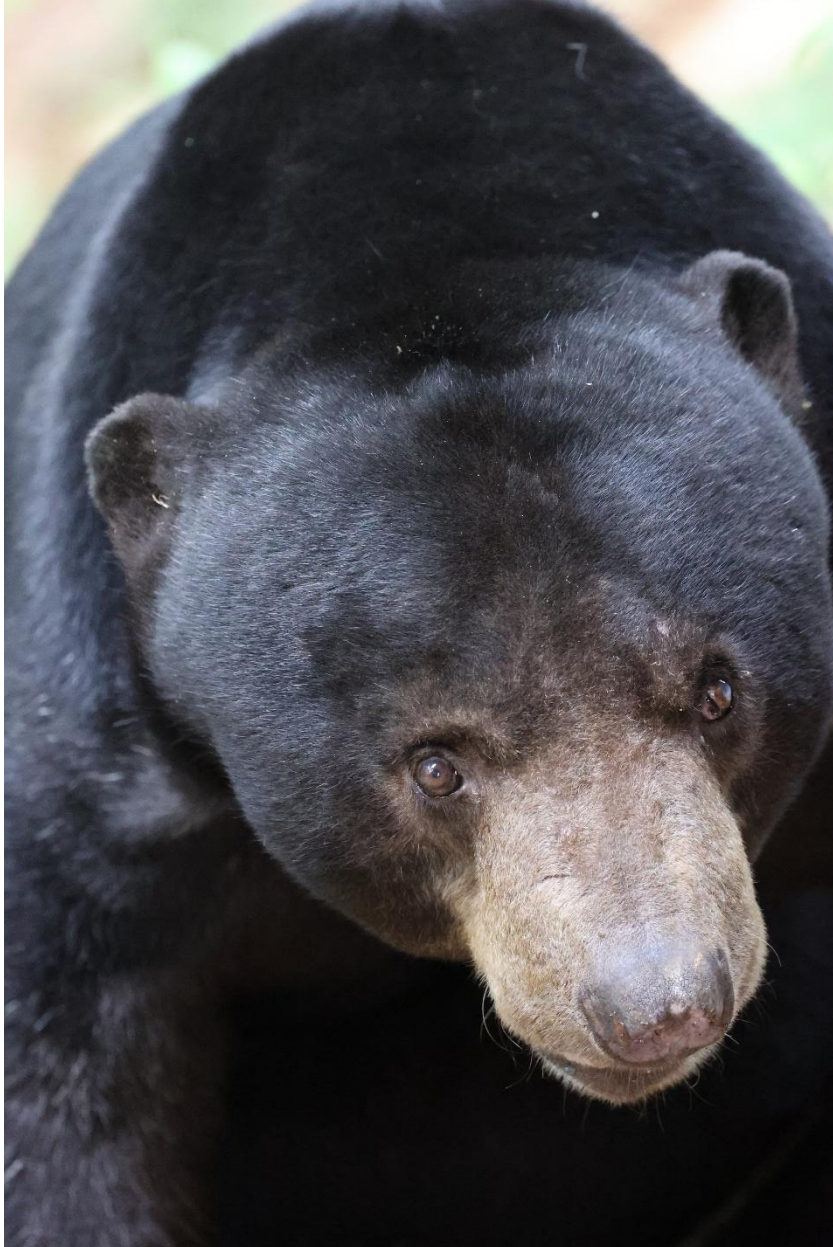


Malaysia and Thailand Trip Report, April – May, 2026



Talking with Stuart Chapman some months ago, I discovered that a hide had been set up in Thailand where Large-spotted Civets could be seen with some degree of regularity. From that, a plan expanded into a three-week trip to Malaysia and Thailand, revisiting favourite spots and exploring a few new ones.

