

# REMOTE SULAWESI 2019:

Talaud, Sangihe, Togian, Taliabu, Peleng and Wakatobi

Sulawesi is one of the most exciting islands of Indonesia. In terms of endemic wildlife, the degree of endemism is just mind-blowing. This trip wasn't focused in the mainland Sulawesi but in a number of smaller islands included within Sulawesi Subregion, with the single exception of Taliabu, that politically belongs to the North Maluku province. Though our trip was bird-focussed, we tried to include as many mammals as possible. This report gives you an idea of what can be seen with a little bit of effort. Obviously, a mammal-orientated trip here would yield far more bats and rodents.

Sulawesi is home to 230 mammals, 111 of which are endemic. The status of many is not well-known, though over the past five years, I've made numerous visits to the islands and gained more knowledge on what is possible to see. On a three week visit in November-December 2019, we recorded 34 mammals, of which 22 are endemic. Additionally, 6 bats and rodents could not be identified down to species level and the recently described Togean Tarsier was heard only. Many of the species are threatened due to high hunting pressure, for food, and ongoing habitat destruction.

The bird report, available below, includes our mammal list, and photos of several of these. For a more detailed account on the mammals, below is a summary:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1\\_3ITS\\_BcpEgl2sB-S4m0pfwopDMjCCA/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1_3ITS_BcpEgl2sB-S4m0pfwopDMjCCA/view)

We visited nine islands: Sangihe, Talaud, Peleng, Taliabu, Togean and Wakatobi, the last one as extension post-tour. Additionally, some of us spent some time near Manado, right before the beginning of the main tour.

**Around Manado:** Some of us spent a night and a morning around Tangkoko and Tomohon, as a pre-tour extension. Tangkoko was excellent as always, with Black-crested Macaque, Gursky's Tarsier and Sulawesi Bear Cuscus as main stars but also the sightings of Sulawesi Spiny Rat, very easy to detect by listening its high-pitch voice, Musschenbroek's Spiny Rat playing hide&seek, Celebes Flying Fox, which was quite a surprise as is widely considered as extinct in the Minahasa Peninsula due to excessive hunting and a very stunning Stripe-faced Fruit Bat were highlights of the night walk. Sulawesi Dog-faced Fruit-Bat was found roosting under palm leaves, some dead, hollow trees were loaded with Lesser False Vampire Bats and Celebes Rousettes and we found a single Celebes Horseshoe Bat roosting inside an abandoned building. A short visit to the mountain town of Tomohon allowed us to visit a couple of caves, with Geoffroy's Rousette, Celebes Horseshoe Bat and a big cluster of *Miniopterus* sp. That we could not identify down to species level.



Sulawesi Spiny Rat and Stripe-faced Fruit-bat

**Talau:** With around 48 hours on the island of Karakelong, we obtained very good views of Talau Fruit Bat and Talau Melomys, both endemic to the Talau archipelago. During the heat of the day, a short visit to a cave delivered a few nice bats, with Swift Fruit Bat as highlight. Talau is supposed to be a Flying Fox paradise, with 4 species around, but with so much trapping going on, see these beasts isn't an easy as it should be.



Talau Melomys and Talau Fruit Bat



Philippine Sheat-tailed Bat and Swift Fruit-bat

**Sangihe:** We had two full days on Sangihe and despite some horrid weather in the upper part of Mount Sahendaruman, we bagged a delightful Talaud Bear Cuscus of the local subspecies, that may deserve a full species status, few Critically Endangered Sangihe Tarsiers and some Island Flying Foxes. The endemic Sangihe Squirrel was also seen a number of times.



Talaud Bear Cuscus and Sangihe Tarsier

**Peleng:** The largest, and most accessible island in the Banggai islands, we spent three nights on the island, including two nights spent at 600m, accessing the mossy forest above 1200m. We found the endemic Banggai Cuscus, Peleng Tarsier and a very nice set of rodents and bats. This includes a *Margaretamys* that may be an undescribed species and a medium size fruit bat that may be Bare-backed Rousette, unknown in the area. Peleng has great caves for bats but we didn't have time to explore any. On the other hand, night forays into the woods delivered quite a lot of Celebes Flying Fox, a beautiful Greater Sulawesi Rousette, previously treated as a Rousette but nowadays

inside its own genus and a bunch Black Sheat-tailed Bats night-roosting under a big banana leaf. Rodent-hunting was simply excellent and although Peleng has a lot to offer in this field, the sights of Peleng Island Xanthurus high in a tree, Marmoset Xanthurus giving point-blank views and the mentioned *Margaretamys* were good enough for me.



