

Borneo's Orang-utans

Naturetrek Tour Report

8 - 18 September 2006

Report compiled by Chris Kehoe



Naturetrek Cheriton Mill Cheriton Alresford Hampshire SO24 0NG England

T: +44 (0)1962 733051

F: +44 (0)1962 736426

E: info@naturetrek.co.uk

W: www.naturetrek.co.uk

Tour leaders: Chris Kehoe (Naturetrek)
Raimie Bin Hassan (Borneo Ecotours)
Jamil and Hassan (Sukau Rainforest Lodge boatmen)
Isnadil (Borneo Rainforest Lodge)

Tour participants: Sandy Holdich
Margaret Hammond
Gail Hammond
Sue Fletcher
Angie Hill
Mike Appleby
Kerry Haynes
Pam Mainprize
Ian Mainprize
Kath Bennett
Colin Bennett
Pauline Bramall
Keith Bramall
Keith Howe
Ros Malcolm

Itinerary

Day 0

Friday September 8th

Outbound from UK

Departed London at 12.30 BST for Kuala Lumpur (12 hours)

O/n: In flight

Day 1

Saturday September 9th

En route to Sepilok; Sepilok Orang-utan Rehabilitation Centre

AM: Arrived Kuala Lumpur at 07.30 local time

Departed Kuala Lumpur at 09.30

PM: Arrived Sandakan at 13.50 via Kota Kinabalu

Transferred to Sepilok (35 minutes)

Sepilok Orang-utan Rehabilitation Centre and hotel area

O/n: Sepilok Nature Resort

Day 2

Sunday September 10th

Sepilok Orang-utan Rehabilitation Centre

AM: Sepilok Orang-utan Rehabilitation Centre and hotel area

Lunch: Sepilok Nature Resort

PM: Sepilok Orang-utan Rehabilitation Centre and hotel area

O/n: Sepilok Nature Resort

Day 3

Monday September 11th

Sepilok to Sukau; Sukau

AM: Hotel area till 11.00

By road to Sandakan (40 minutes)

Lunch: Sandakan Hotel

PM: Motor launch to Sukau (2.5 hours)

Sukau river cruise (upriver)

Night cruise

O/n: Sukau Rainforest Lodge

Day 4

Tuesday September 12th

Sukau

AM: Sukau River cruise to Oxbow Lake

Lunch: Sukau Rainforest Lodge

PM: Gomantong Caves

O/n: Sukau Rainforest Lodge

Day 5

Wednesday September 13th

Sukau to Danum Valley via Lahad Datu

AM: by road to Lahad Datu (4.5 hours)

Lunch: Lahad Datu, Chinese restaurant

PM: Lahad Datu to Borneo Rainforest Lodge, Danum Valley by road (3 hours)

O/n: Borneo Rainforest Lodge

Day 6

Thursday Sept 14th

Danum Valley

AM: Danum Valley

Lunch: Borneo Rainforest Lodge

PM: Danum Valley

O/n: Borneo Rainforest Lodge

Day 7

Friday September 15th

Danum Valley

AM: Danum Valley

Lunch: Borneo Rainforest Lodge

PM: Danum Valley

Night drive

O/n: Borneo Rainforest Lodge

Day 8

Saturday September 16th

Danum Valley

AM: Danum Valley

Lunch: Borneo Rainforest Lodge

PM: Danum Valley

Night walk

O/n: Borneo Rainforest Lodge

Day 9

Sunday September 17th

Danum Valley to Kuala Lumpur via Tawau & Kota Kinabalu

AM: By road to Tawau (5 hours)

Lunch: packed, en route to Tawau

PM: In flight to Kota Kinabalu (40 minutes)

In flight to Kuala Lumpur (2.5 hours)

O/n: In flight to London (12.5 hours)

Day 10

Monday September 18th

Inbound to UK

AM: landed at Heathrow at c07.00 local time

Daily Diary

Days 0-1

Friday 8th & Saturday 9th September

Inbound from UK/ Sepilok

Weather: hot, sticky, dry and bright after arrival

Just over half of the group assembled at Heathrow for our midday flight to Kuala Lumpur on September 8th where the remaining members joined us after flying there the previous day; we all boarded the onward flight to Sandakan via Kota Kinabalu at 09.30 and eventually arrived in Sandakan at 13.45 hrs on September 9th. Raimie, our excellent local guide, was there to meet us and we were soon on our way to the nearby Sepilok Nature Resort. Skipping check-in, there was just enough time to squeeze in a first visit to the nearby Orang Utan Rehabilitation Centre where afternoon feeding takes place at 15.00; the cobwebs accrued during the long journey were soon blown away when up to eleven semi-wild Orangs appeared on cue for their bananas and milk allowing superb photo opportunities. Several Pig-tailed Macaques also visited the feeding platform and cheekily took advantage of the feast on offer; a Green Viper was a further highlight.

