

Yet another Borneo report. Jan 14, 2025 – Jan 28, 2025

Cory Cravatta with guide Henry Sapinggi of Adventure Alternative Borneo

I don't know why I waited so long to write this report. I could say it has been a busy year without stretching the truth. I could claim it was from the trauma of not heeding the advice of others and traveling to Borneo during the peak of monsoon season. There are many reasons I could come up with for the delay in writing a report for this, my first, trip to the island. All would be true, and none would be explanation enough as with the passage of time, I have likely forgotten some of the pertinent details that were worth sharing here.

This trip truly begins with my flight in from Thailand as I headed straight to my flight/s to Borneo from Khao Yai (following my long ago last published trip report that I was much more punctual about writing). I had an overnight layover in Kuala Lumpur that wasn't quite long enough to justify getting a hotel room and due to the international travel, I had to collect my bags and clear customs. Much to my chagrin I discovered I would not be able to check into my flight to Sandakan until morning and had to spend a very long and weary night on the outside of security at the lovely Kuala Lumpur International Airport with all of my luggage (which is, frankly, always too much. I need to get better at packing). After wandering for about an hour in a vain attempt to find somewhere to sit down I happened upon one of my favorite airport finds ever, The Capsule Transit Sleep Lounge. They offered pay by the hour sleeping pods at a reasonable rate, watch your luggage while you rest, and even provide wake up service. Inside the pod was tight but cozy and comfortable and it had outlets for charging up everything. They even provided a little goodie bag of toiletries, a sleep mask, ear plugs, and slippers. If you ever find yourself in a similar situation in Kuala Lumpur International Airport, I cannot recommend this place enough.

A few hours of extremely needed rest later and I was able to check in and board my Air Asia flight to Sandakan. This was my first time flying Air Asia and my biggest take away from the experience was they were very friendly, the service was good, and the seats were not at all made with the body size of a Midwest American in mind. Had I not been fortunate enough to have an empty seat next to me, I'm not convinced I would have been able to fit.

I cannot overly emphasize how excited I was for this leg of my trip. After reading everyone's Borneo trip reports for so long, I was finally going for myself, and I was practically giddy with anticipation. As the plane descended into Sandakan the water droplets started hitting my window, the brilliant green of the island that I could see from above was taking on the soft edged, dappled, and streaked appearance of a Monet or Morisot in the rivulets of rain streaming down my window and pelting the fuselage of the plane. No bother, I was finally here, the place I had long dreamed of visiting. I disembarked

in the deluge and got my first sticky sweet inhalation of the Bornean earthy, wet, vegetative oxygen. The baggage was unloaded quickly but was still thoroughly soaked, and despite having a hard-shelled bag, my clothing was all thoroughly saturated inside it. I had only been in Borneo for about 20 minutes, and I was already beginning to wonder if I should have followed some of the warnings I had received about traveling there during the dreaded monsoon. I met my driver, Mr. Asadi, for the short drive to Sepilok and the Sepilok B&B.

Sepilok (Jan 14 – Jan 15)

The first half of our drive together felt a bit like we may have been boating, as the roads were quite flooded and rain showed no sign of letting up. And then, miracle of miracles, just before we arrived in Sepilok, the rain abruptly stopped and sun shone through illuminating the little piece of heaven that is the Sepilok B&B, it was like something out of a cheesy movie and if it weren't for the few hours of sleep in the airport, I may have believed I was hallucinating. It was too early to check in so I availed them of a quick early lunch, stored my luggage, and headed out to try to find some critters.

Despite the heat and having no real idea of where I was or how far things might be I opted to walk to my first two destinations, both of which I was eager to visit but neither of which promised much in the way of truly “wild” wildlife: The Sepilok Orangutan Rehabilitation Center and the Bornean Sun Bear Conservation Center. The walk wasn't far, and I truly enjoyed watching the morning rain turn to steam on the road as I walked to them. Enroute, I saw a snake of some sort, but it was too quick for me to get a good look at it or a photo. When I arrived at the Orangutan Center, I learned that they are only open for the “feeding” times in the morning and afternoon, I was smack dab in the middle so my visit there would have to wait for the afternoon feeding. I headed across the way to the Sun Bear center where on the walkway to their ticketing window I heard a loud splashing noise, I peered through the dense foliage to see a troop of **Long-Tailed Macaques** (*Macaca fascicularis*) jumping from a tree branch into a stream and then climbing back up to jump in again, like children playing in a swimming pool.

After watching the playful Macaques for a while I headed to the ticketing window, paid for my entrance, and headed in to see the house the famous Dr. Wong built. I have wanted to pay a visit to this place for several years, and I was not disappointed. It is a wonderful facility that is doing incredible work on behalf of these little understood, little studied, and threatened creatures. While observing the bears from one of the walkways I noticed movement in a nearby tree and ended up getting a great view of my first **Prevost's Squirrel** (*Callosciurus prevostii*). While taking photos of the squirrel I was approached by a gentleman and we had a great conversation about the facility, the other wildlife that is sometimes seen in and around there, and the great work they are doing there. This man

turned out to be Dr. Wong himself, and I felt very honored to have had the opportunity to have a chat with him.

A bit more time on the boardwalks, followed by too much time in the gift shop, and it was time to head out to see what else I might see while waiting for the Orangutan Center to open. As I was heading down the walkway back towards the road, lost in my own thoughts, I caught movement in the trees that turned out to be my first ever **Bornean Orangutan/s** (*Pongo pygmaeus*), a female with a baby. I had no doubt that this beautiful creature was, at least semi, habituated due to its proximity to people, the Orangutan Center with its feeding platforms, and what she ended up doing next. She quickly left the trees and began walking



on the handrail of the walkway itself, heading my way. I took A LOT of photos of this beautiful animal while doing my absolute best to give her and her infant as much room as I possibly could, both for their comfort and, if I'm honest, because I was scared out of my wits having such an unfamiliar and powerful creature approaching me

the way she was. They eventually passed by and continued towards the Sun Bear Center's ticketing window, presumably to purchase entry and to view the bears. I later heard from other tourists that she ended up entering the gift shop, stole some snacks that were for sale to humans but not orangutans, and proceeded to eat them on the porch outside.

