

**Sabah, Borneo, October 2022 –**  
**Return to Deramakot – the gift that keeps on giving**  
Nick Cox and Stuart Chapman

This was a return trip to Borneo, and Deramakot, for both of us, and with Sunda clouded leopard already safely secured in our list of lifers a few years ago, **marbled cat** was top of our target list of mega-ticks. We both had a few hoped-for bonuses like skunk badger, Western tarsier, and Nick was still looking for a binturong - what shouldn't be hard to see but has eluded him for years! And always at the back of our minds was any chance of seeing what has become almost a mythical species given the global onslaught to wipe it from existence – a Sunda pangolin.

Our guide was the legendary and peerless Mike Gordon, and the trip was arranged through AA Borneo.

**Mt Kinabalu** - Before our six nights at Deramakot, we started with one night on Mt Kinabalu, and like many other mammalers we found the road from the HQ up to Timohon gate to be quite productive, bagging a few lifers to add to our previous trip to the mountain in 2019. We saw both flying squirrels (**Jentinks** - a lifer for us both) and **Giant spotted** (a lifer for Stuart), plus **Kinabalu rat**, **Brook's squirrel**, and **Anderson's woolly horseshoe bat** (thanks to recent Kinabalu trip reports for the bat ID- Jon Hall, Ian Thompson). Interestingly we saw no mountain treeshrews that seemed to be everywhere on our last trip. We'll be back to Kinabalu I'm sure, to clean up a few stragglers on our list of targets (Tufted ground squirrel at Sayap anyone?).

**Deramakot** – firmly established on the map of must-visit sites in Sabah and well described in numerous past trip reports, so we'll just focus on some of the highlights here.

Meeting Mike Gordon at the usual pick-up point in Telupid, about 2.5 hours from Deramakot, it didn't take long before we could contain ourselves no longer in asking about the recently reported **Bay cat** sighting. In his unflappable style, he quickly quashed any thoughts we had of being another group that might get super lucky. After nodding committedly at our list of (more realistic) target species, and after what I'm sure was a snigger at my continued failure to see a binturong, we were on our way.

Our first night drive was a warmup, getting back in the swing of figuring out how to hold on to a spotlight, binoculars, camera, and thermal scope, with only two hands. We then spent the next two dry and starry nights up and down the main drag between the HQ and the river. Not needing to linger for all the mammals we've seen before, we could keep going past the **Thomas's** and **red giant flying squirrels**, all the civets (except for a few brief stops to admire both the **Malay** and **banded civets**), focusing our attention on road edges and big trees with thick horizontal branches known to be frequented by a certain species of cat...

With Mike demonstrating his world-famous spotlighting prowess, covering forest canopy, ground, and all the forest areas in between at a phenomenal rate of work, we could focus on

attempting to help fill in any of the few blind spots – Stuart with a spotlight and me with a thermal scope.

The thermal did turn up a few trip ticks that would otherwise have been incredibly hard to see with a spotlight - even with Mike's superpowers - and included several sleeping primates: **pig-tailed macaque**, **Sabah grey langur**, and even a juvenile **Bornean orangutan** enjoying a moonlit midnight snack.

Night four saw a couple of deviations to the normal route, with the dry weather spurring Mike to decide to try a couple of side roads. The first headed towards an old quarry and resulted in a few of the usual suspects showing themselves. I had a brief sighting through my thermal of what I described to Mike as a kind of rabbit-sized rat; he deduced it could only have been a **long-tailed porcupine** – unfortunately Stuart missed what would have been a lifer, so we swiftly moved on. The second side road took us through an area opened up for logging just before Covid, and this was the first time Mike had taken clients here. As we drove down the steep hillside the forest changed. Large stands of majestic trees in what seemed to be more primaevial forest and it felt like this new route could turn up something special. After a coffee break and short walk to see if we could find the owners of some fresh **banteng** dung, we headed back towards the main road. It was Stuart who first said, “what is that?”, as a shape revealed itself on a high branch of a huge tree. Mike stayed silent but I'm sure he knew straight away what it was. Sitting with its back to us on the branch, 25 metres up – from the white spots on its twitching ears, and the pattern on its back – we realized quickly that it was a **MARBLED CAT!** After a short while, it got wise to our presence and climbed down the tree and disappeared into the night. We were left elated, and the fist bumps and pumps continued for a long while. The mega-tick of the trip!



