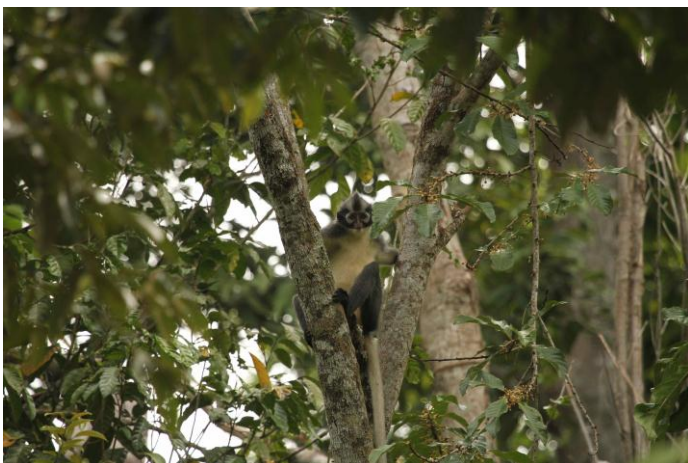


Trip report Sumatra: 24.7.11 – 12.8.11

We had long talked about going to Sumatra to look for wildlife and finally we went end of July. Our two top priorities were Gunung Leuser NP and Kerinci Seblat NP with Way Kambas NP as a third. Way Kambas has got some terrible reviews in different forums so we were not so sure we wanted to go. As it turned out, this was the place we liked the most.

Ketambe, a small village some 7 hours of tedious driving by car from Medan was our base for Gunung Leuser NP. It is possible to fly to a larger town nearby and it is cheaper than by private taxi. Needless to say we flew back. We stayed at Pak Mus homestead which was ok. Nice clean cheap bungalows and a garden bordering the NP and the food was fine. Under the roof of one of the bungalows a **Lesser Sheath-tailed Bat** hung during the days. Every evening at about 5 pm **Thomas's Leaf Monkeys** came for a visit. In Ketambe you can see them a bit everywhere, so they are an easy target. Looking for Thomas's we also found one **Slender Squirrel**, running backwards and forwards with grass in his mouth building a nest.



We had only been in Ketambe for a couple of hours before going on our first night walk by ourselves. We had only walked for some 5 minutes when we spotted two glaring eyes in a tree close to a plantation at the end of the village. A **Greater Slow Lories** delighted us with his presence and he was very cooperative too, posing for some nice photos and film shots. Only a few meters beside a **Trefoil**

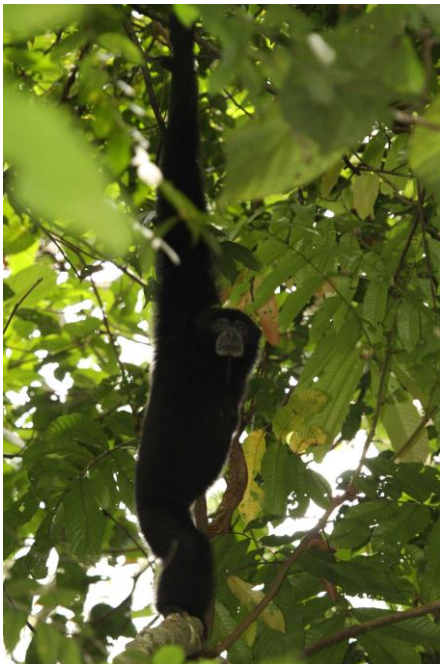
Horseshoe Bat flew back and forth. The village, and especially close to plantations, the Greater Slow Lories seem to thrive. When we came back from our adventurous jungle camping we went to another plantation in the village and we spotted another one. Plantations seem to be the place to look for them. Later the very same evening, along the road, we also saw one **Small-toothed Civet** and a **Black Giant Squirrel**.



Before heading out to jungle camping we went on a couple of day walks with Pak Mus, where we saw some more Thomas Leaf Monkeys, some **Long-tailed Macaques**, some **Pig-tailed Macaques** and another Trefoil Horseshoe Bat hanging from a liana just in front of our eyes.

