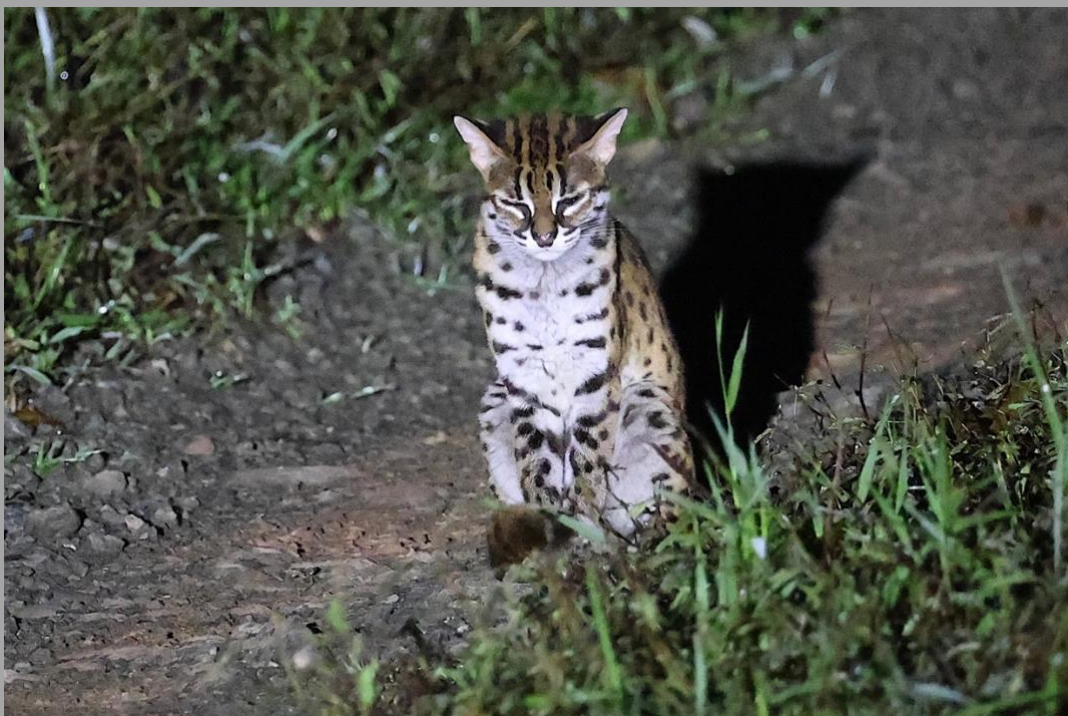


BORNEO (SABAH) 2nd – 21st APRIL 2024



MARbled CAT, Deramakot Forest Reserve. 12th April 20.30

This trip followed a fairly standard Borneo format 1 night Sepilok, 7 nights Deramakot, 2 nights Kinabatangan River, 3 nights Tabin and 2 nights in the Danum Valley. It was relatively hastily arranged so the timing of the trip was dictated by our insistence on only travelling if our preferred guide Mike Gordon was available. His only availability was during April, this would not have been my preferred option, as our main targets would be the island's felines. I was aware having read all the trip reports on this site that the chance of a Flat Headed Cat sighting would be more likely later in the year when the Kinabatangan River level would be lower thus exposing more of the riverbanks where the cat appears to prefer to hunt. Mike would be with us at Sepilok, Deramakot and on 'The River'. The trip was a huge success mainly due to Mike's outstanding guiding capabilities, his night time spotting capacity must be possibly the best worldwide. This report will take the format of a species list with locations seen and some notes which I hope will be of interest. It gives an indication of what is possible in April.



SUNDA LEOPARD CAT. A very underrated small cat possibly due to it being commonly seen. 25+ observed on this trip at several locations. They are beautifully marked. This one was seen on our first night drive at Deramakot, 6th April 19.35.