Returning to the Sepilok Nature Resort there was now time to check-in at leisure and to enjoy the very pleasant surroundings where numerous swiftlets and Silver-rumped Needletails drank from the lake below the restaurant verandah and a couple of White-bellied Sea Eagles flew over. A cacophonous chorus of rainforest insects accompanied our first excellent buffet dinner but not surprisingly most of the group retired early after a rather long day, or two.

Day 2

Sunday 10 September

Sepilok

Weather: hot and sticky, mostly dry and quite sunny, heavy rain in the evening

Soon after dawn indefatigable group members gathered outside the hotel entrance to see what birds occupied the flowering trees there. During an hour and a half a fine selection of species seen included a pair of Buff-rumped Woodpeckers, Scarlet-backed Flowerpeckers and a pair of Chestnut-breasted Malkohas amongst many others. After breakfast we returned to the nearby Rehabilitation Centre where we watched a video of the work carried out there before returning to the feeding platform where five Orangs appeared. Another Green Viper and a Wagler's Pit Viper were seen on the walk back to the entrance. During a leisurely lunch break several of the group explored the extensive hotel grounds with a surprise Bornean Wren-babbler and a Crested Goshawk being avian highlights as several Pig-tailed Macaques roamed about. The afternoon feeding session attracted just three Orang-utans but a couple of Black-and-yellow Broadbills were a good diversion. Plans for a night walk were curtailed by a heavy and spectacular thunderstorm but the bar did good business before we settled down for dinner.

Day 3

Monday 11 September

Sepilok to Sukau/ Sukau

Weather: hot and sticky, dry and mostly sunny

A pre-breakfast stroll near the hotel provided good views of a trio of stunning Black-and-red Broadbills. After breakfast and a little time to enjoy the surroundings we boarded the bus for the short ride to Sandakan where we ate lunch at the Sandakan Hotel before we got into two fast motor launches which took us across Sandakan Bay and into the mouth of the Kinabatangan River. A couple of hours later we disembarked at Sukau Rainforest Lodge and were soon setting off on the first of our river cruises there. This was a particularly productive excursion which allowed everyone great views of the hoped-for Proboscis Monkeys and also several Silvered Langurs and Monitor Lizards; avian interest came in the form of several species of hornbill and, best of all, a pair of rare Storm's Storks.

A night cruise after dinner provided great views of roosting Blue-eared and Stork-billed Kingfishers while Monitor Lizards, a couple of tree frogs and a Mangrove Snake added further interest, though pride of place went to the superb Buffy Fish Owl that posed perfectly on a nearby bare branch for several minutes.

Day 4

Tuesday 12th September

Sukau and Gomantong Caves

Weather: hot and sticky, mostly sunny, rain at lunchtime and in the evening as we returned to Sukau

Our morning cruise took us upriver and into a small side-stream that soon opened out into a large basin. Along the main channel both Wrinkled Hornbills and Jerdon's Baza were seen and a young Reticulated Python was found as we exited the side stream. More Proboscis Monkeys were watched as were several more Silvered Langurs

We were back at the lodge for breakfast at 08.30 after which there was a free period; though most of the group spent some time exploring the boardwalk behind the lodge where several new birds seen included Hairy-backed Bulbuls, Ferruginous and Abbots Babblers and a couple of species of Malkoha, a Bronze-backed Snake was a surprise find. At 15.30 we crossed the river and boarded two vehicles that took take us to Gomantong Caves along a tortuously potholed and bumpy road. On arrival at Gomantong we were able to enjoy great views of several Red Leaf Monkeys, perhaps the most attractive of Borneo's primates, Whiskered Treeswift and an endemic Yellow-rumped Flowerpecker before setting off for the cave itself. Raimie gave an instructive talk about the nest harvesting practices of the locals who gather prodigious quantities of used swiftlets nest three times a year in order to supply the Chinese demand for Swift Saliva Soup. Inside the cave, immortalised in David Attenborough's Life on Earth and Planet Earth, just about everyone (not the tour leader) was able to enjoy the smell of ammonia emanating from a huge mound of bat guano while delighting in the presence of the innumerable cockroaches and millipedes which make this locus horrendous their home. As bats began emerging earlier than normal we took up a position to watch them stream out and to view the predators that gathered to exploit them, a couple of Peregrines and up to half a dozen Bat Hawks. As we re-boarded our boats for the five minute ride to Sukau the heavens opened and everyone got a good soaking; but at least it was a warm shower.

