

Sabah, Borneo, 4th - 21st June 2024

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Photographs by Phil Telfer

Phil organised the trip through the well-known wildlife tour operators Adventure Alternative Borneo (AA Borneo). They arranged our transport, accommodation and guide. It was Phil's eighth visit to Borneo, Karen's fifth and my fourth. Although our trip in March 2020 doesn't really count as we had to leave the country after a few days due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

We visited the well-known mammal hotspots of the Kinabatangan River, Danum Valley, Tabin and Deramakot. All locations that have already been described before in various trip reports so no need to go over them again in detail in this report.

We didn't do much daytime mammal watching, instead we confined our activities to the night. Phil and I had thermal imagers and all of us had powerful torches. Our guide was Adzel Neil who was great company, knew his stuff and was a super spotter even on the longest tiring night drives. We can all thoroughly recommend his guiding services and would have no hesitation in using him again. His email address is: adzelneil@hotmail.com

Itinerary, in order of visit.

Kinabatangan River, Sukau, 3 nights.

Infapro (Innoprise Face Foundation Project (rehabilitation of logged over forest)), Danum Valley, 3 nights.

Tabin Wildlife Resort, 3 nights.

Deramakot Forest Reserve, 4 nights. Originally, we were staying for 7 nights but changed the itinerary whilst there to go back to the Kinabatangan River.

Kinabatangan River, Sakau, 3 nights.

Daily Diary

Tuesday 4th June. Kinabatangan River.

Flew into Sandakan from Kuala Lumpur and was met by our guide Adzel and our driver, Albert, who was driving us to Sakau for the Kinabatangan River. We arrived at Osman's Homestay at 17:00. The surrounding trees held a troop of Long-tailed Macaques. Our target here was Flat-headed Cat. Osman was the boat captain who also did spotlighting along with Adzel.

Night boat ride 20:15 - 00:40. Main River plus Menanggul and Tenegang Rivers.

Philippine Slow Loris (4), Indomalayan Long-tailed Giant Rats (Sabah Giant Rats), Sundaic Arboreal White-bellied Rats (Dark-tailed Tree Rats) - both these species of rat were also seen on

the following 2 nights, Leopard Cat (1), Philippine (Island) Palm Civet (5), Malay Civet (7), Chevrotain (Mouse Deer) sp. (1). Many Proboscis Monkeys and Long-tailed Macaques were seen through our thermal imagers sleeping in the trees.



Philippine Slow Loris

Wednesday 5th June. Kinabatangan River.

We did our one and only day time boat ride from 06:00 to 09:00. Seeing a single Orangutan and many Proboscis Monkeys, Long-tailed Macaques and a single Pig-tailed Macaque. A Prevost's Squirrel was seen around the homestay.

Evening boat ride 20:00 – 00:05. Main River plus Menanggul and Tenegang Rivers.

Leopard Cat (1), Philippine Palm Civet (1), Malay Civet (3), Banded Palm Civet (2), Small-toothed (Striped) Palm Civet (1). When we arrived back at the homestay there were 2 Small-toothed Palm Civets tightrope walking the telephone wires.



Proboscis Monkey

Thursday 6th June. Kinabatangan River.

A Prevost's Squirrel and a few Long-tailed Macaques were around the homestay. We just loafed around waiting for the night.

Night boat ride 19:30 – 01:30. Main River plus Menanggul River.

Malay Civet (5), Small-toothed Palm Civet (1), Banded Palm Civet (1), Sambar (1).

Friday 7th June. Kinabatangan River - Infapro, Danum Valley.

Departed Osman's at 09:00 and made our way to Infapro, arriving around 15:00. A Prevost Squirrel was in the trees around the chalets.

Night drive 20:00 – 23:40.

Diadem Leaf-nosed Bat (1), Sunda Colugo (3), Philippine Slow Loris (1), Thick-spined Porcupine (1), Malay Civet (6), Small-toothed Palm Civet (1), Banded Palm Civet (1), Thomas's Flying Squirrel (4), Sambar (1).

Saturday 8th June. Infapro, Danum Valley.

Eastern Grey Gibbons were heard first thing. We then drove to the Danum Valley Field Centre and walked some of the area as well as a trail. We saw Maroon Langurs, a Colugo, 3 Prevost's Squirrels and a couple of Sambar.

Night drive 20:00 – 23:45.

Large Flying Fox (1), Western Tarsier (1), Thomas's Flying and Red Giant Flying Squirrels, Leopard Cat (2), Small-toothed Palm Civet (3), Malay Civet (4), Elephant (2), Lesser Chevrotain (2), Sambar (1).