I spent the next couple of hours relaxing outside and chit chatting with the local drivers, that were hanging in the Orangutan Center's parking lot in hopes of getting fares, until it was time for the center's gates to open so I could enter and witness the feeding. For those that don't know, the Sepilok Orangutan Rehabilitation Center's primary mission is to care for and rehabilitate orphaned orangutans. Once these orangutans have grown enough, they are released into the surrounding forest. Due to their contact with humans, these orangutans are pretty much all habituated to human presence. They put food out on

platforms twice a day and the orangutans will come in from the forest for the free meal. The ultimate hope is for the animals to learn to live and survive in the forest on their own without needing to return to the center for free food. Watching the afternoon feeding was quite a spectacle. The day I visited there was anywhere from 20-30 Orangutans present, even the employee at the



viewing area was surprised by the numbers. The employee also informed me that a good number of those present were Orangutans that had not been raised there and had not previously been seen showing up. I'm not sure if that's indicative of problems with natural food availability in the forest or if I just happened to be there on a day that a bunch of them decided to try something new but, either way, there were a lot of these beautiful apes there that day to watch and admire.

As I was leaving the feeding a light rain began prompting me to forgo walking back, choosing instead to take a ride to the lodge from one of my new friends in the parking lot. I checked in, dropped my overabundance of luggage in my second-floor room, and headed back to the dining area to relax and have a beverage. Shortly thereafter it was time to head off for the Rainforest Discovery Center for a night walk.

I suspect night walks here are all similar, as other reports I have read sounded nearly identical to what my experience was. It began with a visit to a canopy walkway to watch **Red Giant Flying Squirrels** (*Petaurista petaurista*) emerge from manmade nest boxes where multiple different guides, with various tones and shades of light, would all immediately spotlight them in a way that made photos technically possible but unappealing. As I had opted for a private walk, the group ended up being myself and not one but two guides/spotters which I hoped meant we were going to have improved odds of seeing my two biggest targets here, the Philippine Slow Loris and Horsfield's Tarsier. During our walk we did get lucky enough to spot the **Philippine Slow Loris** (*Nycticebus*



menagensis) but struck out on the Tarsier, another group not far from us on the trail saw a Tarsier but it had leaped away by the time we arrived, and we were unable to locate it. Other than the Loris and the Red Giant Flying Squirrels, the only things we spotted at all were a scorpion, a **Bornean Keeled Pit Viper**

(*Tropidolaemus subannulatus*), and a few sleeping birds but no other mammals. However, on my walk back to the lodge I did encounter another mammal species in the form of a pack of dogs that was circling and following me in a way that made me feel quite uncomfortable. I ended up using a trick for feral dogs that was shown to me by locals in Samoa that, essentially, involves facing them while making a hissing noise and it worked in getting them to back off and leave.

The following morning, I enjoyed a lovely breakfast and headed to my room to start dragging my things down to await my ride. While in the room the sky opened and began dumping one of the biggest rains I have ever witnessed in my life. I stood at my window awe struck by how much water was falling from the sky while, simultaneously, wondering how the hell I was going to get my stuff back to the lodge without all my, now dry, clothes and camera gear not getting wet. I hauled my big bag and some things down the stairs and headed back to the room for my camera backpack when the rain let up. I took that opportunity to rush out of the room and down the stairs when the combination of wet ceramic tiled stairs (why do they put ceramic on everything in Malaysia?), rubber soles, and being a, ahem, top heavy American all collided in my feet flying out in front of me and me sliding the rest of the way down that staircase on my rump and backpack somehow making it to the bottom without breaking either myself nor any of my camera gear that was strapped to my back.

Back on my feet, I managed to haul my overabundance of gear and luggage to the restaurant to sit down to catch my breath and have another coffee before the rain began again. A short while later my wonderful joyful driver, Mr. Boy, arrived to get me for a harrowing and flooded drive to Telupid, the gateway to my next seven days in The Deramakot Forest Preserve. Once we, somehow, managed to float/drive to Telupid the rain

stopped and I was introduced to the man that would be more than a guide for the remainder of my trip, he would be a sentinel. Together we would be drenched, muddied, stung, nearly crushed, stung some more, frightened, marooned, bruised, I can't overemphasize just how thoroughly waterlogged, share in a lot of laughs, some great sightings, and maybe a few beers. I didn't know any of this yet though. At this moment, all I knew was this guy was kind of quiet, seemed a bit reserved, and we were sitting at a small Telupid restaurant. This was the inestimable Henry Sapingga.

Deramakot (Jan 15 – Jan 22)

With full bellies we went to the store to grab a few provisions. Once provisioned, Henry introduced me to Max who would be our driver, and rescuer, for the next seven days and nights in Deramakot and we were off for the long, rutted, and muddy drive past the palm plantations and into the heart of the forest.

We arrived at the Deramakot lodgings and got settled in and learned there was some problem with fuel for the generators, and we would only have electricity for charging batteries, hot showers, and, crucially, ceiling fans a few hours each morning and evening (usually while we were to be on drives). Fortunately, my tendency to overpack meant I had plenty of spare batteries and I could endure sleeping in the heat. Once settled we ate a quick meal and headed out for our first night drive.

On this drive we (and by we, I mostly mean Henry's amazing spotting skills) spotted **Malayan Flying Fox** (*Pteropus vampyrus*), multiple **Small Toothed Palm Civets** (*Arctogalidia trivirgata*), **Malayan Civet** (*Viverra zibetha*), **Red-Giant Flying Squirrel** (*Petaurista petaurista*), and a very photogenic **Sunda Leopard Cat** (*Prionailurus javanensis*) with a kitten. We spent a long time with the leopard cats that evening as they were popping in and out of a bush to watch us. I never managed to get a shot of them together but did get plenty of each of them individually. After a while the insanely hard rains, that had already started to characterize the island in my mind, started up and Henry and I climbed into the cab of the truck to try to wait them out. Once it became apparent that this storm was going to last a



while we decided to head back for the night and get up early to try spotlighting again before sunrise.

