

SULAWESI, JAVA and a bit of SUMATRA

2012

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From August 24 to October 12 I travelled in Indonesia. It was my fifth trip in this country. I visited mainly **Sulawesi** (north and center) and **Java** and as I had extra time I went for 2 full days in **Sumatra (WAY KAMBAS NP)** to see how is the situation.

I travelled all the time independently using public transportation which is quite easy, quite tiring because of the slow processing, but mainly because you are constantly harassed and scammed for money. It was not new, because I experienced the same in the past.

SULAWESI

I arrived from Singapore and France on the 24th of August. It was my 4th time in Sulawesi. Two days after I travelled to **Gorontalo**. It took me one full day by KIJANG (local 4X4 public taxis). Then a local guide from my hotel led me to the Forest department (very near the city center) to organise my trip to **NANTU FOREST RESERVE**. From there we have had to go "**Conservasi office**". As the manager was not in his office we followed a ranger to the manager's office. He didn't speak English but his wife did well. After explaining why I wanted to go there I had to go pay 200 000Rp to get a permit from the Forest department and 50 000Rp to get a permit from the Police. They did photocopies of my passport to prepare everything in advance. And I was forced to have a guide completely useless as I speak enough Indonesian.

One day later and late in the day I embarked on a ferry travelling from **Gorontalo to Wakai** in the **Togeans islands**. I arrived by 9am the following day in **Wakai** encircled by hundred meters of rubbish floating on the sea. From **Wakai** I chartered a boat to reach **Malenge** island where I stayed 4

nights. **Curtis Yart** saw both **Togean Macaque** and **Babirusa** (see **Mammalwatching around the world** and personal communication). But local guides told me it is very difficult to see them. **Macacaques** and **Babirusas** are chased because they come in the crops. Two local guides told me that the best to see **Babirusa** was to camp in the forest. But I had no tent. I heard one morning a **Babirusa** and saw a lot of evidence of them. But I saw also different traps. **Babirusas** are not eaten in this part of Sulawesi because they are pigs and people are muslim. But I saw 2 new interesting birds (**Togean Hawk owl** and **Spotted whistling duck**), thanks to a guide and friend(**Samuel BAWARE**) from **Tangkoko** who travelled with me in the **Togean**s for his job. In the past I tried **Kadiriri** island in the **Togean**s where I saw footprints of **Babirusas**. I waited for them several nights but didn't see any. I was nevertheless rewarded by the sighting of a **Sulawesi palm Civet**.

From **Malenge** I took a public boat to **Wakai** and then the nightferry to **Gorontalo** arriving there early morning. I phoned to the ranger from "**Conservasi**" who had to come with me to Nantu. After a 2 hours delay he arrived in my hotel. He travelled to **Wonorasi** by motorbike. I did it by minibus. From there he picked me up to **Saritani** with his motorbike. We bought food and I paid him cigarettes he asked me. I told him not to smoke in the forest and he agreed. We dropped our luggage in a house of his family where I had to sleep and we walk to the forest reserve. We had to wade in a river, but the level of water reached only the thighs. We walked 10mn in the forest, reached the ranger station, showed them our permits and proceeded to the salt lick (15 or 20mn walk), where there is a hide and a tower. It was already the middle of the afternoon and we stayed less than 2 hours in the hide, but I saw 24 **Babirusas**. The 2 following days who slept in the village and spent the full days at the salt lick, me in the tower and my

guide in the hide. The first full day was extraordinary with at least 34 **Babirusas**, 1 male **Sulawesi warty pig**, 2 **Anoas** (at least 1 male) by 2pm, 5 **Hecks' macaques**. The next full day was very different. During the full morning I got only 4 **Babirusas**, very shy, smelling in our direction, rushing in the forest, coming back and behaving all the time like this. I worried my "guide" was smoking. I went down from the tower, but he heard me and came out of the hide. I asked him if he had smoked. He told me no. I entered in the hide and the smell of cigarettes was very strong. I told him to go to the ranger station if he wanted to smoke and he accepted. After the **Babirusas** came back slowly and still shy. By the end of the afternoon they were more than 40 and one **Heck's Macaque came**. I had asked a permit for 2 other days, but I decided to change of place. So if you go there, check your guide, completely useless, stay with you or better ask him to go back to the ranger station. The day after I travelled to **Gorontalo** where I slept, and after headed to **Manado**. One person told me that to avoid the little nightmare to get your permit in **Gorontalo**, it is better to get it in **Manado**. I never knew who got the money (expensive) I paid for this trip.