After generally uneventful flights, I landed in Kuala Lumpur and headed to a hotel downtown for a few hours' sleep. The next morning, I fueled up with some roti canai and walked over to the GoSo rental car office. The paperwork was straightforward and I was soon on the way to the Kuala Selangor Nature Park. Apple Maps directed me to an abandoned building on the outskirts of the nature park, where I parked the car and walked down a disused, grass covered road. Just before entering the park proper, I saw movement in the small river on my left and found at least a dozen Smooth-coated Otters playing and

showing off fish they had caught. They climbed up on the bank and I was able to get a few photos through the foliage. A brief walk in the park produced no sightings of anything, including visitors, so I drove back towards what I presumed was the actual entrance to the park. A troop of Long-tailed Macaques appeared on the road and I followed them to a college parking lot, from which I walked up Malawati Hill. Along with the macaques, a group of Selangor Silvered Langurs were playing in the trees. By now it was the middle of the day, so I drove into town, found the Grand Kapar Hotel (less grand than its name would indicate, but comfortable), and promptly fell asleep for the rest of the day.



I got up about 5:00 am the following day and returned to the nature park. Several large creatures in the water turned out to be monitor lizards this time. A return walk up Malawati Hill again produced Long-tailed Macaques and Selangor Silvered Langurs. After a late breakfast, I drove to Fraser's Hill. MCM Discovery Villa proved to be a large building that was previously used by Petronas for team-building retreats but has now been turned into a guest house. I had a large room decorated in a Japanese theme. Juliana Senawi, a Malaysian bat expert, and a student had driven up from Kuala Lumpur, so I joined them for lunch and then we hiked the Hemmat trail, which unfortunately was completely devoid of mammals. Back at the hotel for dinner, I chatted with Steven, the owner, who had previously worked on nature documentaries before buying this property and fixing it up. I rejoined Juliana after dinner to hike another couple of trails, which were again surprisingly free of mammals that evening.



The next morning, I was up at 5:15 am and walked down the road from the villa. The first mammal seen was an Indomalayan Pencil-tailed Tree Mouse. Further along the road, a hot spot in the thermal turned out to be a distant White-thighed Langur, which was followed by two White-handed Gibbons in a distant tree, although it was so misty they were difficult to see well. Back at the hotel, a Red-cheeked Squirrel was feeding on insects that had been attracted to the moth lights, while repeat check a short while later revealed a Malaysian Upland Squirrel also feeding on the insects. After my own palatial breakfast of roti canai, fritters, cornflakes and dessert, I walked back along the loop road and found a Black Giant Squirrel close to the spot where the langur had been earlier that morning. After packing up, I drove back to the Waterfall trail, where in previous trip reports I noticed people had seen primates. I asked the woman at the ticket counter about seeing monkeys and she replied that there weren't any, a prediction that unfortunately turned out to be true. Fraser's Hill town was now packed with midday visitors.



Following a tip from Stuart, I walked along the first side road before entering the town, a spot where birders put out mealworms to attract Malaysian Partridges. A Red-cheeked Squirrel was at the site, and several Pallas's Squirrels were seen nearby. Four partridges appeared and allowed for some close-up photos. Shortly afterwards, a couple appeared with some of the largest camera lenses I've ever seen and staked out the feeding spot, but by this time the partridges had moved on and didn't reappear that afternoon. I sat waiting for a hoped for Lesser Gymnure but was unsuccessful in seeing one.



I drove to Kuala Kubu Bharu that night and, unable to find a better option, checked into one of the nastier places I've stayed in years. The list of amenities the room didn't possess (windows, functioning fan, air-conditioner, toilet paper) was significantly longer than the list of amenities it did have. A hot and sweaty night, but I soon fell asleep nonetheless.

I left before dawn and encountered very little traffic. In Kuala Lumpur, a large-scale run was in progress and there were thousands of people running but very little traffic. A note from my brother was concerning – my dad had just been admitted to hospital with searing back pain and shortness of breath, a combination of symptoms which is never good. I dropped off the rental car and went for a walk until the car rental place opened at 9:00 am, then took a Grab over to the Pekeliling bus station to look for a bus to Jerantut. At the station, no tickets were available for that day's one remaining bus, so I purchased a ticket for the following morning. A message from Tracey stated that my dad likely had a leaking aortic aneurysm. I eventually reached my brother, who had arrived in Parry Sound shortly after my dad passed away.