Arriving to bed around midnight, it was quite difficult to wake up at 3am but I managed to get up and get my things together for our planned 3:30-4:00 meet up at the lounge area. I was encouraged to step out of my room into the muggy air and find it was no longer raining. Henry and Max arrived, and no sooner had we all poured coffee when the rain began again.

We waited for around 45 minutes with the rain showing no signs of letting up before we decided to call off our morning drive and go back to bed. As I started to head down the stairs to leave, suddenly I was looking up at the trees with the rain falling on my face and I was writhing on the ground. The combination of wet ceramic, poor footwear, and inattention had struck again and for the second morning in a row I had slipped and fallen on Bornean stairs. This time I didn't escape nearly as unscathed as the previous day. I narrowly avoided bashing my head on the hard ceramic, badly bruised my leg and back, and may have fractured my elbow (I never sought any medical attention, but it was at least 1 ½ months before the pain subsided and I could fully use it properly again). It may have already been there before the fall but there is a chip in one of the stairs there that, I believe, may have been caused by my elbow on the morning of Jan 16. Henry and Max were both



clearly horrified and concerned. I, perhaps a bit foolishly, brushed it off and tried to act like I was fine (an act I would continue with varying degrees of success for the remainder of the trip, that damn elbow hurt and jostling around on rutted roads in the backs of trucks did not help). That was the last time I took those stairs, or, indeed, any ceramic stairs, without being extremely cautious.

That afternoon, in an effort to prove to myself and the others I wasn't badly injured but just banged up a bit, I headed out on a solo walk around the lodge grounds for a while. I'm not a birder so I have no idea what I saw but I saw some cool birds and a really cool

large lizard of some sort. When I returned to the lounge area there was a troop of **Maroon Leaf Monkeys** (*Presbytis rubicunda*) in the trees around the cabins.

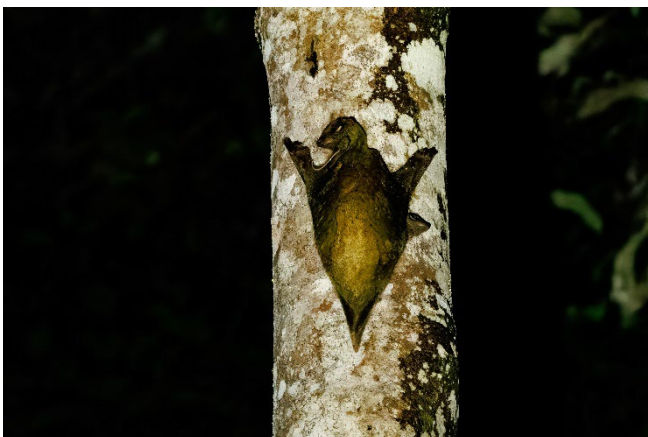
That night we drove, spotlighting, a good long while. Stopping every so often to machete a fallen tree out of the way or to escape the sudden downpours that would spring up. Over the course of



the night we saw more **Small Toothed Palm Civets** (*Arctogalidia trivirgata*), multiple **Sunda Leopard Cats** (*Prionailurus javanensis*), **Borneo fruit bat** (*Aethalops aequalis*), **Malayan Flying Fox** (*Pteropus vampyrus*), **Malayan Civet** (*Viverra zibetha*), **Common Palm Civets** (*Paradoxurus hermaphroditus*), a



Moonrat (*Echinosorex gymnura*), a **Sunda Stink Badger** (*Mydaus javanensis*), **Masked Palm Civets** (*Paguma larvata*), **Greater Mouse Deer** (*Tragulus napu*), a **Malayan colugo** with a baby (*Galeopterus variegatus*), and our truck was bluff charged by a grumpy **Bornean Pygmy Elephant** (*Elephas maximus*). All and all, a productive night.



The next night, in between downpours, turned up **Lesser Mouse Deer** (*Tragulus kanchil*), **Thomas's flying squirrel** (*Aeromys thomasi*), **Sambar Deer** (*Rusa unicolor*), **Malayan Porcupine** (*Hystrix brachyura*), **Thick-spined porcupine** (*Hystrix crassispinis*), and **Buffy Fish Owl** (*Ketupa ketupu*) in

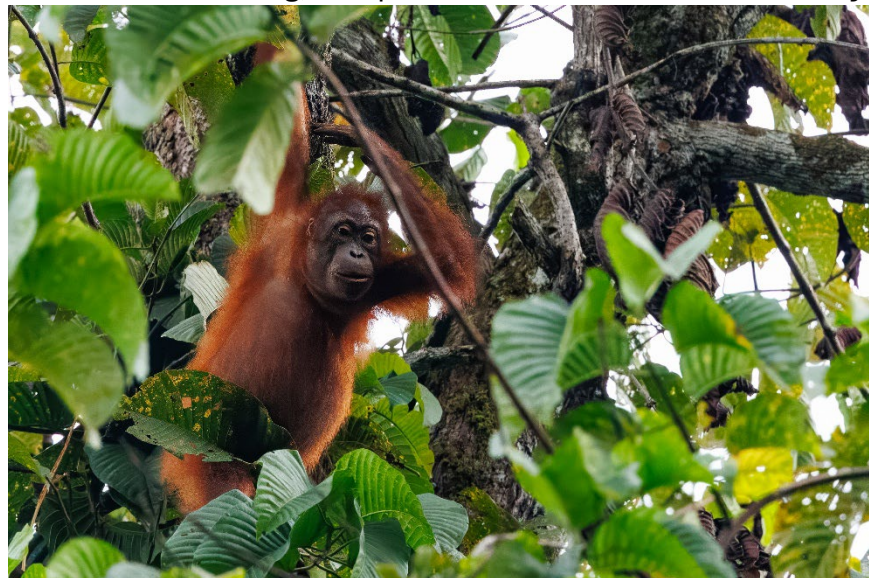
addition to more civets, more leopard cats (so many leopard cats), another Colugo, and another bluff charging elephant. Eventually the rain got to be too continuous, and we called the night early.