From Manado I went to **Bunaken** island where the snorkeling is excellent and then to **Tangkoko Reserve**. I had already been several times to both places.

In **Tangkoko** a guide is compulsory, but they really do their job. In 2 mornings I saw 40 Sulawesi black-crested macaques, 4 **Spectral tarsius**, 1 **Bear Cuscus** and 1 **Sulawesi treesquirrel** (**Probsciurillus murinus**). You see the Tarsius at dawn or at dusk, and now the guides are used to lure them with grasshoppers they come to eat a few centimeters from you.

JAVA

From Manado I flew to Surabaya on Java. I visited a few national parks:

BALURAN NP:

It was my third time in Baluran. But this time the rangers told me that all types of accommodation were closed in the park. I suppose it is a scam. In fact, I had not the choice if I wanted to visit the park, had to sleep in the home of a ranger. In that manner they get more money and you pay them each time they carry you. But it is not the best to see the wildlife, as they can't drive by night (bad road and bad motorbikes). I saw at least **250 Rusa deers, 1 Wild boar, 1 Black giant squirrel**, a lot of **Long tailed macaques, 50 Ebony langurs, 2 Javan mongooses** and from very far at dawn **1 Javan ferret-badger**. In the past I saw also **Bantengs, Dholes and Little Indian civet** when I was permitted to sleep in the park. This time I saw only faeces of both species.

ALAS PURWO NP:

It was also my third time in this park. But this time the ranger told me the accommodation at **Triangulasi** was full. They told me I had to go 6km away to sleep in a tent at a ranger station. The tent was dirty, like the shared mandi. There was no camping and they wanted the price of a room in a good hotel. I didn't accept to pay and slept under my mosquito net in the so called restaurant (I got the permission from the people working there) and it was a good option. You will understand why later. I went to Triangulasi and was told it was empty and that there was a problem with the rangers. Again a scam. As I was far from the grazing grounds where concentrate most of the animals, I started to walk by 3pm. Late afternoon I saw there **61 Bantengs, 57 Rusa deers, 6 Muntjaks, 17 Wild boars**, several **Ebony langurs**, a lot of **Long tailed macaques** and by night 1

Little Indian Civet. Near the restaurant I saw 1 **Common palm civet** and 1 **Wild boar**. As I was alone reading in the restaurant, by 9pm, I got a **Javan ferret-badger** running below the tables. It came only 5m from me.

GUNUNG GEDE NP

Cibodas gate: When I arrived I was told that the trail was closed after the waterfall and that it will be open one week later. So it was impossible to go at **Air Panas** where **the Periplus guide-Birding in Indonesia** says you can see **Stink Badger** and(or) **Javan ferret badger**. In fact the information seem to be contradictory: on page 54 it is **Ferret badger** and on page **Malay stink badger**. And many local peopled, including staff of the park, rangers and guides told me that Stink badger is easy by night at this place. I saw 7 **Ebony langurs**, 6 **Grizzled langurs**, 10 **Sunda black banded squirrels**, 1 **Javan mongoose**, 2 **Tupai (Tupaia javanica)**, 3 **Common palm civets** (including 1 by daylight), and by night 1 **Red giant flying squirrel** but neither **Ferret badger** nor **Stink badger**. I prospected by night the park between the waterfall and the entrance, and in the Komodo park which includes the camping ground. I also heard **Javan Gibbon**, but they were far.

