Crimson-winged woodpecker	Picus puniceus
111	Borneo bristlhead	Pityriasis gymnocephala
112	Crested jayshrike	Platylophus galericulatus
113	Malayan black magpie	Platysmurus leucopterus
114	Chestnut-backed scmimitar-babbler	Pomatorhinus montanus
115	Yellow Bellied Prinia	Prinia flaviventris
116	Black-headed Bulbul	Pycnonotus atriceps
117	Asian Red Eyed Bulbul	Pycnonotus brunneus
118	Yellow-vented bulbul	Pycnonotus goiavier
119	Cream-vented bulbul	Pycnonotus simplex
120	Silver Rumped Spinetail	Rhaphidura leucopygialis
121	Raffles Malkhoha	Rhinortha chlorophaea
122	Malaysian Pied Fantail	Rhipidura javanica
123	Spotted fantail	Rhipidura perlata
124	Crested Serpent Eagle	Spilornis cheela
125	Changeable Hawk Eagle	Spizaetus cirrhatus
126	Rufous-fronted babbler	Stachyridopsis rufifrons
127	Chestnut-winged babbler	Stachyris erythroptera

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128	Spotted Dove	Streptopelia chinensis
129	Brown Wood Owl	Strix leptogrammica
130	Collared Kingfisher	Todiramphus chloris
131	Large green pigeon	Treron capellei
132	Little Green Pigeon	Treron olax
133	Pink-necked green pigeon	Treron vernans
134	White-chested babbler	Trichastoma rostratum
135	Hairy-backed bulbul	Tricholestes criniger
136	Hume's white-eye	Zosterops auriventer

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Reptiles

	Common Name	Binominal Name
1	Gold-ringed Cat Snake	Bioga dendrophila
2	Dog-toothed Cat Snake	Boiga cynodon
3	Green Crested Lizard	Bronchoccela cristatella
4	Estuarine Crocodile	Crocodylus porosus
5	Taylor's bow-fingered gecko	Cyrtodactylus quadrivirgatus
6	Striped Borneoan tree skink	Dasia vittatum
7	Beautiful bronzebacked tree-snake	Dendrelaphis formosis
8	Painted bronzeback tree-snake	Dendrelaphis striatus
9	Common flying lizard	Draco sumatranus
10	Common sun-skink	Eutropis multifasciata
11	Borneo angle-headed lizard	Gonocephalus bornensis
12	Grey-tailed racer	Gonyosoma oxycephalum
13	Brooke's house gecko	Hemidactylus brookii
14	Asian House Gecko	Hemidactylus frenatus
15	Spiny hill turtle	Heosemys spinosa
16	Rough mabuya	Mabuya rudis
17	Reticulated Python	Malayopython reticulatus
18	Sumatran cobra	Naja sumatrana
19	Common mock viper	Psammodynastes pulverulentus
20	White-bellied rat snake	Ptyas fusca
21	Sabah forest skink	Sphenomorphus sabanus
22	Borneon Keeled Pit Viper	Tropidolaemus subannulatus
23	Asian Water Monitor	Varanus salvator

Key: Tabin Wildlife Sanctuary (TAB) Kinabatangan River (KIN) / Deramakot Forest Reserve (DER) / Sepilok (SEP) / Tawau Hills National Park (TAU)				
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Amphibians

	Common Name	Binominal Name
1	Cricket Frog	Amnirana nicobariensis
2	White-lipped frog	Hylarana chalconota
3	Dark Eared Tree Frog	Polypedates macrotis
4	File Eared Frog	Polypedates otilophus
5	Harlequin Flying Frog	Rhacophorus pardalis