Day three started out in a sustained downpour. The winds were blowing, and we could hear the canon fire cracks of trees falling in the forest as their roots lost hold in the saturated soil. We spent a long and lazy day anxiously watching the skies for a chance of clearing while editing photos in the dining area. Sometime after noon the sun broke through the clouds, the ground turned to steam, and we decided to pack our dinner to go and head out for the night early. Within minutes of leaving, we spotted a lone **Maroon Leaf Monkey**

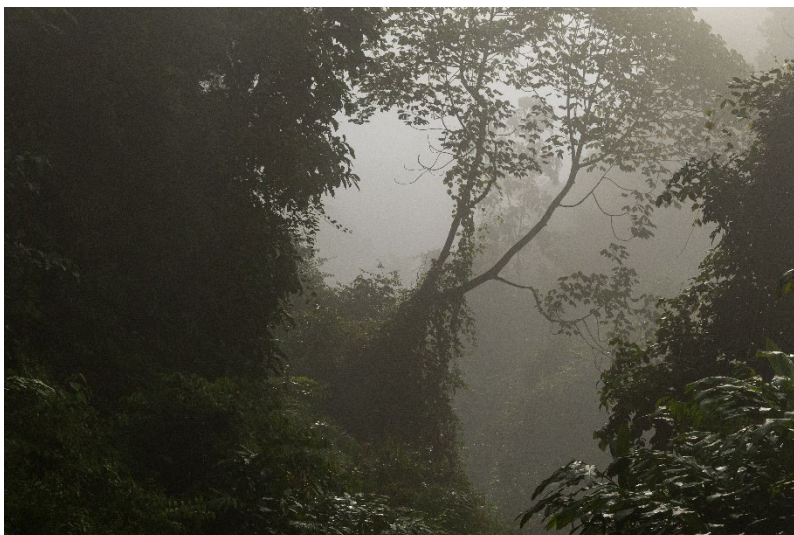
(*Presbytis rubicunda*)

high in the canopy
nearly immediately
followed by my first truly
wild **Bornean**

Orangutan (*Pongo pygmaeus*). Before darkness would fall, we would see at least 5 more Orangutans, including a mother with a baby, on this drive along with some



beautiful foliage and flowers and two troops of **Sunda Pig Tailed Macaques** (*Macaca nemestrina*), **Black Hornbills** (*Anthracoceros malayanus*), and a **Crested Serpent Eagle** (*Spilornis cheela*).



Just before dark we found a spot in the road that was relatively flat and not too muddy to enjoy our packed meal. Whilst eating Henry, ever the eagle eye, spotted a large, disc faced, male Orangutan building a nest in a tree that was so distant I will never understand how he spotted it. After dark, we began driving again with less

success than we were getting in daylight. The early portion of this drive, before the rain, turned up a couple of **Small Toothed Palm Civets** (*Arctogalidia trivirgata*), **Malayan Flying Fox** (*Pteropus vampyrus*), **Red-Giant Flying Squirrel** (*Petaurista petaurista*), another **Malayan colugo** (*Galeopterus variegatus*), and **Sambar Deer** (*Rusa unicolor*) but nothing we hadn't previously spotted.

After these sightings the sky opened and Borneo decided to show me that most of the rains I had seen previously were mere sprinkles compared to what was possible. As we weren't far from the one sheltered place along the road, Max gunned it to there and we hopped out to take shelter. The rain was falling so hard it felt like being inside the world's largest waterfall, we weren't more than 20 feet from the truck and could not see it. And then, just as abruptly as it began, the rain stopped. We loaded back in the truck to attempt spotlighting again, but a thick fog rolled in once the rain stopped and visibility was difficult. Our aim this evening was to get as far as the river, farther than we had gone previous nights. It began raining again but not quite as hard, so Henry and I stayed in the back of the truck, and I stashed my camera in my dry bag. After about ten minutes of fruitless searching in the fog and rain we rounded a bend and, for the only time in my entire trip, Henry's cool demeanor broke and he got extremely excited. I could see the creature scurrying in the brush but had no idea what it was. I fumbled with my dry bag for the camera and managed



to get a few bad shots of what would turn out to be one of the best sightings of the trip, a solitary **Otter Civet** (*Cynogale bennettii*) (previously misidentified as a Hose's Civet). Henry tells me it was the first he had seen in four years and only his third or fourth sighting ever. I clearly saw its face and confirmed with guidebooks and google later but its face is not visible in any of my photos.

We were riding high on this sighting and fully believing that this was going to turn into our night for marbled cat, clouded leopard, or any number of other amazing sightings when it happened. We broke through the fog just as we rounded a bend and the truck just...sank. We were buried over the axles in the thick viscous mud that doubles as a road in the Deramakot Forest Preserve and no amount of switching between reverse and drive, going into lower gears, begging, or spinning tires was getting us out of it. We were 23 km from camp, getting swarmed and tormented by the ever present **Greater Banded Hornets**

(*Vespa tropica*) that were drawn in by the truck's headlights, standing next to a stationary truck in thick muck that nearly reached our knees, being bitten by fire ants in the mud, and by the time we admitted we were stuck it was nearing 10pm. This was not a good situation. While I was taking a mental inventory of our food and water and trying to figure out if I could manage the hike



back in the sandals I was wearing with my badly bruised leg and back and potentially fractured elbow, our driver Max came up with a plan.

Max's plan was that he, and he alone, would take Henry's light and would head on foot towards the river, 8 km away, where there was supposedly, a Ranger's cabin with a ranger stationed. He would get that ranger to call or radio for help. I did not like the idea of us splitting up but, deferring to his and Henry's knowledge of the area and the forest, wished him well and hoped for the best while Henry and I waited behind. Not long after Max left, while sitting in the darkness, Henry and I began to hear the unmistakable sound of a bull elephant trumpeting in the woods nearby. Having been bluff charged by elephants both previous nights, I did not give us good odds of success if this elephant decided it didn't like us or the stuck truck being on the road that night. I could tell from Henry's face that he was thinking the same thing. I asked him what our best course of action might be if that elephant showed up and he said, "hope it doesn't". After some thought and consideration, we decided our best bet might be to attempt to build a fire on the road as elephants are, supposedly, afraid of fire. After much effort, we eventually managed to coax a meagre fire out of some water-soaked wood pulled from the forest. I'm not sure if that fire ever kept the elephant away but it didn't arrive and creating our little smolder gave us a task to occupy our minds and ease our tension.