Sunday 9th June. Infapro, Danum Valley.

Gibbons were heard first thing. Around the grounds were Prevost's Squirrel, a pair of Sunda Giant Squirrels, a few Pig-tailed Macaques and a Sambar.

Night drive 19:00 – 01:00.

A Pen-tailed Treeshrew seen early on into the drive showed well given that it was so fast. It only stopped for a couple of seconds each time, but it was enough to see the tail banner. Colugo (1), Slow-Loris (1), Thomas's and Red Giant Flying Squirrels, Rane Mice sp., Small-toothed Palm Civet (1), Malay Civet (7), Lesser Chevrotain (1), Yellow Muntjac (1), Sambar (7).

Monday 10th June. Infapro - Tabin.

Departed Infapro for Tabin at 09:30. A single Elephant was seen on the road out of Danum Valley. We arrived at Tabin Wildlife Resort at 13:15. Our main target here was the Small-clawed Otter.

A nice welcome for us at Tabin was an Eastern Grey Gibbon in the trees right outside our chalets. There was also a large troop of Pig-tailed Macaques around the resort.

We staked out the river looking for otters for a couple of hours and at 16:35 a Small-clawed Otter came into view making its way upriver. It was a male and showed remarkably well eventually settling on a large rock mid-stream. We watched the otter for about an hour before it was lost to view heading down river.

At dusk the small colony of Ridley's Myotis Bats (mentioned in the Phillips' Field Guide) began emerging from their daytime roost under the first visitor cabin up the hill.

Night Drive 20:00 – 00:05

We had super views of a sleepy Leopard Cat on the side of the road, also Malay Civet (1), Philippine Palm Civet (1) a Sunda Skunk was seen briefly, Thomas's and Black Flying Squirrels,

Tuesday 11th June. Tabin.

Gibbons were heard soon after first light. A Small-clawed Otter moved swiftly upstream at 06:40. It wasn't the same individual as yesterday as this one was slightly smaller, it might have been a female. We spent most of the day loitering riverside in the hope of more otters but no luck. A large troop of Pig-tailed Macaques were present before it got too hot when they retreated to the shade of the forest. The troop had been joined by a Long-tailed Macaque which had obviously been accepted as it was actively being groomed by more than one Pig-tailed.

Night Drive 20:00 – 00:30

A Moonrat was seen early on and got us off to a good start. A Binturong slouching across branches high up in a fruiting tree was good. It hadn't moved one jot when over an hour later we went back to the tree. We also saw a Large Flying Fox, a single Colugo, Thomas's and Red Giant Flying Squirrels, Greater and Lesser Chevrotains, Sambar.



Small-clawed Otter



Small-clawed Otter

Wednesday 12th June. Tabin.

Gibbons were calling early in the morning and 3 or 4 were seen. The Pig-tailed Macaques were the only other mammals around early morning. Again, we spent quite some time during the day river watching but had no more otter sightings.

Night Drive 20:00 – 00:30

It was a productive drive with Leopard Cat (7), Slow-Loris (5), Philippine Palm Civet (4), Malay Civet (5), Moonrat (1) and Thomas's and Giant Red Flying Squirrels.

Thursday 13th June. Tabin – Deramakot.

Departed Tabin for Deramakot at 07:00, arrived Deramakot at 17:30.

We saw Pig-tailed and Long-tailed Macaques on route and a bull Elephant on the entrance road to Deramakot. Our main target at Deramakot was Marbled Cat and as 2 had been seen in the last couple of days our hopes were high.

Night Drive 20:00 – 23:00. We drove in the direction of the river.

Moonrat (1), Sunda Skunk (1), Slow-Loris (1), Colugo (1), Leopard Cat (1), Malay Civet (1), Philippine Palm Civet (3), Small-toothed Palm Civet (5), Thomas's and Red Giant Flying Squirrels, Rane Mice sp. and a Muller's Rat.

Friday 14th June. Deramakot.

An early morning walk through the Ecological Trail and along the road only produced a Prevost's Squirrel, Gibbons were calling some way off.

Night Drive 18:30 – 04:00. We drove to the river.

Colugo (2), Slow-Loris (4) Leopard Cat (2), and many Philippine Palm, Small-toothed Palm and Malay Civets, Thomas's and Red Giant Flying Squirrels. Then, at 02:40 and only 2.5 Kilometers from the Centre our night (and trip!) was made when Adzel spotted a Marbled Cat. It was lounging in the crook of a tree close to the road and at eye level. We watched this fantastic cat for an hour. At one point it climbed down the tree, we could see it on the ground in the thick vegetation in our thermals before it climbed back up to its branch. On its second climb down we waited around for 15 minutes but it didn't return so we headed back to the Centre. Very pleased and happy with the sighting we drank coffee and chatted about the cat. Phil and I then walked back to the spot at first light to see if the cat had returned but it hadn't, so we went back to our chalet for some much-needed sleep.



