

Primate Watching Trip Notes

South-west Borneo: June 21 to July 4, 2022

John and Tyler Rogers, David Andrew (Sarawak only)

Guide: Yeo Siew Teck



Bornean Orang-utan, outside Tanjung Puting

Itinerary

15 days in south-west Borneo. 5 national parks: Semenggoh, Kubah and Tanjung Datu (Sarawak), Gunung Pulung (West Kalimantan) & Tanjung Puting (Central Kalimantan). Saw the 3 key primates: Abbotts Gray Gibbon, Bornean White-bearded Gibbon and Cross-marked Langur.

21 to 23 June – Kubah

23 to 26 June – Tanjung Datu

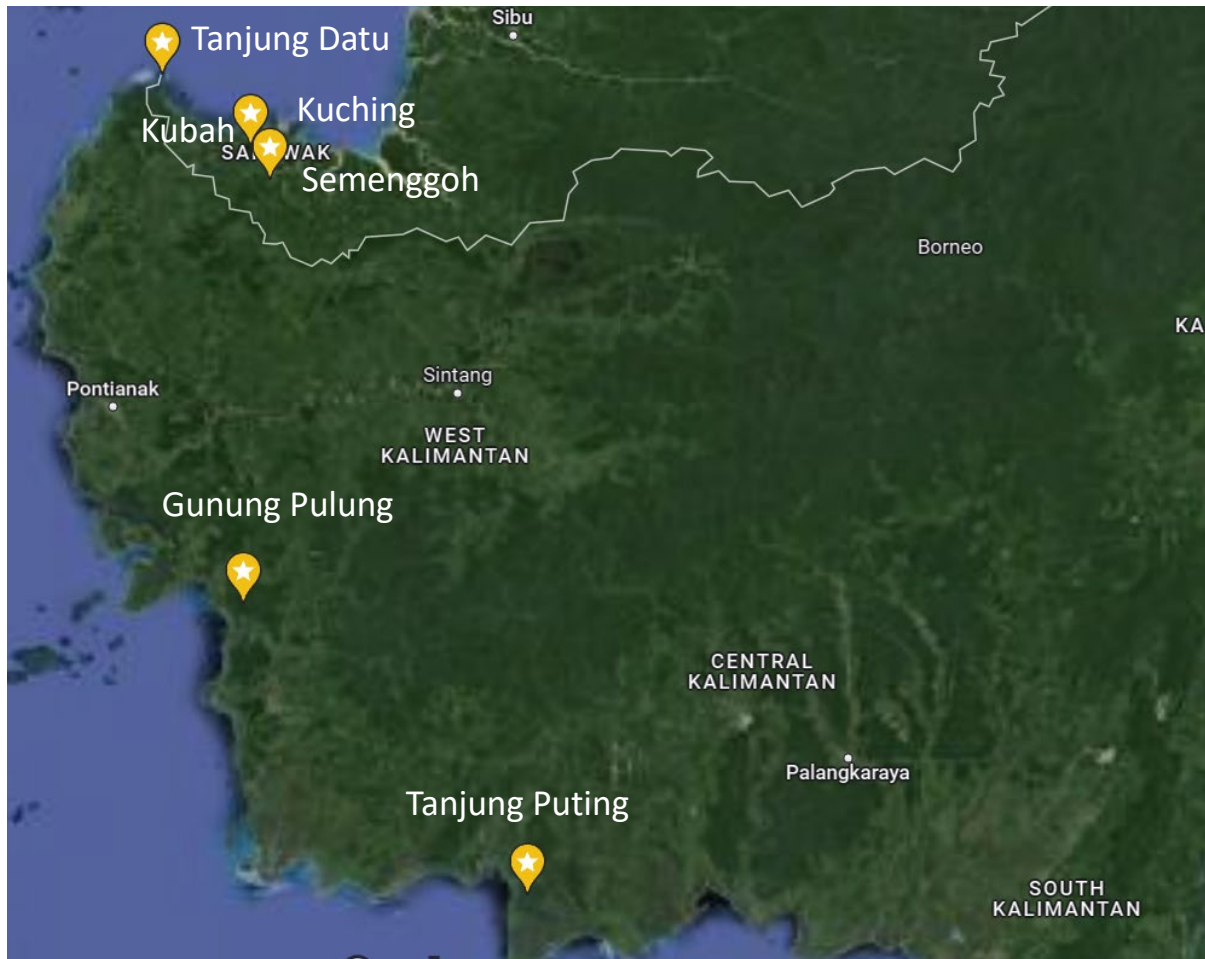
27 June – Kuching dolphin cruise, Semenggoh

28 June – Semenggoh

29 June – travel

30 June to 2 July – Gunung Pulung

2 to 5 July – Tanjung Putting



Locations

Semenggoh

Mostly very scrappy secondary forest just outside the small reserve. There is Orang-utan feeding in the reserve itself, but no wild mammals of note.