My dad was 96, so his death wasn't a shock in the abstract, but very much was in reality. I knew that it would happen one day, but when it did, I still felt a sense of shock as I thought of visits that were never going to happen, conversations that would go unsaid. My dad was one of the two main reasons why I started writing these trip reports (Jon Hall's persistence being the other). He was quite deaf but still read widely, so I would mail him paper copies of the reports to let him know what I had been up to, bypassing both his deafness and his reluctance to use a computer.

Feeling disoriented, I decided to spend the night in Kuala Lumpur and walked back over to the Ahyu Hotel. I checked for flights home. My dad had wanted to be cremated. His Celebration of Life wasn't going to be held for a few weeks so I decided to continue the trip. I walked to the Kuala Lumpur botanical gardens and saw a Common Treeshrew and some Long-tailed Macaques, then wandered over to Pizza Hut before an early night.

I returned to the bus station the next morning and caught the bus to Jerantut. Touts were waiting at the Jerantut bus station and I was quickly transferred onto the boat to Kuala Tahan, which left immediately. The forest along the river was noticeably more patchy and open than it had been the last time I did this trip, 31 years ago. Arriving at Kuala Tahan, a sizeable village had arisen on the river bank opposite the national park. After paying my one-ringgit entrance fee and 5-ringgit per camera photography fee, I pitched a tent in the Kuala Tahan campground, which had become a bit derelict but the price was right, at 10 ringgit per night. A walk around the swamp loop trail revealed a Southern Grey-bellied Squirrel. At Tahan Hide, some movement caught my eye and a Small-toothed Palm Civet appeared in a nearby tree feeding on fruit. White-thighed Langurs moved through high branches of the surrounding trees. I walked to the end of the boardwalk and saw a Common Treeshrew on a brush pile on the way back. After dinner at one of the riverside restaurants, I headed out towards Lubok Simpon. I found several Lesser Mousedeer and a couple of Malay Civets before returning to the tent around 11:15 pm.





An early morning walk produced a fruit bat and more Mousedeer, Malay Civets and White-thighed Langurs, while a walk after breakfast turned up Plantain and Southern Grey-bellied Squirrels. About 4:00 pm I started the hike to Tabing Hide, a bit over 3 km away. According to a posted sign one is supposed to do this hike with a guide, but others said they had walked it on their own. In the end I didn't meet anyone either way on the trail. One large animal was heard crashing away through the underbrush and I found a Lesser Sheath-tailed Bat in a hollow stump. I arrived at the hide about 5:30 pm and watched two Sunda Black-banded Squirrels playing on a nearby tree. Noticing a leech on the hide platform, I thought "where did that come from" for a second before realizing that it had obviously come from me. A quick search revealed another six or so still attached. By 9:30 pm nothing had appeared at the hide and thunder and lightning were drawing nearer. I walked back to the campground, seeing a couple of mousedeer along the way.



I packed up the next morning and crossed to Kuala Tahan village, then back to Kuala Lumpur. The remainder of the day was spent speaking with family and making travel arrangements for my dad's Celebration of Life.

I was at Stuart Chapman's place early the next morning. Stuart, known to many on this site, has been living in Kuala Lumpur for some years now and had wanted to explore an area in northern Malaysia, Kuala Nerang, where a contact of his had seen Mainland Clouded Leopard twice. I was excited to visit Kuala Nerang after finding trip reports from a British herper who had visited the area twice and seen Sunda Pangolin both times. I didn't know what the total trip number denominator was for Stuart's contact, but figured 2/2 for pangolin sightings was impressive. We arrived in Kuala Nerang in mid-afternoon and checked in to a hotel that had good bones but an air of neglect, heightened by the carpet of dead insects on the bathroom floor. However, the air-conditioner worked and, more importantly, there didn't appear to be any other options in the vicinity, so we dropped our stuff and went for dinner. After dark, we drove along a road near Lake Pedu and saw a Mainland Leopard Cat, a Common Palm Civet, two Small Indian Civets, several Malaysian Wood Rats and a smaller brownish rodent that appeared to be a Whitehead's Maxomys. We also found a couple of snakes.