Marbled Cat – 3 photos



Saturday 15th June. Deramakot.

We just slept, ate and loafed about until the evening.

Night Drive 20:00 – 00:10. We drove in the direction of the main gate.

Singles of Leopard Cat, Lesser Chevrotain, Slow-Loris, Small-toothed Palm Civet, Philippine Palm Civet and a couple of Red Giant Flying Squirrels.



Sunda leopard Cat

Sunday 16th June. Deramakot.

An early morning walk along the road produced a Maroon Langur with a youngster, a Long-tailed Macaque and a Plantain Squirrel. On the Ecological Trail the only mammal seen was a Long-footed (Plain) Treeshrew.

This was to be our final day in Deramakot, we had discussed whether it was worth staying any longer as we had now seen a Marbled Cat. Although you never know what's around the next bend the chances of any new mammals weren't high. We decided to move back to the Kinabatangan River for another try at Flat-headed Cat, a species myself and Karen still needed. Adzel made all the arrangements with AA Borneo. We were going to stay at Osman's again for 1 night and then the Borneo Ecological Lodge for 2 nights.

Final Night Drive 21:30 – 01:00. We were going to go out at 20:00 but heavy rain delayed our departure. We drove in the direction of the river.

Leopard Cat (1), Slow-Loris (1), Sambar (1), Chevrotain sp., Banded Palm Civet (1), Malay Civet, Small-toothed Palm Civet (4), Philippine Palm Civet (3), Thomas's and Red Giant Flying Squirrels. There was also several medium sized Fruit Bats plucking fruit off a tree – but we couldn't identify them with any certainty. Of interest it was nice to see Wallace's Flying Frog.



Sunda Leopard Cat

Monday 17th June. Deramakot – Kinabatangan River, Sakau.

We departed Deramakot at 09:20 and arrived at Osman's Homestay at 15:00.

Night Boat Ride. 20:00 – 00:30 main river plus the Menanggul river.

Leopard Cat (1), Malay Civet (4), Small-toothed Palm Civet (2), Philippine Palm Civet (3), Chevrotain sp. (3), Indomalayan Long-tailed Giant Rats, Sundaic Arboreal White-bellied Rats – both species of rat were also seen on the following 2 nights. An interesting sighting was of a big Saltwater Crocodile dragging a (dead) Orangutan through, and under, the water. Whether the Crocodile caught and killed the Orangutan is anyone's guess! In all his years on the river this was the first time Osman had seen a Crocodile with an Orangutan.

Tuesday 18th June. Kinabatangan River.

A couple of Plantain Squirrels were in the trees behind our accommodation. After breakfast we moved upriver a few hundred meters to the Borneo Nature Lodge as Osman's was pre-booked and full for the next few days. There were up to 6 Prevost's Squirrels and a troop of Long-tailed Macaques around the lodge grounds. In the late afternoon a troop of 31 Proboscis Monkeys had settled in trees on the opposite bank of the river.

Night Boat Ride. 22:30 – 04:30 Main River plus Menanggul River.

Janu was the boat owner and captain and did nearly all the spot lighting and very good he was too. Phil and I mainly used our thermals. Janu manoeuvred his boat quietly, slowly and carefully, a very good captain for river mammal watching.

Leopard Cat (1), Chevrotain sp., Malay Civet (4), Small-toothed Palm Civet (1). But best of all were very good views of an Otter Civet which we were able to follow along the riverbank. Although obscured now and again as it moved behind stands of bushes, it walked parallel to the river before eventually it moved away from the riverbank and was lost to view. Otter Civets aren't seen at this location very often, in fact it was Janu's first Otter Civet in the 13 years he's been working the river.

Wednesday 19th June. Kinabatangan River.

Caught up on sleep, ate meals and just mooched about until the evening. Prevost's Squirrels and Long-tailed Macaques were around the lodge grounds and the Proboscis Monkeys were again settled high up in the trees on the opposite side of the river.

Night Boat Ride. 22:30 – 03:30 Main River plus Tenegang and Menanggul Rivers.

Slow-Loris (1), Leopard Cat (1), Philippine Palm and Small-toothed Palm Civets.

Thursday 20th June. Kinabatangan River – Sandakan.

The small troop of Long-tailed Macaques were around and looking for mischief. We departed the Borneo Nature Lodge at 08:30 for Sandakan airport for the first leg of our journey back to the UK.