Kubah

Nice lower hill forest close to Kuching. This was a replacement for the closed Borneo Highlands Resort. A **Bornean Striped (Small-toothed) Palm Civet** and **Bornean Colugo** were the highlights of our night walk. During the days we only added **Prevost's** and **Plantain Squirrels**.

Tanjung Datu

Beautiful location. Primary rainforest meets white sandy beaches and crystal-clear water at the far western tip of Borneo. First day had some very nice birds (Helmeted Hornbill and Great Argus) but during the day only **Silvered Langur** (which were relatively common) and **Long-tailed Macaque** (plus Yeo most likely heard Proboscis Monkeys) and then at night **Bornean Colugo** with young and a **Malay Civet** in the campgrounds. However, we had found a couple of fruiting trees and on the second day were able to spend some time watching, from a distance, the usually very shy **Abbott's Gray Gibbons** (most likely 3 individuals, at least one with a darker and one with a lighter pelage), we heard at least two other pairs vocalizing. We also saw a pair of very shy **Cross-marked (Sarawak) Langurs** fleeing through the trees after giving their distinctive alarm call. A **Yellow-throated Marten** was inquisitive - watching us from a tree above. Tyler and Yeo both separately saw muntjac (most likely Red Muntjac). Our evening walk produced our only **Philippine (Island) Palm Civet**. The third day we were much luckier with the Cross-marked Langurs, with a group of c8 moving above us and allowing one to be photographed. A brief evening walk was cut short by heavy rain but not before we watched a **Lesser (Sunda) Short-nosed Fruit Bat** feeding next to the path and saw a couple of unidentified muntjac in the thermal.

Kuching

Our dolphin cruise was a very pleasant morning and we saw at least 4-6 **Irrawaddy Dolphin** close to shore around the fishing boats, as well as a lone individual swimming upstream.

Gunung Pulung

We seem to have been the first western eco-tourists to visit Gunung Pulung. The trip from Kuching was long. Effectively 12+ hour drive (with time to cross the border and brief stops for lunch and to sample some Durian fruit) to overnight in Ketapang, then a 90-minute drive back to the park the following morning, a 45-minute motorbike ride up muddy trails and an hour-plus hike to the Riam Berasap campsite. Between the entrance road and camp site most of the vegetation is 30-year re-growth from when it was (illegally) cleared by loggers. The following day we did the full hike to the area above the waterfall where Tufted Ground-squirrels have been most often recorded (our guides felt it was 50/50 we would find them). While only 6km each way this hike up and down hills and across streams took us the full day, and might be the most leech covered forest I have even been in. The bad news was that an absence of fruiting trees along the 6km did not give us any real opportunity to wait for the squirrel to emerge.

The good news is that the mostly secondary forest is of very high quality evidenced by good lowland bird species. Mammals are probably shy due to long-term hunting pressures (that are likely abating now). On our return walk to the campsite we were able to see a group of **Bornean White-bearded Gibbon**. Their vocalizations were quite obviously different to the Abbott's Grays we had been hearing three days earlier.

Future visitors (we were not able to yet) will apparently be able to stay at the research station (a 5-hour boat ride), which sounds like a much easier place to look for the squirrels (one hour walk to prime habitat), and we also heard there is a much easier location on the other side of the park to look for Bornean White-bearded Gibbons. Yeo can help co-ordinate any future visits.

Tanjung Puting

This is the place to see wild **Bornean Orang-utan**. We had three nights on the klotok (houseboat) and saw around 30–35 individuals. Some are obviously habituated and hang around the settlements and feeding stations, but others seem totally wild, including those outside the park that are never fed. There are a lot of visitors that come on packaged nature holidays and most don't seem very nature focused (think forest walks in high-vis athletic wear and no binoculars), but it is very relaxing nature watching from a beanbag on a boat. That said, the peatland forest is superb, and the national park is huge, so it is a great destination. The birding highlight was a successful search for the seldom seen (Bornean) Crestless Fireback at the forest path to the Camp Leakey feeding station.