The sky had cleared the next morning and we returned to the same area. A troop of Long-tailed Macaques was foraging by the road. Driving down a side road, we came across several abandoned buildings which contained Lesser False Vampire Bats and Sunda Short-nosed Fruit Bats. The most surprising sight was a soft-shelled turtle on the road which we guided to safety. The afternoon was spent exploring other local roads, including one where a Mainland Clouded Leopard had been seen some

months previously. No cats were in evidence today, but we saw a Southern Pig-tailed Macaque and, later, a Slender Squirrel.





The night drive started in heavy rain. A short way down the road we had followed last night a shape appeared ahead of us, which turned out to be a Sunda Pangolin! We jumped out of the car to get photos, but the pangolin moved surprisingly quickly and we didn't want to harass it, so we only managed a few photos before it moved into the undergrowth. Newly energized, we continued along the road and found a Malayan Box Turtle, a Banded Krait and several cat-eyed snakes. Back on the main highway we came across a pair of Common Palm Civets feeding on termites and a Mainland Leopard Cat.



The next day we drove to a lookout point from which we could hear Agile Gibbons calling, but were unable to see them. After dark that night, we drove our favourite road again and found a Russell's Viper, multiple cat-eyed snakes, a Common Palm Civet and a Mainland Leopard Cat, but no new mammal species.



The next morning, we drove back to the lookout point and could hear gibbons calling at a shorter distance than the previous day. These turned out to be White-handed Gibbons and we were eventually able to get a decent look at one. Afterwards, Stuart dropped me at the Malaysian-Thailand border before he headed back to Kuala Lumpur. I caught a truck into Betang and eventually found a share taxi going to Yala. At the driver's suggestion I was dropped off at the Yala Rama Hotel, close to the train station and a great deal at 550 baht per night. My only mammal sighting that night was a Pacific Rat.

I went to Tham Kruha Phimuk temple, about 20 minutes east of downtown Yala, early the next morning. The first cave temple was full of Black-bearded Tomb Bats, while the grounds were occupied by a troop of Long-tailed Macaques. I walked further down the path, but the farther caves were locked. Fortunately, I found a helpful woman, Tutu, who may or may not have worked there but who in any event was able to locate a key to let me enter. The first cave had a closed, but not locked, gate at the rear, which I went through. Loud yells indicated I wasn't to go there, so after that Tutu accompanied me, clearly realizing I shouldn't be left to my own devices. This turned out to be fortuitous, as Tutu became increasingly enthused about finding bats. Each cave we entered seemed to hold more than the previous one. Black-bearded Tomb Bats were followed by Large Asian Roundleaf Bats, Malayan Horseshoe Bats, Cantor's Roundleaf Bats, Kunz's Leaf-nosed Bats, Ashy Roundleaf Bats and perhaps others. After an hour or two, we were running out of new cave chambers to explore, so I wandered back to the road to find a Grab vehicle. I walked out to the road but was unable to get any cell reception. A woman with two young children in the car stopped and motioned to a passing motorcycle driver to stop also in order to translate. Both offered me a ride, so I hopped on the back of the motorcycle for the quick drive back to Yala to pack up.





That evening I caught a sleeper train from Yala to Hua Hin, which arrived as scheduled at 6:40 the next morning. At the rental office, I was upgraded to a very comfortable Toyota Fortuner. I departed in the pouring rain but made reasonable time to Kaeng Krachan. After a quick lunch at the lower campground, Ban Krang, I drove up to Phanoen Thung on the steep and narrow road. When I had last been here in 2019 the road was closed for repairs and upgrading but I was unable to discern what upgrading had actually taken place. I found Dusky Langurs around Phanoen Thung and later also found some Banded Langurs, but didn't see any of the famous Sun Bears for which this campground is known. Back at the lower campground I discovered that the cafeteria closed after lunch, but had fortunately stashed some instant noodles for just such an emergency. I had pitched my tent in the visitor centre and spent some time photographing the rats running around. A brief forest walk revealed an Indomalayan Pencil-tailed Tree Mouse but little else.