Suddenly there was a noise in the darkness. We jumped at the sound and saw a light. It was Max, returning much sooner than we had anticipated (he was only gone around two hours). It seems, while he was walking, he crested a hill and by some miracle his cellphone dinged. He had somehow managed to get a bar of service. He used that bar to call back to camp, literally, minutes before the power would be shut down for the night. At that very moment, there was another truck driving out the road to rescue us. In short order they arrived, managed to pull our truck out with a rope that should not have been capable of doing it, and we were on our way back to base camp with nary another sighting for the night but very relieved to be making it back.

The remaining days and nights were still rainy but less...eventful. We chose to drive pretty much whenever, day or night, the weather would allow and ran on very little sleep. We had many more sightings of **Maroon Langurs**, **Orangutan**, **Leopard Cats** (one night drive we spotted 6 in one drive including one walking the road with a rather large rat in its mouth), **Malay Civet**, **Small Toothed Palm Civet**, **Masked Palm Civet**, **Common Palm Civets**, lesser and greater mouse deer, **Sambar**, **Thomas's Flying Squirrel**, **Red Giant Flying Squirrel**, **Pig Tailed Macaques**, **Moonrat**, **Flying**



Fox, **Thick-Spined Porcupine**, and **Malayan Porcupine**. In addition, the remaining days and nights in Deramakot added **Banded Palm Civet** (*Hemigalus derbyanus*), **Black Flying Squirrel** (*Aeromys tephromelas*), **Phillipine Slow**

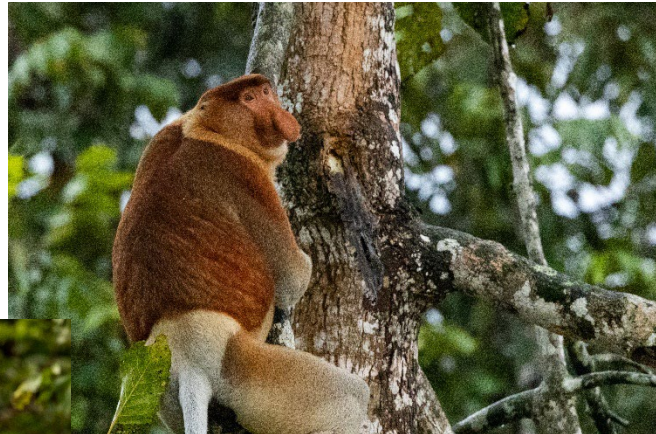
Loris (*Nycticebus menagensis*), **Lesser Pygmy Flying Squirrel** (*Petaurillus emiliae*), **Least Pygmy Squirrel** (*Exilisciurus exilis*), **Long Tailed Macaque** (*Macaca fascicularis*), **Long-Tailed porcupine** (*Trichys fasciculata*), and **Northern Grey Gibbon** (*Hylobates funereus*) along with a few more birds and a couple of cool snakes.

Alas all good things must come to an end. We drove the long muddy and rutted track out of the Deramakot and back towards Telupid where Henry and I bid a mournful farewell to Max and transferred into the vehicle of our old friend Mr. Boy. With that we were off to our next destination, the Borneo Nature Lodge on the Kinabatangan River where we would be the only guests. We were the only people in Deramakot for all but one of our nights there as well, it seems other people might be a bit wiser when it comes to traveling there in monsoon season.

Kinabatangan River (Jan 22 – 25)

The drive from Telupid to the settlement of Sukua began in light rain (my lightest of the trip) that quickly dissipated with the day turning into the clearest, sunniest, and hottest day of the trip this far. On the drive we had the misfortune of witnessing a **long-tailed Macaque** (*Macaca fascicularis*) run into the road and get hit by a car but otherwise the drive passed uneventfully. We arrived at the dock area; Henri and I bid Mr. Boy adieu, boarded our boat, and we were off for couple of nights at the Borneo Nature Lodge.

The plan was to get checked in and then go boating before dinner but before we could even finish checking in the sky opened into another intense downpour. Henri, some of the staff, and I sat under the covered porch of the lodge marveling at the raw fury of the rainfall while we imagined the nearby river rising to envelope us.



The lodge served us an early dinner right as the rain started to subside and we headed out to begin boating before dusk. Before dark we managed to check off a couple of troops of **Proboscis Monkeys** (*Nasalis larvatus*), a troop of a **Long-Tailed Macaques** (*Macaca*

fascicularis) and a few birds. After dark things got slow that night with zero sightings apart

from some sleeping Proboscis Monkeys, a single **Buffy Fish Owl** (*Ketupa ketupu*), and a whole bunch of **Greater Banded Hornets** (*Vespa tropica*) that were tormenting us all but especially our poor boatman. Eventually the rain returned, and we decided to call it a night.

I awoke the following morning to see the largest spider I have ever seen in my life on the wall of my room, a **Giant Orange Huntsman** (*Heteropoda borneensis*). I went to grab Henry to show him but by the time we returned it had gone...somewhere, never to be seen again. We ate a quick breakfast and headed out for a