NOTES:

1. When we arrived in Borneo it became more than apparent that the island was experiencing unusual weather conditions. The wet season prior to our visit had not materialised and they had experienced several months without heavy rainfall, on top of that the daily temperatures had been extremely high, higher than normal. We were told that this occurs approximately every 7 years. It is caused by El Nino (Southern Oscillation) and presumably is influenced by global warming. So, when we arrived at the Kinabatangan River it was very low thus exposing far more of the riverbanks than would normally be expected at this time of year. In other words, ideal conditions for a Flat-headed Cat sighting. This proved to be the case as we enjoyed a prolonged sighting on our first night boat ride. We stayed at Osman's Homestay, Osman himself along with Mike, the dream team, would guide us on 'The River'. After only being out for an hour on the Sg Menangul (a tributary of the Kinabatangan) we hit the jackpot. Osman and Mike almost simultaneously spotted the cat in red and white light. We followed it down the bank for about 50metres before it vanished behind bushes only to reappear after several minutes before eventually heading inland. Mike thought it was one of the best FHC sightings he had experienced.



FLAT-HEADED CAT. Images difficult due to undergrowth. Sg. Menangul 13th April 21.40.

If a FHC sighting is high on your list I would recommend Osman's Homestay (basic but comfortable), ensure you book a private boat and I would suggest doing some extended night boat trips. Osman in his own right is a very accomplished spotter and guide, he has been used by the BBC Wildlife Team and taken David Attenborough out!

2. Our Clouded Leopard encounter occurred on the following night's boat ride. Osman had seen a Clouded Leopard about a week before we arrived so our final night boat ride would concentrate up river in the area it had been seen. As we were returning to the homestay (22.45), I picked up a very strong heat pattern of a significantly larger cat than we had seen so far. The heat signature was glowing red hot in my thermal. Just as I shouted "Leopard" Osman had the cat in his spotlight and was also shouting "Leopard". It was just visible behind some overhanging branches. As the boat turned towards the bank the cat immediately headed inland. I just briefly saw a medium sized cat, grey in colour with dark blotches. Mike got onto the bank and had a good closeup view of the Leopard which had stopped and turned before running away at speed. Unfortunately, no images were available but it was a definite sighting.

Clouded leopard sightings at Kinabatangan appear to be becoming more frequent. My own view is that as the Bearded Pig population has become almost wiped out by swine flu, some Leopards have headed towards the river where prey is plentiful, in particular primates. Using a thermal indicates just about every tree along the riverbank at night has several primates sleeping, often on relatively thin branches overhanging the river, perhaps an indication of the threat? Incidentally we saw no Bearded Pigs during this trip, pre-covid Mike said the species would have been a certainty.

4 OUT OF 5 CATS SEEN, not many trips achieve an 80% success rate.

3. During our 3 night stay in Tabin on a night drive we observed a very unusual Civet, the sighting featured on this site earlier this year "An Unusual Civet. Borneo (Sabah). April 2024".



The UNUSUAL CIVET. Tabin Wildlife Reserve. 16th April 21.15.

My appeal for help in identifying the Civet met eventually with a significant number of suggestions of both a scholarly and amateur nature. The general consensus was that it was an unusual colour morph of the Bornean Striped Palm Civet, which possibly had not been recorded before, a similar sighting was recorded in Tabin 2 weeks after we left.

4. Whilst in the Danum 2 sightings went unrecorded due to a lack of a positive ID, both were on an extended night drive (19th April 20.00 - 23.00), a medium sized cat was identified in the thermal it was hiding under a bush watching a small Island Palm Civet on the track. As we approached it vanished, it was certainly larger than a Leopard Cat. Was it a Bay Cat? who knows. Shortly afterwards another mammal was identified again by thermal signature. It was at a considerable distance, high in a tree and through binoculars a stocky black body could just about be made out, it was possibly either a Binturong or a small Sun Bear.

