

SUMATRA (GUNUNG KERINCI AND TAPAN ROAD)

6th – 11th June 2016

Richard Webb



Mitrid Langur

INTRODUCTION

Following on from a successful trip to Sabah, John Wright and I continued on to Sumatra in the hope that our luck with cats would continue and we would connect with the Asian Golden Cats sometimes seen hunting the lower slopes of Gunung Kerinci. James Eaton and Rob Hutchinson have been successful here on at least a couple of occasions. We also hoped to see something along the nearby Tapan Road where Pete Morris photographed a Sumatran Tiger at close range a couple of years ago and Rob Hutchinson saw Sunda Clouded Leopard in 2015.

We were unsuccessful with Gunung Kerinci being particularly hard work although we did find fresh cat tracks, possibly Golden Cat, after heavy rain on the main trail. It does seem to be a hotspot for squirrels though and Siamangs and Mitrid Langurs are common. Although the forest at Tapan Road remains intact the recent upgrading of the road to tarmac means that the volume of traffic, particularly lorries and bikes, makes seeing something on the road extremely unlikely, and although it is part of the national park, we saw lots of evidence of locals hunting pigs with dogs on the two days we were there, increasing the disturbance.

Note there is no good field guide to the mammals of Sumatra and although there is an online checklist to the mammals of Kerinci it is extremely inaccurate not even mentioning the Mitrid Langurs which are common here and listing Montane Treeshrew as present even though it's a Bornean endemic. See https://docs.google.com/file/d/0Bw3LaCy_xnh8QjBQNURGYVhEZ2M/edit

LOGISTICS

Kerinci is a long way from anywhere. The closest airport is Padang which is serviced by numerous Indonesian airlines from various destinations, and by Air Asia from Kuala Lumpur. We took the latter route. From Padang it is a long 6-7 hour drive to Kerisik Dua where we stayed at the famous Subandi Homestay which is where most birders stay. From here it is a 10 minute drive to the start of the main trail at Gunung Kerinci, and a two hour drive to Tapan Road. Some visitors to Tapan Road stay at a hotel about 30 minutes away in Sungai Penuh but we chose to stay at Subandi throughout our stay and Pak organised all transfers to and from Padang, the trails and Tapan Road using his comfortable van.

At Kerinci we were on the trails from about 0630, it's just light at 0600 in early June, to 1800 although on two days we left at 1600 with most of the afternoon being a washout. Although we didn't use rubber boots they are probably advisable, the main trail becomes a muddy stream after heavy rain. A folding umbrella and good waterproofs are essential.

For Tapan we left at 0430 and got there about 0630 departing at 1715 on the first day and midday on the second day when we were washed out by torrential rain from about 0815!

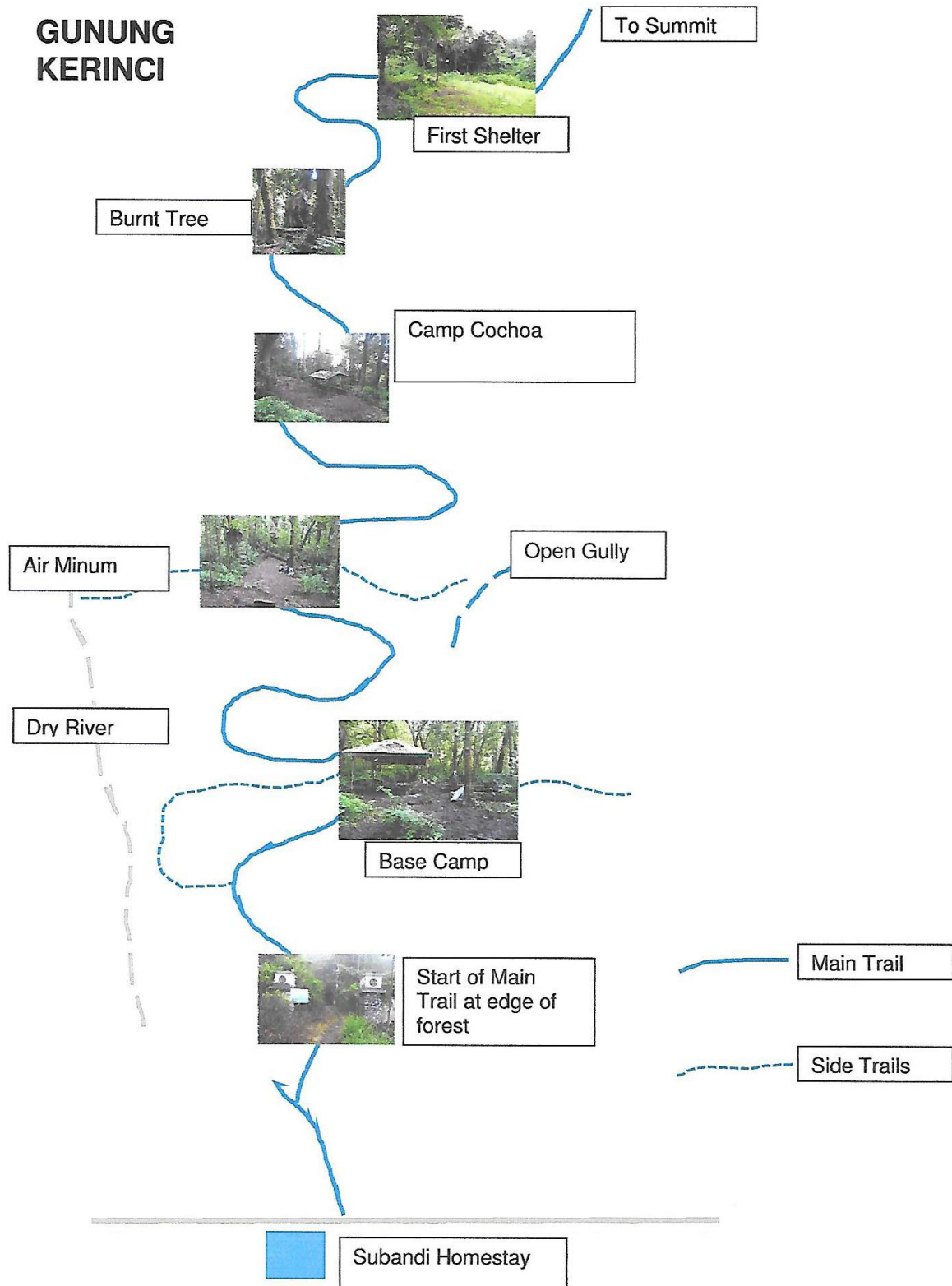
The total cost for two people for seven nights including all transfers, accommodation in single rooms, with hot water provided for washing (there are no showers), tea, coffee and as much bottled water as required, breakfast (normally banana pancakes with chocolate sauce), packed lunches and dinner (normally chicken, or eggs for John as a vegetarian), plus park permits and guiding fees, Subandi's nephew Dwi Wahyudi, a bird guide joined us on all six days, came to 13,560,000 rupiah or £745 based on the exchange rate of 18,200 rupiah to £1 available at Padang airport. The rate was 2.8% higher than that available in the UK.