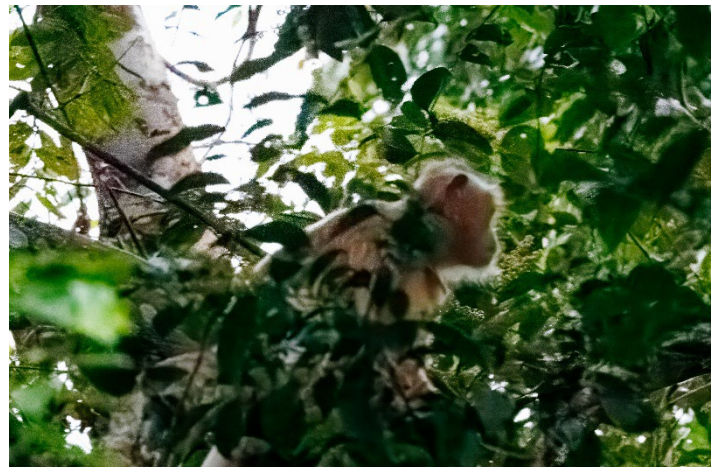
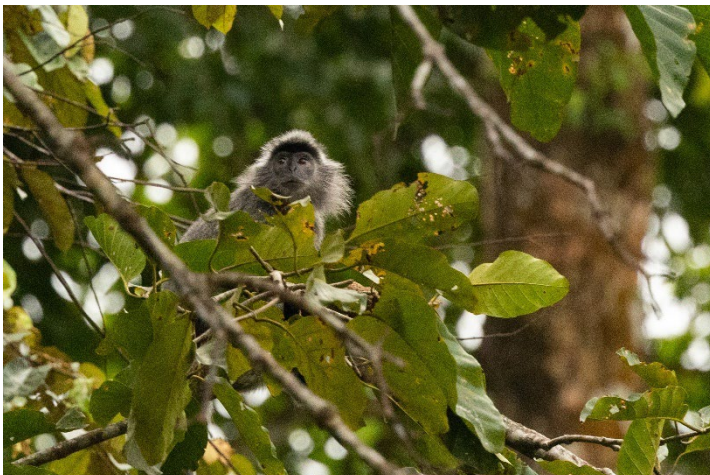


morning boat as an eerily beautiful morning mist coated the river and surrounding forest.

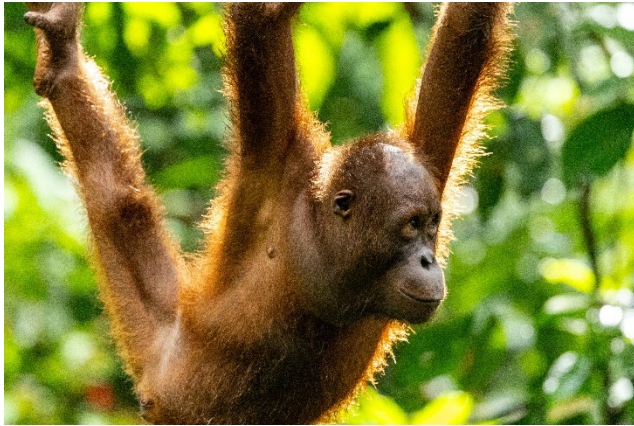


The morning's voyage turned up multiple birds, many troops of **Proboscis Monkeys** (*Nasalis larvatus*), the ever present **Long-Tailed Macaques** (*Macaca fascicularis*), **Sunda Pig Tailed Macaques** (*Macaca nemestrina*), multiple **Bornean Orangutan** (*Pongo pygmaeus*) including a

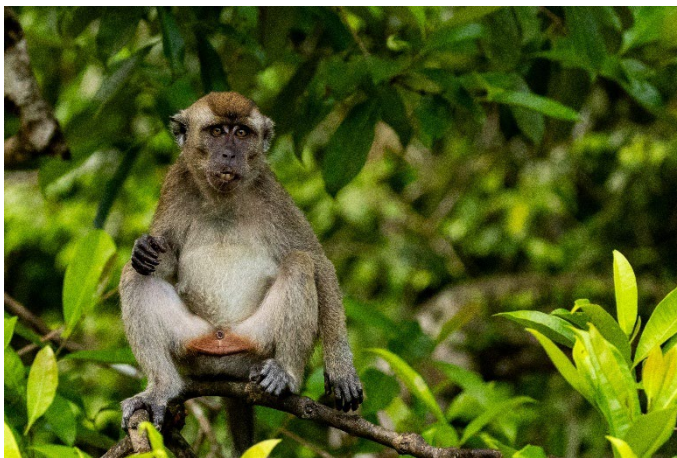
mother that had a juvenile and an infant with her, and **Silvered Latung** (*Trachypithecus cristatus*). The most exciting sighting was a rare color morphed Silvered Latung that had



retained the orange color from its infancy into adulthood. I got a couple of photos of this morph, but they are not good as I was having some issues dialing in my settings.



evening. Turning up some sleeping **Proboscis Monkeys** (*Nasalis larvatus*) and **Long-Tailed Macaques** (*Macaca fascicularis*), a **Small Toothed Palm Civet** (*Arctogalidia trivirgata*), a **Masked Palm Civet** (*Paguma larvata*), another **Buffy Fish Owl** (*Ketupa ketupu*), and my first and only **Saltwater Crocodile** (*Crocodylus porosus*).



We returned to the lodge for the now ubiquitous afternoon rain showers and went out again for another night boat that evening. The evening boat wasn't a lot more productive than the previous



My next, and final, day and night on the river were very productive with birds and mammals but didn't turn up any new mammal species for the trip and **Malay Civet** was the only new mammal for this location. The following morning, we packed up and boated back to Sukua to meet up with our old friend Mr. Boy for the drive to Lahad Datu.

Danum Valley (Jan 25-28th)

Mr. Boy, Henri, and I arrived in Lahad Datu after a beautiful but uneventful drive and settled in at a restaurant for coffee while we waited for the driver from our next lodge to meet us for the remainder of the day's trip to Infapro in Danum Valley where we were, once again, the only guests. Given how wet nearly everything I had was by this point, I was fully recognizing how much I had underestimated the Bornean monsoon season.

What am I thinking? To hell with thoughts like that! We're mammal watchers dammit! Wet fur is still fur! Now let's get on with it and see what critters might be turn up in Danum.

Cough. Sorry.

Henri and I sat in the Infapro dining area waiting for a tasty dinner while we watched the rain fall. While we ate, the rain broke, and a troop of **Long-Tailed Macaques** (*Macaca fascicularis*) showed up in some nearby trees to provide us some entertainment with our meal. As we were finishing eating and dusk was beginning to fall our open cab (brave in monsoon) truck pulled in and we were ready to get to driving.