I was awoken at 2:00 am by rats in the visitor centre. I've included a photo, below. I think this is likely Pacific Rat, *Rattus exulans*. A quick walk around provided views of Sambar Deer in the grass around the campground, while a walk along the road just after dawn produced Dusky Langur, White-handed Gibbon, Black Giant Squirrel and Slender Squirrel. I did a couple of drives back to the entrance and some short walks, but saw little in the way of mammals. A close view of a Common Palm Civet in the campground was the highlight of the night walk.

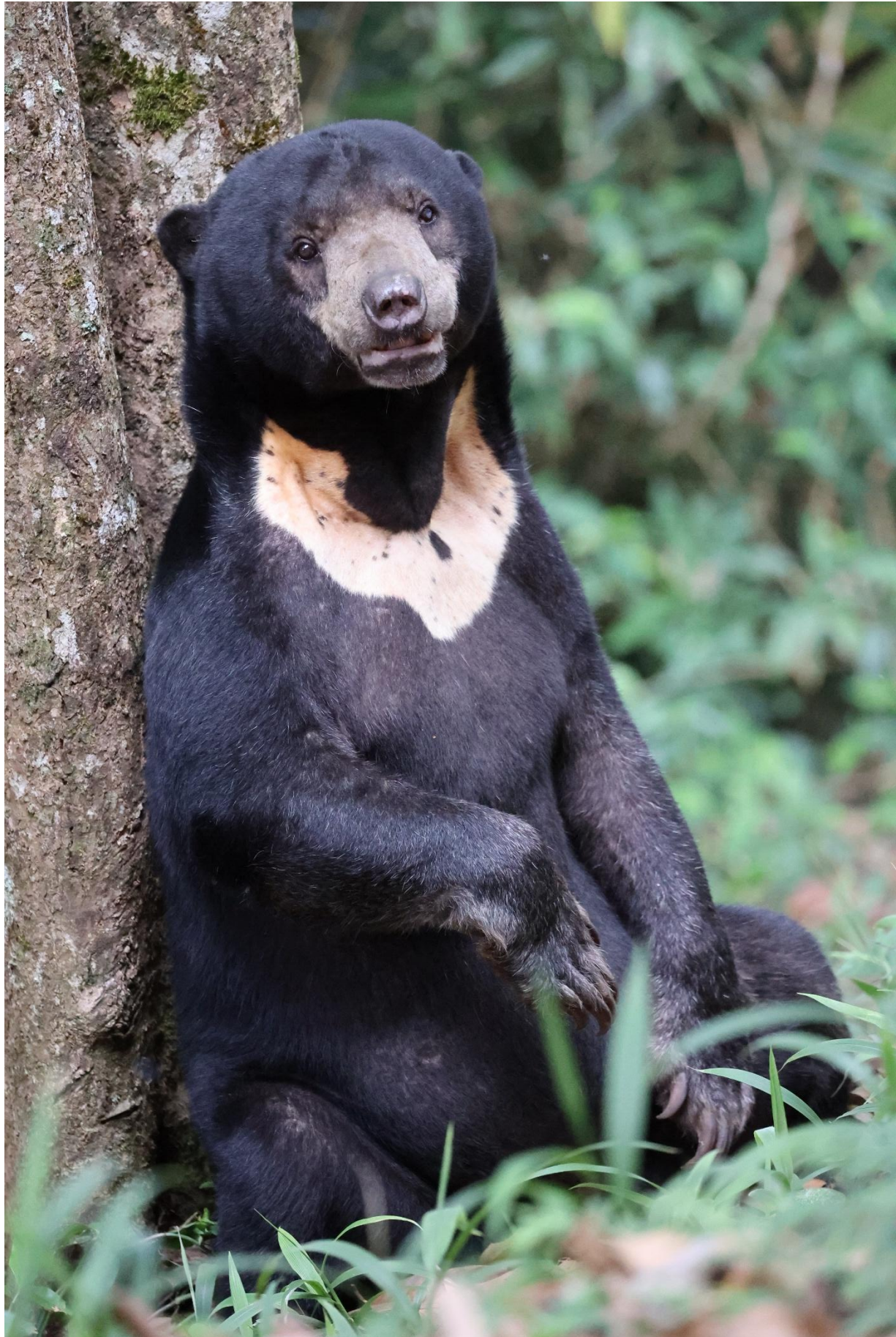








I left the lower campground at 5:40 am the following morning and arrived at Phanoen Thung before 7:00 am after a surprisingly mammal-free drive. After a quick breakfast I walked down the road towards the Tortlip Waterfall, about 5 km each way. I found several groups of White-handed Gibbons and Dusky Langurs. Back at the upper campground and visitor centre a woman mentioned that the Sun Bear, Durian, had “gone home”. Further questioning revealed that the bear was at one of the chalets past the campground. I drove down the road and immediately saw “Durian” feeding from a garbage container in front of the first chalet. He was utterly unfazed by my presence, so I was able to watch while he did various bear-like activities – eating garbage, defecating and scratching his back. I went back to the campground for lunch and a nap. At 4:00 pm I received word that the bear had broken into one of the chalets, an action which usually results in a bad outcome for a Canadian bear. The bear was now behind the chalet and again allowed for some photos.





A hike down the road past the campground revealed two Northern Treeshrews and further Dusky Langurs. A night walk in the same area produced two Malayan Porcupines, a Small-toothed Palm Civet, and some rats, both arboreal and terrestrial. After discussions with Venkat, I think the upper photo on the next page may be a Greater Marmoset-rat, a very rare species. If others have different suggestions I would love to hear them. The lower rat might be a *Berylmys*, likely *Berylmys berdmorei*, but again, I'm interested if anyone has a different idea.





The drive out of the park the next morning was again surprisingly mammal-free. A couple of park regulars I spoke with in the park said they had seen fewer animals this visit than on previous ones, which might have been a function of the rains being earlier than usual this year.