Pak the owner of Subandi can be contacted at subandi.homestay@gmail.com or by phone or text on +62 81274114273. He is quite slow at responding to emails so a follow up with a call or text is advisable.

GUNUNG KERINCI

Gunung Kerinci is the premier birding site for Sumatran montane endemics but also has a rich mammal list. The map below is taken from Graham Talbot's excellent April 2015 birding report http://www.cloudbirders.com/tripreport/repository/TALBOT_Sumatra_04_2015.pdf although there are also plenty of other good reports on www.cloudbirders.com. Almost all mammalling is done from a single often very muddy trail which is the trail to the summit although there are a number of side trails worth exploring. Graham's map only shows one side trail between the start of the trail and Base Camp but there are actually several small side trails in this area.

The summit starts at 1,900m at the edge of the forest, the forest edge having contracted greatly due to encroachment from cultivation over the past 20 years. It rises relatively slowly, although there are some steep sections, to 2,500m at First Shelter (actually the third shelter) and eventually to 3,800m at the summit. I ventured as high as Air Minum and John to Camp Cochia but we spent most of the time below Base Camp where there is a shelter which is very welcome in heavy rain.



It can get very busy with trekkers particularly at weekends but we only encountered trekkers on two of our four days on the mountain. Most trekkers don't seem to arrive at the start of the trail before 0900 anyway and most come down from late afternoon onwards the following day. The porters sometimes come down earlier.

The trail is hard going particularly when it rains heavily, which appears to be frequently, even in the dry season, but by walking the main trail and some of the side trails slowly, and in my case by sitting off the trail watching baited sections of the trail for hours at a time, we saw ten species of mammal and some good birds. **Siamangs** and particularly **Mitrid Langurs** are common, and we also saw **Wild Boar**, **Lesser Treeshrew**, **Beccari's Shrew** and no fewer than five species of **squirrel**; **Low's** (very common), **Slender**, **Pale Giant**, **Black-striped** and **Niobe Ground**. The latter resembles Three-striped Ground Squirrel but TSGS does not occur above 1,000m.

On one evening shortly after seeing several **Wild Boar**, Dwi and I independently twice heard what sounded like the growls of a cat, about 200m from the start of the trail but didn't see anything. On the final morning after heavy rain we found very fresh tracks of a medium-sized cat at two different spots along the main trail below Base Camp, and I also found fresh scat probably from a civet or marten on the trunk of a fallen tree one morning.

In hindsight we should have spent more time spotlighting along the lower sections of the main trail and possibly in the cultivated areas just below the forest as Dwi's only previous sighting of Asian Golden Cat was at dawn just outside the forest but we didn't find this out until the last day.