The start of our route for the evening took us from Infapro towards the Danum Valley Field Center. While enroute Henry pointed out one of the side roads to me and told me it was the way to another location in Danum called Langom. He told me about Langom



earlier in our trip, he said he had done a survey there a few weeks prior and in three nights of walking in the area around the lodging he had multiple CL sightings. I was, and am, very eager to check out Langom. Alas, there is a gate blocking the road and, I was told, access is currently limited to researchers. We continued driving and once darkness fell

we spotted a couple of **Lesser Mouse Deer** (*Tragulus kanchil*), **Thomas's flying squirrel** (*Aeromys thomasi*), **Red-Giant Flying Squirrel** (*Petaurista petaurista*), and a **Malayan Civet** (*Viverra zibetha*) before reaching the field center right as rain began to fall. We took shelter in a small gazebo thing at the field center while it rained as multiple unidentified bats flew around and past us catching insects. A brief wait for the rain to let up and we were back on the road. Shortly after leaving the field center area, we came upon a couple of **Sambar Deer** (*Rusa unicolor*) in the roadway. The deer left us in a hurry, sadly with no cat in pursuit, and we continued. Over the next couple hours we spotted numerous **Small Toothed Palm Civets** (*Arctogalidia trivirgata*), **Masked Palm Civets** (*Paguma larvata*), **Common Palm Civets** (*Paradoxurus hermaphroditus*), another **Malayan Civet** (*Viverra zibetha*), a couple of **Sunda Leopard Cats** (*Prionailurus javanensis*), a **Phillipine Slow Loris** (*Nycticebus menagensis*), and more **Sambar Deer** (*Rusa unicolor*)

before we came upon one of my top trip targets a **Horsfield's tarsier** (*Cephalopachus bancanus*). The tarsier didn't seem to mind Henri's spotlight and stayed put on its branch even after we left the truck and approached it for a closer look. We had, at least, 20 minutes with it! Shortly after our Tarsier sighting, we turned around and started to slowly



spotlight back towards the lodge spotting a couple more **Sambar Deer** (*Rusa unicolor*), another **Sunda Leopard Cat** (*Prionailurus javanensis*) and a **Malayan Porcupine** (*Hystrix brachyura*) before we made it back for the night.

A morning drive the following day produced **Sunda Pig Tailed Macaques** (*Macaca nemestrina*), **Maroon Leaf Monkeys** (*Presbytis rubicunda*), multiple **Bornean Orangutans** (*Pongo pygmaeus*), **Northern Grey Gibbons** (*Hylobates funereus*), **Bornean yellow muntjac** (*Muntiacus atherodes*), **Pale Giant Squirrel** (*Ratufa affinis*), a few different hornbills, and a super cool bird that Henri identified as a **Great Argus** (*Argusianus argus*). After returning to the lodge to wait out the ever-present afternoon torrent, we enjoyed our dinner and headed out

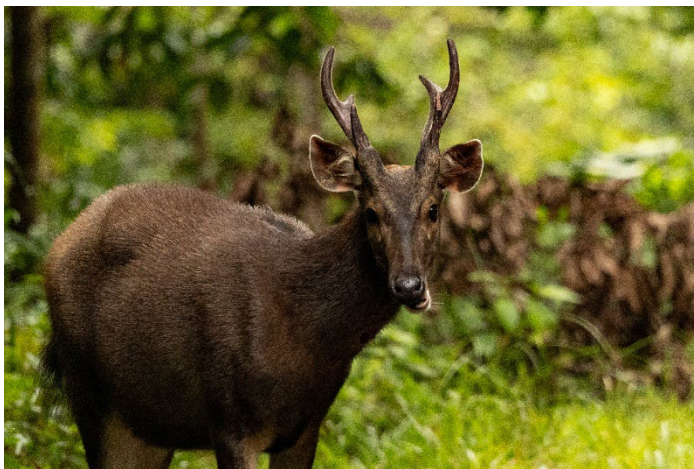
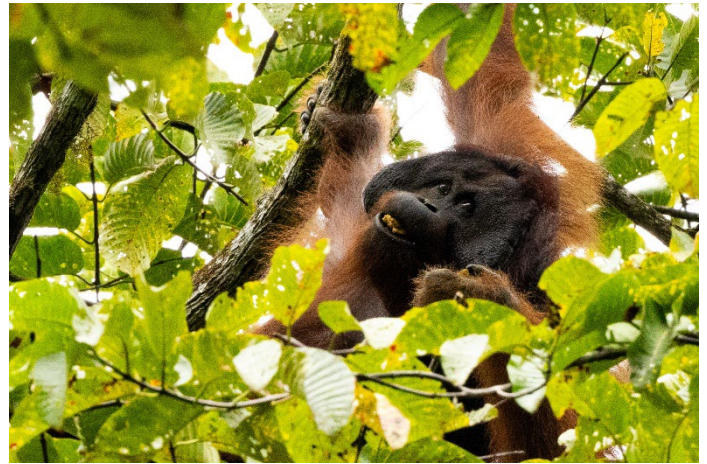




for a night drive. The night turned up **Thomas's flying squirrel** (*Aeromys thomasi*), **Red-Giant Flying Squirrel** (*Petaurista petaurista*), **Black Flying Squirrel** (*Aeromys tephromelas*), **Small Toothed Palm Civets** (*Arctogalidia trivirgata*), **Masked Palm Civets** (*Paguma larvata*), **Common Palm Civets** (*Paradoxurus hermaphroditus*), **Malayan Civet** (*Viverra zibetha*), **Long-Tailed porcupine** (*Trichys*

fasciculata), **Northern Boobook** (*Ninox japonica*), and more **Sambar Deer** (*Rusa unicolor*). On the way back to the lodge that night the truck started to stall out and we barely managed to get it to limp back to Infapro before it died.

I awoke to a deluge on my last full day in Borneo, met Henry for a late breakfast and we decided to forego driving in the tempest that morning choosing, instead, to spend the morning in our rooms attempting to dry things and get as packed up as we could for our departure the following day. We made plans to skip lunch and meet for an early dinner to begin driving with some daylight left before our night drive that evening.