I drove to Huai Khayeng Nature Park, a spot I had been wanting to visit for months since first learning that Large-spotted Civets might be seen there. Darryl, the owner, is a Brit born in Singapore who came out to Thailand to teach English many years ago and hasn't left. He had been constructing hides for birders on his property and discovered that civets were visiting them regularly. His current record is three civet species in one night – Large-spotted, Large Indian and Small Indian. Darryl had kindly offered to let me set up a tent in his not-yet-complete house there, so I dropped my stuff, grabbed a camera and we drove out to the hide which currently seemed to be the most productive. The hide was large and comfortable and we settled in with a great deal of anticipation.

By midnight, the sense of anticipation had faded and we were both falling asleep. We stopped at Darryl's rubber plantation on the way back to the house and visited a flying squirrel nest that Darryl and his staff had found. A pair of Phayre's Flying Squirrels were visible inside the hollow cavity. We walked along the edge of the plantation and found a Kanburi Pit Viper, a localized endemic, before returning to the house

for a late dinner.



The weather report had called for rain, so I was pleasantly surprised to awaken to a clearing day and an improving forecast. I drove to Sai Yok National Park, most famous for its cave containing Kitti's Hog-nosed Bats, the smallest in the world. The bats in the cave were largely segregated by species, with Kitti's Hog-nosed Bats, Himalayan/Great Roundleaf Bats, and Stoliczka's Asian Trident Bats. After a pleasant couple of hours exploring the cave, I had lunch and then drove back to Huai Khayeng. This evening was far more productive. A Lesser Ricefield Rat was running around about 6:45, and then, half an hour later, a Large-spotted Civet appeared briefly, followed by an Indomalayan Niviventer about 8:30 pm. We waited a little while longer and then drove up a public road that passes alongside a national park, one of the many in Thailand's Western Forest Complex. We found two great snakes, a Chequered Keelback and a Monocled Cobra, followed by a Small-toothed Palm Civet and an Asian/Bengal Slow Loris. A great night!