Bodogol: This part of the park is normally reserved for researchers or students. I was allowed to stay at the research station for a very cheap price, but unfortunately the "guide" was compulsory. I saw perfectly and several times the **Javan gibbons** (1 group of 6 and one of 3) around the guesthouse, but also a **Black giant squirrel** and several **Sunda black banded squirrels**. By night I went with my guide, unfortunately noisy and not interested. I saw **Ebony langurs** and a **Javan Kanchil** but he was always at the front and saw nothing.

GUNUNG HALIMUN NP

Like **Jon HALL** I stayed in **Citalahab** village and looked for animals mainly around **Cikaniki** research station. I saw 3 **Common palm civets** (twice there was 1 the fig tree at Cikaniki) but now **Small toothed palm civet**, several **Black banded squirrels**, **1 Black-eared pygmy squirrel**, **2 Giant black squirrels**, **1 Red giant flying squirrel**, several **Javan gibbons** and **Ebony langurs**.

GUNUNG GEDE NP

As the trail to **Air Panas** was supposed to be open on the 2th of October I returned there, but it was still closed this time until the 8th. I saw 10 **Wild boars**, 3 **Common palm civets** and I glimpsed a **Javan ferret badger**.

Having still some time left I decided to go to **WAY KAMBAS** on Sumatra.

SUMATRA

WAY KAMBAS NP:

In 1993 I already visited **WAY KAMBAS** and it was not forbidden to walk on the main track and I saw interesting birds and mammals including **Asian small clawed otter** and twice **Asian elephants**. Since I have seen several trips reports telling you can't do anything alone, that it is expensive and that the guides are reluctant to walk. **Richard Webb** in June 2012 (see **Mammalwatching around the world**) used **Satwa ecolodge** to visit the park and was enchanted and his mammal list prove it is still a good place. Unfortunately Satwa never responded to my emails. Having only 2 or 3 days to visit the park I decided to try to visit it by myself and I don't recommend you do it. You can't do anything alone. They always check what you do (even by night).

Around the camp I heard every day **Siamangs** and saw 4. I also saw 30 **Wild boars**, 1 **Muntjak**, 1 **Sambar**, at least 1 **Lesser Kanchil** and 1 **Greater Kanchil**, 5 **Silvered leaf langurs**, 15 **Long tailed macaques**, 1 **Prevost squirrel** and 1 **Plantain squirrel**.

I went twice with 2 guides (one with a gun). On the first night (2 hours walk) I saw a **Small toothed palm Civet** and the guide if unknowledgeable did his best to find something. On the 2nd night I saw a **Malay civet** but the guides were worst. The 2 times I saw eyes, instead to use their torch to help me, they switch them off.

There were fruit-bats under each shelter in the camp.

By the end the staff tried to overcharge me (double price) for the transportation. But this is **Indonesia**. On my way back I have stopped at **Satwa** to get an another email-address to contact them and use them.

JAVA

GUNUNG GEDE NP

Cibodas gate:

As the trail was normally open on the 8th of October, I went there for a last try. It was still closed but by paying an extra unofficial 20 000 RP I was allowed to go to **Air Panas**. I stayed there until night. There are 3 places where you can camp around **Air Panas (Hot water)**, and there is even a shelter at one of them. Two places were occupied by workers: one place with a tent and another with a large shelter and 22 persons. All the workers agreed that Stink badgers come by night to steal their food. Of course I didn't see anything where they slept. At the place with the shelter and no people I had put some rice on the ground and I saw no less than 4 **Javan ferret badgers**

including a young one. They were not shy, coming next to my feet, but they don't tolerate the light of a torch. At the place with the tent of the 2 people (that I knew) they asked me to sit down (they had put some rice just a few meters from us) and I saw a 5th **Javan ferret badger**. Then I walked back to **Cibodas**, but I missed **Stink badger**.

The day after I reached **JAKARTA** and it was the end of my trip. I intended to go to **UDJUNG KULON NP** (I went there already in 1993 and saw fresh footprints and piles of dungs of **Javan rhinoceros**) but I gave up because I remembered it was a nightmare to have a guide not willing to walk, so it would have been a waste of money.