Proboscis Monkey, **Silvered Langur** and **Long-tailed Macaques** are all also quite common. Waiting after the orang-utans had finished at one of the feeding-stations we had a **Kalimantan Treeshrew** (split from Plain/Long-footed, lacking the back stripe of the out of range Large, and lacking the reddish tail of Splendid) and **Plantain Squirrel** coming into feed on the scraps. There was also a solitary habituated Bornean White-bearded Gibbon that was at one of the feeding stations (this is apparently the gibbon that most tourists see – but I would be very loath to count this as wild).

MAMMAL LIST

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|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Kalimantan (Plain) Treeshrew | <i>Tupaia salatana</i> | Tanjung Puting |
| 2. Sunda (Bornean) Colugo | <i>Galeopterus variegatus</i> | Kubah, Tanjung Datu |



Kalimantan Treeshrew, Tanjung Puting



Bornean Colugo with young, Tanjung Datu

3. Abbott's Gray Gibbon

Hylobates abbotti

Tanjung Datu



Abbott's Gray Gibbon, Tanjung Datu

4. Bornean White-bearded Gibbon

Hylobates albibarbis

Gunung Pulung

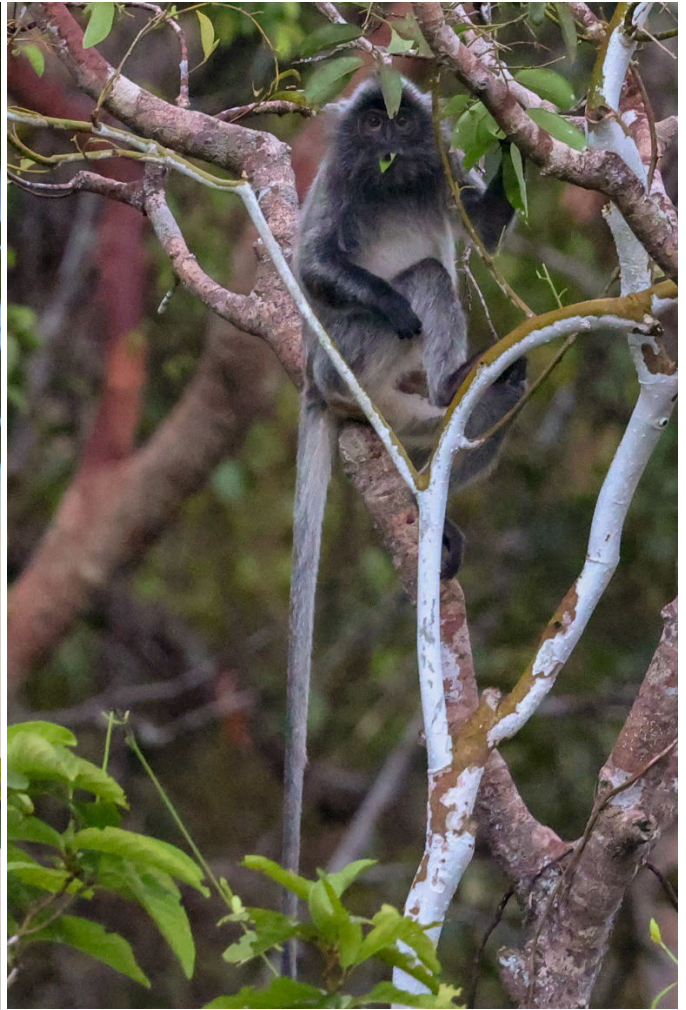


Bornean White-bearded Gibbon, Gunung Pulung

5. Cross-marked Langur *Presbytis chrysomelas chrysomelas* Tanjung Datu
(also known as Bornean Banded or Sarawak Langur)
6. Silvered Langur (Latung) *Presbytis trachypithecus* Tanjung Datu, Tanjung Puting