I was up early the next morning and drove to Huai Kha Khaeng Wildlife Sanctuary. I arrived about 4:00 pm and was told that camping was no longer allowed in the park and that I should come back after 6:30 the next morning. I was aware that camping had been banned but had been hoping this decision might have been reversed. After driving randomly around the village, I googled “Homestay” and ended up at Baan Pai, a lovely spot just outside the park. I later discovered from their trip report this was the same homestay where Rob and Romi Jansen had stayed when they visited the park a couple of years ago. I asked about restaurants and was told that there weren’t any nearby, but that the homestay owners could cook for me, which turned out well as I enjoyed one of the best meals I had in Thailand, which is saying a lot.

I was up early and back to the park at about 6:30. The park didn’t open formally until 8:00 am, but I was told I could hang out behind the visitor centre beside a small river. Black Giant Squirrels and Northern Gray-bellied Squirrels were feeding in a fruiting tree, along with what was likely a Pallas’s Squirrel which disappeared before I could get a good look at it. While I was waiting for the ticket office to open, an Asian Elephant appeared by the river, followed by a Wild Pig and a group of four Banteng. HKK is the best spot to see Banteng in Thailand, but, even so, I hadn’t expected them to be quite this easily seen. The office opened just before 8:00 am and I was the first visitor along the road. Whether this made a difference or not I don’t know, but a Fea’s Muntjac appeared on the left side of the road about kilometre seven, a species I had been hoping to see in Kaeng Krachan but hadn’t expected in HKK.





At the ranger area I was greeted by Tuip, who offered to guide me around the nature trail. The vegetation was very dense, so more animals were heard than seen, although we did get views of Wild Pig and Pallas's Squirrel. A walk around the ranger area produced a small herd of Eld's Deer, one of the species I had most been wanting to see. The population here is re-introduced, as are all the populations in Thai parks and reserves, but the animals were spectacular nonetheless. A visit to the two observation towers revealed only Wild Pig at the first tower and a large monitor lizard at the second. Checking a culvert at kilometre 13 along the road revealed several Lesser False Vampire Bats. I saw a Green Peafowl when I did a repeat visit to the first observation tower, but no further mammals. By this time the park was closing and I returned to Baan Pai for another scrumptious dinner. A night drive along the roads bordering the park was unproductive.



I dropped by the park entrance the following morning, then headed south, through Bangkok and onward to the beach resort area at Sattahip. To confirm that mammal enthusiasts are insane, the destination was not chosen for a well-deserved beach afternoon, but rather to see the Indochinese Silvered Langurs that Jon Hall and Cheryl Antonucci had both observed there previously. As others have reported, the location is in an area controlled by the Thai military. One hands over one's passport, pays a small fee, and then is able to drive to an absolutely stunning beach. The Blue Sea Café, the last café on the beach, was densely populated by Russian tourists but unfortunately not by langurs. I was starting to get a bit nervous, but recalled from the earlier trip reports that the monkeys appeared later in the afternoon. I had a spicy pork salad, then walked on the trail just past the restaurant. Nothing. By now it was 4:00 pm and I was starting to get a bit anxious. I spoke with one of the restaurant staff, who suggested I walk back up along the beach parking area. Sure enough, a large male Northern Pig-tailed Macaque was patrolling the car park. I saw some movement back in the trees and found a troop of Indochinese Silvered Langurs jumping

through the branches, far enough away to allow for reasonable views but horrible photos. The simien trio was rounded out by the appearance of a number of Long-tailed Macaques. Mission complete, I jumped back in the car and drove back to a small hotel close to the airport in Bangkok.



A big thank you is in order for several people. Thanks to Juliana Senawi for bat information and identification, to Stuart Chapman for his affable company in Kuala Nerang, to Darryl Sweetland for his hospitality, and to Venkat Sankar for his help with rodent identification. Also, thanks to Jon Hall and Cheryl Antonucci for the information on the Indochinese Silvered Langur site south of Bangkok. As always, please feel free to contact me with questions, alternate identifications or for further information.