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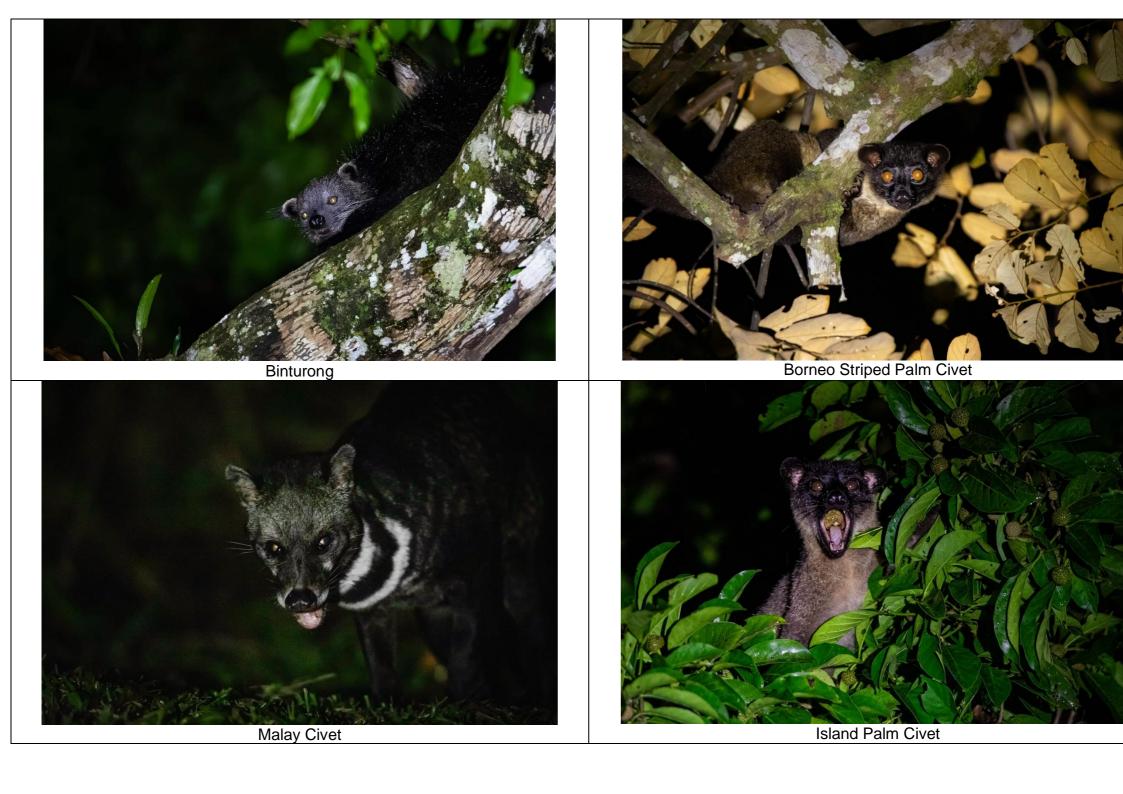
All of the pictures below are from Dario Nessi & Monty Ross with their permissions.



Asiatic Short-clawed Otter



Banded Palm Civet





Island Palm Civet



Sunda Palm Civet



Island Palm Civet



Sunda Leopard Cat



Sunda Leopard Cat



Borneo Orangutan



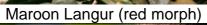
Sunda Leopard Cat



Borneo Orangutan









North Borneo Gibbon

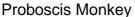


Maroon Langur (white morph)



Philippine Slow Loris







Sundiac Silver Langur



Sabah Grizzled Langur



Western Tarsier



Greater Mousedeer



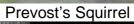
Great Treeshrew



Lesser Mousedeer

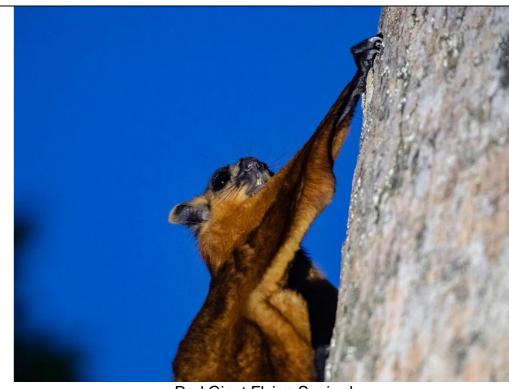








Sunda Colugo



Red Giant Flying Squirrel



Barred Eagleowl



Great Argus











Changeable Hawk-Eagle



Golden-ringed Cat Snake



Reticulated Python



Golden-ringed Cat Snake



Reticulated Python







Reticulated Python



Dark-eared Treefrog