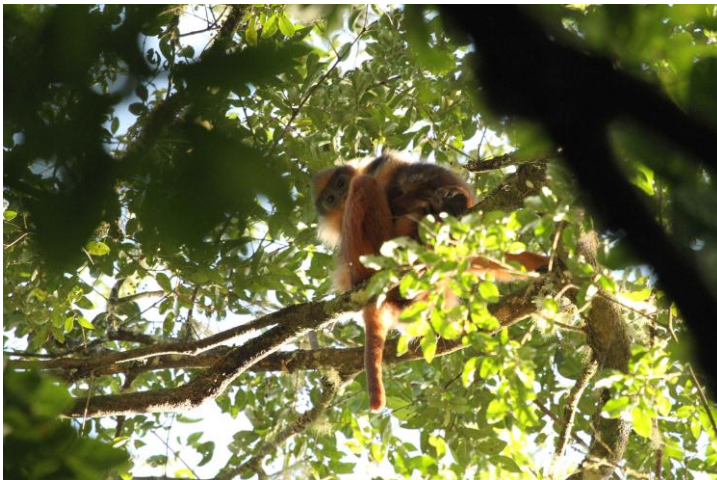
We booked our jungle tour with Pak Mus and his son was our guide. He told us it was at least a 5 hours walk to the camp so we packed a big first aid kit and a lot of other equipment. We were a bit surprised when we were at the camp already after a one hour walk. And we were not alone. Some 30 other people were there too. This is the place where they take all adventure seekers in Ketambe. The son of Mus then suggested that we should relax, read a book and go swimming. He even offered to go back to the village to get us some beer, which would have tasted nice, much better than the boiled water, but, this was not quite what we had in our mind. He tried to convince us that we should not do any night walks as there were leeches around. He failed at that. We did not see one leech on the two night walks we did with him. Lucky enough our porter turned out to be a very good spotter and he pointed out quite some nice things. On the third day after our morning tour he asked us if we did not want to go back to the village. Our original intention was to stay for another night, but under the circumstances this did not sound like a bad idea, so we went back. Enough moaning. What about mammal watching. Yes, we saw some very nice species we had never seen before, so we were quite content afterwards. Only 2 fig trees had fruits in this area so we spent quite some time around there, and these trees were popular with monkeys and birds. We saw **Sumatran Orangutan** each day, in total 10. On top of our list, apart from the impossibles, Tigers and Rhinos, the **White-handed Gibbon** was very high on our most wanted. You hear them early mornings very loudly, but they are not that easily spotted as they tend to stay high up in the canopy. Once we were lucky enough to get a pretty good view with 2 of them swinging like, well, only a Gibbon can do. The night walks while camping did not produce any mammals but we saw a few other goodies, with 4 species of snakes, 2 violin beetles and a fungus infested caterpillar. After going back prematurely to the village we hired another guide for a long day walk. We had not yet seen a **Siamang** so this was our main target and after a few hours search we found one and followed him for an hour or so. A French woman was by the Siamang too. All of a sudden our guide walked away with her without telling us. Apparently he walked with her to the camp to get her children and we got her guide instead, Abu

(abuketambe@hotmail.com, 081260674539). Her guide turned out to be quite good and knowledgeable and we were quite happy. Although we walked with him for an hour or so only he gave us a good impression, and if we go back, we will try to go with him.



Our next stop was Kerinci Seblat NP. After 2 flights and a 6 hour taxi journey to the small town of Kersiktua ,we were finally there. The mountain rainforest is very beautiful with trees overgrown with mosses and epiphytes. We mostly came for the **Mitred Langurs**, and it was no problem at all finding them along the only path existing (taking you up to Gunung Kerinci). They were very shy though and did not let us approach too close to get some good photos. On every occasion we walked on that path we saw one or several groups. We spent 4 days in the forest in total. We saw Siamangs on half of the walks we did, but the forest is quite dense and it was hard to get any good views and very hard to follow them. Their song is fantastic and only hearing them gave us goose skin, being on par with the Howler Monkeys from South America and the Indris of Madagascar. We also saw a few **Three-**

striped Ground Squirrel. The night walks were not that successful. One **Great Wolly Horseshoe Bat** seemed to have his favorite hang-out by camp 1 and he came and hung there at about 6pm every night with a snack in his mouth. He was very cooperative and we got within only a couple of meters from him. On one occasion we saw **3 Leopard Cats**, one female with two young ones and on another one. Both times at the plantation. We walked up and down the trail each night and hoped to see a Sun Bear or two but had no luck. What we heard was plenty of chain saws doing their dirty work. From Kersiktua, where we stayed, not much rainforest is left, and they are planning to build new roads through Kerinci Seblat NP....