Ian Thompson

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List of mammals seen:

1. Sunda Pangolin – *Manis javanica*
2. Northern Treeshrew – *Tupaia belangeri*
3. Common Treeshrew – *Tupaia glis*
4. Sunda Short-nosed Fruit Bat – *Cynopterus brachyotis*
5. Lesser Sheath-tailed Bat - *Emballonura monticola*
6. Kitti's Hog-nosed Bat – *Craseonycteris thonglongyai*
7. Lesser False Vampire Bat – *Megaderma spasma*
8. Black-bearded Tomb Bat – *Taphozous melanopogon*
9. Malayan Horseshoe Bat – *Rhinolophus malayanus*
10. Big-eared Horseshoe Bat – *Rhinolophus macrotis*
11. Himalayan/Great Roundleaf Bat – *Hipposideros armiger*
12. Kunz's Leaf-nosed Bat – *Hipposideros kunzi*
13. Cantor's Roundleaf Bat – *Hipposideros galeritus*
14. Large Asian Roundleaf Bat – *Hipposideros lekaguli*
15. Ashy Roundleaf Bat – *Hipposideros cineraceus*
16. Stoliczka's Asian Trident Bat – *Aselliscus stoliczkanus*
17. Asian/Bengal Slow Loris – *Nycticebus bengalensis*
18. Long-tailed Macaque – *Macaca fascicularis*
19. Southern Pig-tailed Macaque – *Macaca nemestrina*
20. Northern Pig-tailed Macaque – *Macaca leonina*
21. Selangor Silvered Langur – *Trachypithecus selangorensis*
22. Indochinese Silvered Langur – *Trachypithecus germaini*
23. White-thighed Langur – *Presbytis siamensis*
24. Dusky Langur – *Trachypithecus obscurus*
25. Banded Langur – *Presbytis femoralis*
26. White-handed Gibbon – *Hylobates lar*
27. Sun Bear – *Helarctos malayanus*
28. Smooth-coated Otter – *Lutrogale perspicillata*
29. Small-toothed Palm Civet – *Arctogalidia trivirgata*
30. Common Palm Civet – *Paradoxurus hermaphroditus*
31. Small Indian Civet – *Viverricula indica*
32. Malay Civet – *Viverra zangalunga*
33. Large-spotted Civet – *Viverra megaspila*
34. Mainland Leopard Cat – *Prionailurus bengalensis*
35. Asian Elephant – *Elephas maximus*
36. Wild Pig – *Sus scrofa*
37. Lesser Mousedeer – *Tragulus kanchil*
38. Fea's Muntjac – *Muntiacus feae*
39. Sambar – *Cervus unicolor*
40. Eld's Deer – *Cervus eldii*
41. Banteng – *Bos javanicus*
42. Red-cheeked Squirrel – *Dremomys rufigenis*
43. Malaysian Upland/ Mountain Slender Squirrel – *Sundasciurus tahan*

44. Pallas's Squirrel – *Callosciurus erythraeus*
45. Southern Grey-bellied Squirrel – *Callosciurus concolor*
46. Northern Grey-bellied Squirrel – *Callosciurus caniceps*
47. Plantain Squirrel – *Callosciurus notatus*
48. Sunda Black-banded Squirrel – *Callosciurus nigrovittatus*
49. Slender Squirrel – *Sundasciurus tenuis*
50. Black Giant Squirrel – *Ratufa bicolor*
51. Phayre's/Indochinese Flying Squirrel – *Hylopetes phayrei*
52. Indomalayan Pencil-tailed Tree Mouse – *Chiropodomys gliroides*
53. Whitehead's Maxomys – *Maxomys whiteheadi*
54. Berdmore's Rat – *Berylmys berdmorei*
55. Pacific Rat – *Rattus exulans*
56. Black Rat – *Rattus rattus*
57. Lesser Ricefield Rat – *Rattus sakeratensis*
58. Malaysian Wood Rat – *Rattus tiomanicus*
59. Indomalayan Niviventer – *Niviventer fulvescens*
60. Greater Marmoset-rat – *Hapalomys longicaudatus*
61. Malayan Porcupine – *Hystrix brachyura*