Marbled cat video: <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=7XBWYVeczPY>

And yet the magical night had one more gift for us. About an hour after our marbled cat encounter, and heading back towards the HQ, while still giddy from the experience and not really trying hard with our spotting (though of course Mike was still focused) another mega-tick and a monumental lifer was gifted by the forest spirits... Having narrowly missed one during my first visit to Deramakot in 2018, this time there was no way I was going to let a **SUNDA PANGOLIN** get away! We were incredibly lucky that the pangolin trundled back on to the road in front of us allowing for a few camera clicks and Stuart to get some B-roll, before it shuffled off back into the undergrowth. This capped off the trip for me and not least because what it means personally and professionally to see a pangolin ALIVE!, rather than in a bowl of soup or reduced to a bag full of its scales.



**Sunda pangolin** video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yykJ4EMnVNk>

On the last night, and just 5 minutes from the HQ, Mike picked up eyeshine on a large branch 20m up a smooth sided tree. It was another MARBLED CAT (!). This cat was not at all bothered by our presence and after a few minutes observing this stunning cat, we left and were able to pass the information on to another group who were already in bed in what must be the ultimate wake-up call: "Want to come and see a Marbled cat in a tree?" We left Deramakot two days later fully satisfied, although a return trip to Borneo beckons one day to try and get one or two of the other critters that have evaded us (Bay Cat...?!)

## MAMMAL TRIP LIST

1	Marbled cat	<i>Pardofelis marmorata</i>
2	Leopard cat	<i>Prionailurus javanensis</i>
3	Malay civet	<i>Viverra zangalunga</i>
4	Island palm civet	<i>Paradoxurus philippinensis</i>
5	Bornean striped palm civet	<i>Arctogalidia stigmatica</i>
6	Banded palm civet	<i>Hemigalus derbyanus</i>
7	Yellow-throated marten	<i>Martes flavigula</i>
8	Sunda pangolin	<i>Manis javanica</i>
9	Malayan porcupine	<i>Hystrix brachyura</i>
10	Long-tailed porcupine	<i>Trichys fasciculata</i>
11	Spotted giant flying squirrel	<i>Petaurista elegans</i>
12	Red giant flying squirrel	<i>Petaurista petaurista</i>
13	Jentink's flying squirrel	<i>Hylopetes platyurus</i>
14	Thomas's flying squirrel	<i>Aeromys thomasi</i>
15	Black flying squirrel	<i>Aeromys tephromelas</i>
16	Borneo black-banded squirrel	<i>Callosciurus orestes</i>
17	Bornean mountain ground squirrel	<i>Sundasciurus everetti</i>
18	Brooke's squirrel	<i>Sundasciurus brookei</i>
19	Summit (Kinabalu) rat	<i>Rattus baluensis</i>
20	Jentink's squirrel	<i>Sundasciurus jentinki</i>
21	Whitehead's spiny rat	<i>Maxomys whiteheadi</i>
22	Slender treeshrew	<i>Tupaia gracilis</i>
23	Greater mouse-deer	<i>Tragulus napu</i>
24	Lesser mouse-deer	<i>Tragulus kanchil</i>
25	Bornean yellow muntjac	<i>Muntiacus atherodes</i>
26	Sambar deer	<i>Rusa unicolor</i>
27	Asian elephant	<i>Elephas maximus</i>
28	Sabah grizzled (grey) langur	<i>Presbytis sabana</i>
29	Southern pig-tailed macaque	<i>Macaca nemestrina</i>
30	Long tailed macaque	<i>Macaca fascicularis</i>
31	Philippine slow loris	<i>Nycticebus menagensis</i>
32	Bornean Orangutan	<i>Pongo pygmaeus</i>
33	Bornean colugo	<i>Galeopterus borneanus</i>
34	Large Flying-fox	<i>Pteropus vampyrus</i>
35	Andersen's woolly horseshoe bat	<i>Rhinolophus foetidus</i>
36	Trefoil horseshoe bat	<i>R. tricoloratus</i>
37	Lesser sheath-tailed bat	<i>E. monticola</i>
38	Greater sheath-tailed bat	<i>Emballonura furax</i>
39	Acuminate horseshoe bat	<i>Rhinolophus acuminatus</i>
40	Diadem leaf-nosed bat	<i>Hipposideros diadema</i>
41	Greater long-tongued nectar bat	<i>Macroglossus sobrinus</i>