Trip Notes

It was a very enjoyable and successful trip even though we missed one of our main targets – Flat-headed Cat. It rained most days but mainly in the afternoon and not for too long. One exception was when we were delayed going out on our final night drive at Deramakot. Glad to say it didn't rain at all when we were out on night drives or on the river. Of the many highlights the Marbled Cat of course was top of the list, helped by the prolonged and close views. But it was a close-run thing with Small-clawed Otter, Otter Civet and even the humble Pen-tailed Treeshrew all vying for top spot. The biggest disappointment was undoubtedly missing Flat-headed Cat, so a return trip for me at least is on the cards sometime. We put in 29.5 hours over 6 nights on the Kinabatangan River, the water wasn't too high but could have been lower, it was

certainly low enough for a hunting Flat-headed Cat. We concentrated our efforts mainly along the Menanggul River which runs into the Kinabatangan River and tried the Tenegang River as well. What could be a growing problem is the mass of non-native invasive Water Hyacinth in the rivers and channels joining the main river. The green masses blocked our progress on a couple of occasions, and it also obscured the view of sections of the bankside.

The Deramakot Centre is getting bigger, a visitor accommodation block is being built and in our 3-room chalet block at least, the kitchen area was being converted to a 4th bedroom. All food is available in the restaurant – breakfast, lunch, evening meal. There is no self-catering as far as we could tell. Whether increased visitors mean more vehicles on the road at night and what impact that might have on nighttime mammal watching only time will tell.

We saw quite a few rodents, most of which went unidentified, but we managed to identify some. The same can be said for bats - we saw many of varying sizes flitting about, most of which went unidentified.

Systematic List, 40 species. Names follow the single volume All the Mammals of the World (Lynx).

Large Flying Fox	<i>Pteropus vampyrus</i>
Diadem Leaf-nosed Bat	<i>Hipposideros diadema</i>
Ridley's Myotis	<i>Myotis ridleyi</i>
Moonrat	<i>Echinosorex gymnurus</i>
Pen-tailed Treeshrew	<i>Ptilocercus lowii</i>
Long-footed Treeshrew	<i>Tupaia longipes</i>
Sunda Colugo	<i>Galeopterus variegatus</i>
Philippine Slow Loris	<i>Nycticebus menagensis</i>
Western Tarsier	<i>Cephalopachus bancanus</i>
Maroon Langur	<i>Presbytis rubicundi</i>
Proboscis Monkey	<i>Nasalis larvatus</i>
Southern Pig-tailed Macaque	<i>Macaca nemestrina</i>
Long-tailed Macaque	<i>Macaca fascicularis</i>
Eastern Grey Gibbon	<i>Hylobates funereus</i>
Bornean Orangutan	<i>Pongp pygmaeus</i>

Muller's Rat	<i>Sundamys muelleri</i>
Indomalayan Long-tailed Giant Rat	<i>Leopoldamys sabanus</i>
Sundaic Arboreal White-bellied Rat	<i>Niviventer cremoriventer</i>
Thick-spined Porcupine	<i>Hystrix crassispinis</i>
Prevost's Squirrel	<i>Callosciurus prevostii</i>
Plantain Squirrel	<i>Callosciurus notatus</i>
Sunda Giant Squirrel	<i>Ratufa affinis sandakanensis</i>
Black Flying Squirrel	<i>Aeromys tephromelas</i>
Thomas's Flying Squirrel	<i>Aeromys thomasi</i>
Red Giant Flying Squirrel	<i>Petaurista petaurista</i>
Marbled Cat	<i>Pardofelis marmorata</i>
Sunda Leopard Cat	<i>Prionailurus javanensis</i>
Small-toothed Palm Civet	<i>Arctogalidia trivirgata</i>
Philippine Palm Civet	<i>Paradoxurus philippinensis</i>
Malay Civet	<i>Viverra zangalunga</i>
Otter Civet	<i>Cynogale bennettii</i>
Binturong	<i>Arctictis binturong</i>
Banded Palm Civet	<i>Hemigalus derbyanus</i>
Sunda Stink Badger	<i>Mydaus javanensis</i>
Bornean Pygmy Elephant	<i>Elephas maximus borneensis</i>
Lesser Indo-Malayan Chevrotain	<i>Tragulus kanchil</i>
Greater Indo-Malayan Chevrotain	<i>Tragulus napu</i>
Sambar Deer	<i>Cervus unicolor</i>
Bornean Yellow Muntjac	<i>Muntiacus atherodes</i>
Asian Small-clawed Otter	<i>Aonyx cinereus</i>



Wallace's Flying Frog

The end