COMMON NAME	SPECIES	SUBSPECIES	LOCATION SEEN	NOTES
Ear-spot Squirrel	<i>Callosciurus adamsi</i>		S	
Prevost's Squirrel	<i>Callosciurus prevostii</i>	pluto	S, D, KR, T	Sabah race Commonly seen
Sunda Giant Squirrel	<i>Ratufa affinis</i>	baramensis	S	Sandakan race
	<i>Petaurista petaurista</i>	rajah	S, D, T	Relatively common
Western Tarsier	<i>Cephalopachus bancanus</i>	borneanus	S, D*	*not JW
Large Treeshrew	<i>Tupaia tana</i>	paitana	S, D	
Long-tailed (Crab-eating) Macaque	<i>Macaca fascicularis</i>	Fascicularis	D, KR, T	Very common
(Southern) Pig-tailed Macaque	<i>Macaca nemestrina</i>	nemestrina	D, KR, T, DV	Very common
Island Palm Civet	<i>Paradoxurus philippinensis</i>		D, KR, T, DV	ex. Common Palm Civet. Very common.
Thomas's Flying Squirrel	<i>Aeromys thomasi</i>		D, DV	
Bornean Striped Palm Civet	<i>Arctogalidia stigmatica</i>		D, T	Ex. Small-toothed Palm Civet, trivirgata? Incl. unusual colour morph at Tabin. Normal morph very common.
Bornean Colugo	<i>Galeopterus borneanus</i>		D, T, DV	
Banded Civet	<i>Hemigalus derbyanus</i>	boiei	D	Only 1 seen.
Bornean Orangutan	<i>Pongp pygmaeus</i>	morio	S, D, DV	Truly wild at D, DV
Sunda Leopard Cat	<i>Prionailurus javanensis</i>	sumatranus	D, KR, T	Commonly seen 25+ night drives only
Diadem Roundleaf Bat	<i>Hipposideros diadema</i>		D	
Malay Civet	<i>Viverra zangalunga</i>		D, KR, T, DV	Relatively common.
Malayan Porcupine	<i>Hystrix brachyura</i>	longicauda	D, T	
Sambar Deer	<i>Rusa unicolor</i>	brookei	D	New ssp. to that seen in India.
Philippine Slow Loris	<i>Nycticebus menagensis</i>		D, KR	

Moonrat	Echinosorex gymnurus	albus	D	
Sunda Skunk	Mydaus javanensis	lucifer	D	Also known as Sunda Stink Badger
Black Flying Squirrel	Aeromys tephromelas	phaeomelas	D, T, DV	Common.
Hose's Pygmy Flying Squirrel	Petaurillus hosei		D, T	Actually seen flying.
Large Sunda Tree Mouse	Chiropodomys major		D, T	
Rajah Maxomys	Maxomys rajah		D	
Low's Squirrel	Sunda sciurus lowii		D	
Lesser Rane Mouse	Haeromys pusillus		D	
Greater Mousedeer	Tragulus napu		D, T	
Binturong	Actictis binturong	pageli	D	Only 1 seen.
Proboscis Monkey	Nasalis larvatus		D, KR	KR very common.
Marbled Cat	Pardofelis marmorata	marmorata	D	Excellent close prolonged sighting
Borneo Pygmy Elephant	Elephas maximus	borneensis	D, KR	D small herd at night, KR 1 crossing the river.
Large Flying Fox	Pteropus vampyrus		KR	
Horsfield's Myotis	Myotis horsfieldii		KR	
Flat-headed Cat	Felis planiceps		KR	Good prolonged sighting.
Dark-tailed Tree Rat	Niviventer cremoriventer	kina		
Silvered Langur	Trachypithecus cristatus	cristatus	KR	
Plantain Squirrel	Callosciurus notatus	dilutus	KR, T	
Red Langur	Presbytis rubicunda	chrysea	KR, DV	
Lesser Mousedeer	Tragulus kanchil		KR, T	
Sunda Clouded Leopard	Neofelis diardi	borneesis	KR	Great thermal, briefly without
North Borneo Gibbon	Hylobates funerus		T	
Bornean Pygmy Squirrel	Exilisciurus exilis		KR, T	
Horse-tailed Squirrel	Sundasciurus hippurus	pryeri	DV	

SPECIES ORDER AS SEEN.

TAXONOMY TAKEN FROM: Phillipps Field Guide to the Mammals of Borneo and Their Ecology. Sabah, Sarawak, Brunei and Kalimantan. Quentin Phillipps, Karen Phillipps. Second edition. 2018. John Beaufoy Publising Ltd.

45 different mammal species recorded, all new to us as we have never visited S.E. Asia before.

4 out of 5 cat species recorded.

9 out of 10 primate species (Sabah only) recorded.

74 bird species recorded without really trying.

6 out of 8 Hornbill species recorded.

16 species of reptiles and amphibians recorded.

LOCATION KEY: SEPILOK	S
DERAMAKOT FOREST RESERVE	D
KINABATANGAN RIVER	KR
TABIN WILDLIFE RESERVE	T
DANUM VALEY	DV

A more anecdotal trip report is available on safaritalk.net under Trip reports, Worldwide, Asia. Title: Chasing Wild Cats in Borneo (Sabah). April 2024.

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