Tapan Road some 2 hours by car from Kersiktua, is another famous spot for seeing animals, not only for twitchers. We went there with the intention of camping for 3 nights. After one night we left. They are enlarging the road at the moment and are literally scraping down the rainforest and the road is quite heavily used by cars and heavy trucks, even at night. We saw some Pig-tailed Macaques, 3 troops with Mitred Langurs, two **Sunda Black-banded Squirrels** and one **Common Tree Shrew**. During the one night drive we did we saw one **Masked Palm Civet**.

All in all, Kerinci Seblat NP was very disappointing and I would be surprised if we go back, and if, not from Kersiktua.

After another 6 hour taxi drive back to Padang and a flight to Jakarta and then another flight to Bandar Lampung, where a taxi from the Satwa Elephant Eco Lodge (www.ecolodgesindonesia.com) picked us up for the 2 hour drive to the lodge, we were at the edge of Way Kambas NP. The lodge

turned out to be very good, with good food, nice comfortable rooms, cold beer and a guide who was willing to put in the hours. We can really recommend our guide Hari (harytata@gmail.com, 081379285415). He is one of two educated guides, so it may be a good idea to pre-book. One worry with Way Kambas, which was one of the reasons we were not sure if we should go, was that the rangers working as guides would strictly adhere to the tour length stated in the program, usually 2 hours. Many complained about this in the forums. As it turned out, we could hunt for animals as long as we liked at no extra charge. The manager told us that we could be out there as much as we liked, and he was as good as his words.

We arrived late in the afternoon and before the first night drive we took a stroll in the village by ourselves. Within 25 minutes we found our first Greater Slow Loris in the cacao plantation inside the village, where else. He turned out not to be that slow though and hurried away at a break neck speed, for a Slow Loris any way. Each time we walked in the village we would see one, so also here they seem be easy to see. We stayed in total 5 days driving and walking up and down the one road leading through the park, mornings, afternoons and nights. Each morning we saw one or two groups of Siamangs. They are easily seen as the canopy is fairly low and not too dense, like in Kerinci Seblat and Gunung Leuser. There were plenty of **Beautiful Tree Squirrels**, a few **Prevost's Squirrels** and one **Banded Langur** that could not get away fast enough from us. On Way Kanan, a river, you can go on river tours, and we did this twice. On the first tour we went by boat for a few hours. It was supposed to be very good for **Silvered Leaf Monkeys** and we saw plenty. According to our guide the afternoon is better as the monkeys come out from the forest to sleep. We also saw some more of the inevitable Long-tailed and Pig-tailed Macaques. On the second tour, we went by boat for 10 minutes and walked for about one hour to a natural grass clearing. They have built a platform up on a tree so you have very good views from the platform and it was indeed beautiful. We did not however go there for the views. We wanted to see some Asian Elephants. We did not. We saw some **Eurasian Wild Pigs** and **Sambar Deer** later in the afternoon as they came out to feed. They rangers in general are very safety conscious and on the Way Kanan tours we had one ranger with a machine pistol. If it was against wild animals or wild poachers we do not know.

The night drives were fun as ever as you never know what to encounter and they have some pretty amazing beasts roaming. The beasts we saw were plenty of Sambar Deer, Eurasian Wild Pigs, **Lesser Mousedeer** and **Red Muntjacs**. But we never stopped hoping for something bigger behind each bend. After coming back late one evening hungry and thirsty, our guide got an sms. Elephants were marching towards the fields for yet another raid, an eternal problem. On one side, in the forest, we heard the elephants walking and trumpeting, making their presence well known. On the other side, on the road, the villagers gathered making noise as well and lightning fire. One even had a gun and fired it up in the air. We figured both parties waited for the other to get tired so they could move on with their business. The ones who got tired first were we. After one hour or so we thought that this standoff may take a while so we went back for a cold one.

Carmen and Torbjörn Lundqvist