Peleng Tarsier and Banggai Cuscus



Greater Sulawesi Rousette and Peleng Island Xanthurus



*Margaretamys sp* and Marmoset Xanthurus

**Taliabu:** The Sula islands comprise of three rare-visited islands; Sanana, Mangole and Taliabu. Taliabu is best visited due to being able to access the higher reaches of the island, up to 1300m, along an old logging track. We spent four nights here, including two camping at 1000m. Taliabu is the tough bit of the trip, as it includes long walks. Birding was certainly awesome but mammals sadly weren't as great, though Celebes Horseshoe Bat, Greenish Bare-backed Fruit Bat and Pallas's Tube-nosed Fruit Bat were all appreciated.



Pallas's Tube-nosed Fruit Bat and Celebes Horseshoe Bat

**Togean:** 2 nights, spending very little time at night, gave us a great view of Sulawesi Taeromys Rat and we did hear the high-pitch calls of the recently-described Togean Tarsier but unfortunately, a bit too distant. For some reason, I couldn't start my camera anymore so no more photos from the last two places.

**Wakatobi:** 1 night there. This remote and seldom-visited archipelago was loaded with *Pteropus*. Grey Flying Fox and Island Flying Fox were particularly common

**Stuff we missed:**

Sangihe: Sulawesi Dwarf Cuscus is regularly encountered here and I have seen it in previous visits but the day we were staying at the core area, the rain never stopped and we couldn't try at night

Taliabu: The main prize here is the Taliabu Babirusa, really difficult to see but regularly hunted by locals. They did show us a number of skulls and recent videos of hunted animals.

Togean: We didn't visit Malenge so we didn't have the chance to try for Togean Macaque and Togean Babirusa. Infrastructure in Malenge is improving fast and nowadays, both species are pretty reliable

Systematic List

Sulawesi endemics are indicated with a S. Introduced species are indicated with an I

LIST OF MAMMALS RECORDED

Talaud Fruit Bat *Acerodon humilis* S - Talaud  
Celebes Flying Fox *Acerodon celebensis* S- Tangkoko  
Small Flying Fox *Pteropus hypomelanus*- Sangihe  
Grey Flying Fox *Pteropus griseus*- Wakatobi  
Greater Sulawesi Rousette *Boneia bidens* S- Peleng  
Sulawesi Dog-faced Fruit-Bat *Cynopterus luzionensis*- Tangkoko  
Greenish Bare-backed Fruit-bat *Dobsonia viridis*- Taliabu  
Celebes Rousette *Rousettus celebensis* S- Tangkoko  
Geoffroy's Rousette *Rousettus amplexicaudatus*- Tomohon  
Stripe-faced Fruit-bat *Styloctenium wallacei* S- Tangkoko  
Swift Fruit-bat *Thoopterus nigrescens*- Talaud  
Pallas's Tube-nosed Bat *Nyctimene cephalotes*- Taliabu  
Philippine Sheat-tailed Bat *Emballonura alecto*- Talaud  
Black Sheat-tailed Bat *Mosia nigrescens*- Peleng  
Lesser False Vampire *Megaderma spasma*- Tangkoko  
Celebes Horseshoe-Bat *Rhinolophus celebensis* S- Tangkoko, Tomohon, Talaud, Taliabu  
Minahassa Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus minahassae* S- Tangkoko and Manado itself  
Sangihe Tarsier *Tarsius sangirensis* S- Sangihe  
Gursky's Tarsier *Tarsius spectrumgurskyae* S- Manado  
Peleng Tarsier *Tarsius pelengensis* S- Peleng  
Sulawesi Bear Cuscus *Ailurops celebensis* S- Tangkoko  
Talaud Cuscus *Ailurops melanotis* S- Sangihe  
Banggai Cuscus *Strigocuscus pelengensis* S- Peleng  
Sangihe Squirrel *Prosciurillus rosenbergi* S- Sangihe  
Whitish Dwarf Squirrel S- Tangkoko  
Sulawesi Dwarf Squirrel *Prosciurillus murinus* S- Tangkoko, Sangihe

Indo-pacific Bottlenose Dolphin *Tursiops aduncus*- Between Talaud and Sangihe  
Spinner Dolphin *Stenella longirostris* – Between Manado and Sangihe  
Sulawesi Spiny Rat *Maxomys hellwaldii* S- Tangkoko  
Musschenbroek's Spiny Rat *Maxomys musschenbroekii* S- Tangkoko  
Talaud Melomys *Melomys talaudium* S- Talaud  
Marmoset *Xanthurus* Rat *Rattus marmosurus* S- Peleng  
Peleng Island *Xanthurus* Rat *Rattus pelurus* S- Peleng  
Sulawesian Taeromys Rat *Taeromys celebensis* S- Togean