Cross-marked Langur, Tanjung Datu



Silvered Langur, Tanjung Puting

7. Proboscis Monkey

Nasalis larvatus

Tanjung Puting



Proboscis Monkey, Tanjung Puting

8. Long-tailed Macaque

Macaca fascicularis

Datu, Pulung, Putting

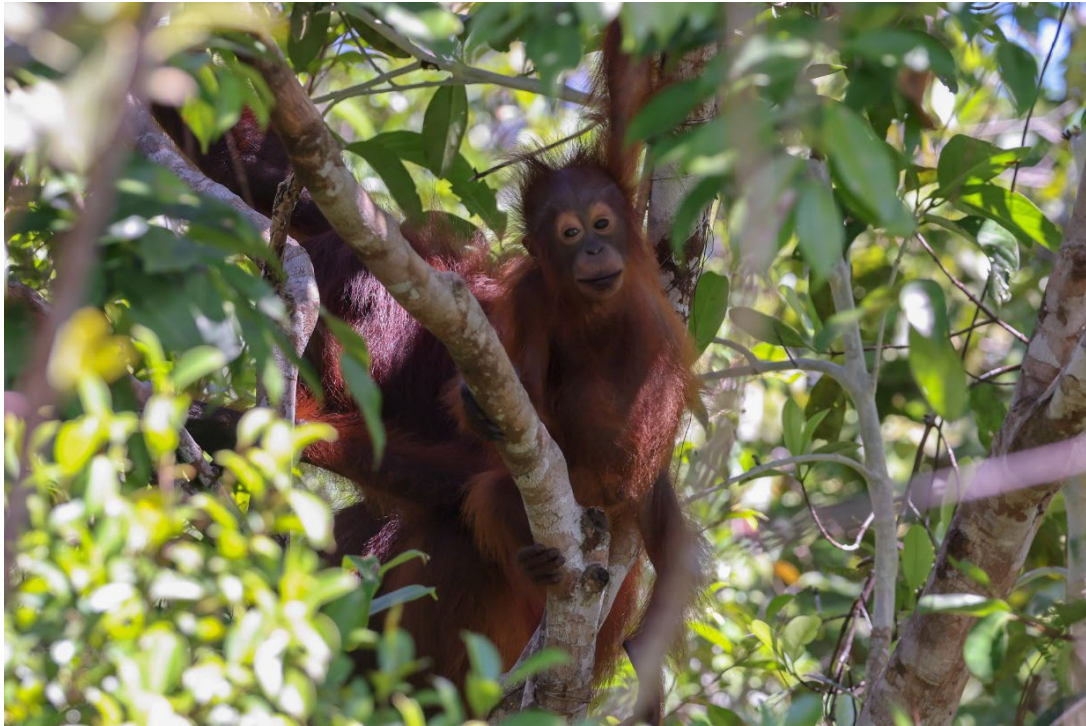


Long-tailed Macaque, Tanjung Datu

9. Bornean Orang-utan

Pongo pygmaeus

Tanjung Puting



Bornean Orang-utan, Tanjung Puting

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| 10. Yellow-throated Marten | <i>Martes flavigula</i> | Tanjung Datu |
| 11. Prevost's Squirrel | <i>Callosciurus prevostii</i> | Kubah |
| 12. Plantain Squirrel | <i>Callosciurus notatus</i> | Kubah, Tanjung Putting |
| 13. Lesser (Sunda) Short-nosed Fruit Bat | <i>Cynopterus brachyotis</i> | Tanjung Datu |



Plantain Squirrel, Tanjung Putting



Lesser (Sunda) Short-nosed Fruit Bat, Tanjung Datu

- | | |
|---|--------------|
| 14. Bornean Striped (Small-toothed) Palm Civet <i>Arctogalidia stigmatica</i> | Kubah |
| 15. Malay Civet <i>Viverra zangalla</i> | Tanjung Datu |
| 16. Philippine (Island) Palm Civet <i>Paradoxurus philippinensis</i> | Tanjung Datu |



Bornean Striped Palm Civet, Kubah



Philippine (Island) Palm Civet, Tanjung Datu

17. Irrawaddy Dolphin

Orcaella brevirostris

Kuching



Irrawaddy Dolphins, Kuching

BIRDS

Highlights – Crestless Fireback, Bonaparte's Nightjar and Sunda Frogmouth (Putting), Brown-backed Flowerpecker and Rufous-collared Kingfisher (Kubah), Helmeted Hornbill and Great Argus (Datu), Bornean Blue-banded Kingfisher and Gould's Frogmouth (Pulung)

SNAKES

Only one snake on the whole trip, the tiny:

Bornean Reed Snake

Calamaria borneansis

Kubah