Our driver showed up with a new truck (this one with a cab). The daylight portion of our final drive produced several Gibbon calls early on but no sightings of the quick moving and elusive creatures. Creatures we did see included hornbills, a serpent eagle, **Sunda Pig Tailed Macaques** (*Macaca nemestrina*), a couple more **Bornean Orangutans** (*Pongo pygmaeus*) including a particularly good sighting of

a large male, and a great sighting of a **Southern Red Muntjac** (*Muntiacus muntjak*). Just before dusk that evening our driver and Henry had a surprise in store for me. I never learned

how they arranged it, but they had procured permission and the key to the gate for us to drive the road towards Langom that night.

The Langom road followed a steady rise through forest, at times breaking way to clear views overlooking the canopy that I'm certain by day would make for stunning landscape photos. The road itself was rougher than the other roads in Danum but nothing like the roads in Deramakot. There were a few areas of the road that had, clearly, encountered recent mud slides due to all the rainfall and some of these were difficult to get through. Shortly after starting up the road, we encountered a **Sambar Deer** (*Rusa unicolor*). On our way down this road it seemed like we encountered at least 10 **Lesser Mouse Deer** (*Tragulus kanchil*) (ONE WAY). As we reached a somewhat clear patch of road we could smell something unmistakably "cow" like and there was dung in the road that looked suspiciously like the cow dung from my grandfather's farm growing up. We suspect it was a good spot for

Banteng but despite sticking around and spotlighting for a while we never spotted any. Shortly past the "Banteng" spot we gained a little more altitude and all our phones suddenly started receiving notifications, we had somehow found a small patch of cellular service deep in the Danum forest.



After joking about how we should have left our phones at home we continued on to see (and smell) a lot of elephant signs along the road but, much like the Banteng, never came across them. We eventually came to a "T" intersection that I learned would be our turn around point. We jumped out of the truck for a leg stretch and to let the road "reset". While wandering around I spotted a turtle of some sort moving through the brush and a snake but couldn't get a good enough look to identify either. The other direction on the road turned up **Lesser Mouse Deer**, **Thomas's flying squirrel** (*Aeromys thomasi*), **Red-Giant Flying Squirrel** (*Petaurista petaurista*), and a fantastic **Sunda Leopard Cat** (*Prionailurus javanensis*) that stayed in the road for at least 20 – 30 minutes.

After our drive towards Langum and back our driver and Henry informed me that we were going to drive the road towards the Rainforest Lodge, a road that I had believed was open only to their guests. The gate was open, so we went for it. Our desire to find a cat had reached manic levels. I suspect we could have been



in some trouble had we been caught there as both Henry and the driver seemed a bit on edge. Our drive on this road did not produce much just a **Buffy Fish Owl** (*Ketupa ketupu*), **Common Palm Civets** (*Paradoxurus hermaphroditus*), and a **Malayan Civet** (*Viverra zangalla*). Not terribly long into driving this road it started to rain, and we turned around and that is when the night started to get interesting.

No sooner had we turned back than the sky opened into the hardest and most torrential rain I had seen, not just in Borneo to date but in my entire lifetime. Despite a heavy raincoat and rain pants, every article of clothing I was wearing under my gear was completely soaked through nearly instantly. Our driver was hitting the gas trying to escape the deluge but there was water flowing over the roadway and he couldn't drive too fast for fear of losing control. The wind began to pick up, and we began to hear the canon fire cracking of trees falling in the forest all around us. I was standing in the back of the truck, as it was more comfortable to stand and hold on than to let my fractured elbow bounce around on the seats in the back, and I looked over my shoulder to see trees crashing onto the road behind us. I looked at Henry and saw genuine fear in his eyes. This did not make me feel comfortable. The sound of the rain was absolutely deafening. Henry stood. We were both watching the road ahead of us, hoping there would be no trees blocking our way out, hoping we'd make it off this road and back to the lodge. Hell, hoping we'd survive. And then, it happened. A massive tree's roots couldn't keep their grip any longer. I saw Henry's face; we both saw it at the same time. Henry yelled something at our driver. The driver slammed the brakes just in time to avoid having the giant tree fall on top and crush us. The nose of the truck came to a stop in the tree's branches, and this tree was now completely blocking the road ahead of us. We got out of the truck to investigate, and were immediately swarmed (seriously, in the damn rain) by **Greater Banded Hornets** (*Vespa tropica*) who

chose to leave me many souvenirs of my trip. After looking it over our driver thought he could, somehow, pull the tree out of the way with the truck and a rope. He tied a rope around the tree, tied it to the front fender of the truck, put the truck in reverse, and hit the gas. This did not move the tree, but it did snap the truck's serpentine belt, ensuring we would not be moving even if we were somehow able to move the tree.



Our driver said that Infrapro wasn't far, it would be faster if he went alone, and he took off running up the road. Just like with the night in the mud at Deramakot, Henry and I were left alone together in the jungle with another incapacitated vehicle. This time it was still raining quite hard and anytime we shined any light

we were swarmed with the dreaded hornets (I suspect there were a lot of them in that tree). Henry and I settled into an uncomfortable silence as we both warily watched the other trees around us for fear of one of them coming down on top of us while we waited. Fortunately, while we could still hear the unmistakable sound of trees crashing down in the forest, none of them crashed down in our vicinity. After a while, a vehicle approached from the other side of the tree. It was our driver and another lodge employee, they brought a chainsaw and cut a path through the tree for Henry and me to walk through, loaded us into the extra truck, and drove us back to the lodge where we could attempt to dry out before our morning exit. It seemed the island of Borneo wanted to say goodbye and to remind me of why one doesn't typically travel there during monsoon season.

The next day we loaded up early and began the drive back to Lahad Datu. On the way out of Danum we saw an animal in the road ahead. Both Henry and I gasped. Had we FINALLY, after all of that, gotten our Clouded Leopard? We both genuinely thought so but it turned out to be just another dang long tailed macaque.