TAPAN ROAD

Ranging from around 300m to 1,500m, Tapan Road cuts through .c.15 kms of virgin rainforest in the Kerinci-Seblat National Park. Sadly a new road has been built in the past three years and this is now very busy and you need to be very conscious of this while walking the road.

Prior to this it was a barely used dirt road and the potential for seeing good mammals during the day or at night must have been great. I really regret not having visited the area sooner as others have as mentioned previously seen Sumatran Tiger and Sunda Clouded Leopard here in recent years.

Most of the time here was spent birding with a few squirrels, a **Large Treeshrew** and a solitary **Wild Boar** being the only mammals seen, although **Siamang** was commonly heard. On both visits we started to walk downhill from the Ranger Station towards the top of the pass slowly walking the main road and occasionally checking small side trails in gullies. The vehicle would follow us and occasionally pick us up and drive us on for a couple of kilometres. We went as far as a kilometre or so beyond the first bridge and then turned back as the road beyond this point was under constructions with lots of disturbance. On our second visit heavy rain from just after 0800 made it difficult and we eventually gave up at midday.

ITINERARY

- 6th** Gunung Kerinci all day.
- 7th** Gunung Kerinci but curtailed early due to torrential afternoon rain.
- 8th** Tapan Road all day.
- 9th** Gunung Kerinci all day.
- 10th** Tapan Road until midday when we gave up after persistent heavy rain.
- 11th** Gunung Kerinci until mid-afternoon when curtailed by persistent rain.

Low's Squirrel



Lesser Treeshrew



Niobe Ground Squirrel

MAMMALS

Beccari's Shrew *Crocidura beccarii*

Large Treeshrew *Tupaia tana*

Lesser (Pygmy) Treeshrew *Tupaia minor*

Mitrid Langur *Presbytis cruciger*

Long-tailed Macaque *Macaca fascicularis*

Sunda Pig-tailed Macaque *Macca nemestrina*

Siamang *Symphalangus syndactylus*

Pale Giant Squirrel *Ratufa affinis*

Black-striped Squirrel *Callosciurus nigrovittatus*

Niobe Ground Squirrel *Lariscus niobe*

A single seen twice at Kerinci on 9th.

One at Tapan Road on the 8th.

Kerinci, two on 6th and singles on 7th, 9th and 11th although probably under-recorded among the large numbers of Low's Squirrels.

Common at Kerinci but remarkably difficult to photograph.

One seen by John on the drive back to Padang.

Two on the drive back to Padang.

Seen at Kerinci in small numbers with larger numbers heard on all four days with great views on the day I left the camera behind.

Heard on both days at Tapan Road.

One on Kerinci on the 6th. John saw a second.

Singles at Kerinci on 6th, 7th, 9th and 11th. Others seen by John.

4+ at Tapan Road on 8th.

Kerinci, one on the 7th, three on the 9th and four on the 11th, particularly coming to food around shelters etc.

Two at Tapan Road on 10th, also seen by John on 8th and 10th.

Low's Squirrel *Sundasciurus lowii*

Slender Squirrel *Sundasciurus tenuis*

Wild Boar *Sus scrofa*

Very common at Kerinci with smaller numbers at Tapan Road.

5+ at Kerinci on 6th but smaller numbers on other days although probably under-recorded among large numbers of Low's Squirrel.

One at Tapan Road on 10th.

One at Tapan Road on the 8th and 7+ at Kerinci on the 9th.

SELECTED BIRDS

Salvadori's Pheasant

Sumatran Peacock-Pheasant

Green-billed Malkoha

Barred Eagle-Owl

Rajah Scops Owl

(Sumatran) Collared Owlet

(Sumatran) Short-tailed Frogmouth

Salvadori's Nightjar

Sumatran Trogon

Lesser Yellownape

Long-tailed Broadbill

Chestnut-capped Laughing-Thrush

Sumatran and Pygmy Wren Babblers

Sumatran and Shiny Whistling-Thrushes

Lesser Forktail

Sunda Warbler.

Snowy-browed Flycatcher

Blue Nuthatch

Black and Crimson Oriole

Sumatran Drongo

Temminck's Sunbird

Sumatran Treepie

Sumatran Cochoa

Males on Kerinci on two occasions.

One seen on Kerinci, commonly heard at Tapan Road.

Small numbers Tapan Road.

One Kerinci.

One Kerinci.

Seen on Kerinci on two days.

Two roosting birds at Kerinci on 6th.

One at Kerinci on the 6th.

Seen at Kerinci and Tapan Road.

One Tapan Road.

Common at Tapan Road.

One Tapan Road.

Regularly seen at Kerinci.

Small numbers Kerinci.

5+ Tapan Road.

Common Kerinci.

Common Kerinci.

5+ Tapan Road.

Two Tapan Road.

Several Tapan Road.

One Tapan Road.

Small numbers Kerinci and Tapan Road.

Seen by JW at Kerinci.



Rajah Scops Owl



Short-tailed Frogmouth