Day 5

Wednesday 13th September

Sukau to Danum Valley

Weather: hot and sticky, overcast mid-afternoon with some light drizzle

We set off at 08.30 for Lahad Datu, the first leg of our day long journey to the fabled Danum Valley. The journey saw us retrace our route to Gomantong Caves initially. After heavy overnight rain the road had turned into an absolute quagmire in places, indeed the skills of our drivers were really but to the test as we slithered along and occasionally had call for the help of four wheel drives to tow us through the deepest mud - or a bulldozer to actually remake a road ahead! Eventually we reached the main road in one piece and transferred to a comfortable coach for a smooth journey to Lahad Datu where we had lunch in a Chinese restaurant before changing to another coach that then took us to Danum Valley. The three hour journey to The Borneo Rainforest Lodge at the heart of the Danum Valley Conservation Area took us quickly onto a dirt track, where rather depressingly logging tucks were much in evidence, then into an increasingly wild landscape of misty hills and huge hardwood trees. After a couple of hours we stopped to admire a pair of spectacular Rhinoceros Hornbills and finally arrived at our destination around 17.00. In stark contrast to the wild landscape, the lodge itself was the height of sophistication and we took no time in settling into our home for the next four nights. There was

little light left for wildlife viewing though a habituated Bearded Pig that resides in the lodge grounds was seen by most. It rained heavily overnight

Day 6

Thursday 14th September

Danum Valley

Weather: hot and sticky, misty then sunny, heavy rain during the lunch period and then overcast till evening

Our first misty morning at Danum Valley began in fine style with a dawn gathering of Crested Firebacks near the chalets before a short walk along the access road to where a young male Orang-utan had been seen building a nest late the previous evening. The Orang was already on the move in the murky half-light when we arrived but before he finally moved off altogether twenty minutes later everyone was able to enjoy decent views of our first truly wild individual. A little further along the road we diverted to the Canopy Walkway where our first Tiger Leeches were observed - at a distance - before strolling back for a fine buffet breakfast. After breakfast the group divided, most set off with Raimie and our local guide Isnadil to look for more Orangs on the Segama Trail while the rest of us took the less energetic option of birding along the Access Road. Four people who became briefly separated from the rest of the Orang group serendipitously bumped into some research students watching three Orangs while everyone else enjoyed views of superb Bornean Gibbons. Avian highlights this morning included spectacular Red-naped Trogons and Helmeted Hornbills while other fauna included our only Horse-tailed Squirrel and a spectacular Rajah Brooke's Birdwing Butterfly or two, amongst many other butterflies.

After a leisurely lunch, and the obligatory photo session with the butterflies on the lodge flowers, the group was again due to split into separate interest groups when word came from Isnadil that he'd just seen an Orang-utan nearby at the staff quarters; everyone soon gathered there and enjoyed very good prolonged views of a pregnant female. This particular individual remained in the same general area until the end of our stay though she was often elusive in the huge trees. A 2 metre long Dog-toothed Water Snake was watched devouring a tree frog at a roadside pond before the group finally split into birders and apers. Ironically it was the birders who came across another Orang, perhaps the morning's young male, along with a good selection of birds including several species of babbler. The non-birders succeeded in finding prodigious numbers of leeches on the Danum and Hornbill Trails.

Day 7

Friday 15th September

Danum Valley

Weather: hot and sticky, sunny before heavy lunchtime rain then overcast until dusk

The lodge truck picked us up soon after dawn and delivered us 6km to the entrance gate from where we walked back at varying paces to the lodge. Fortified by an early breakfast the slower group took plenty of time to admire the birds en route with particular highlights being a Crimson-winged Woodpecker, a small group of stunning Red-bearded Bee-eaters, an amazingly tame Great Argus Pheasant and a Brown Wood Owl. Later in the morning most of the group took it easy or explored the area between the lodge and the start of the Segama Trail where a selection of birds and other fauna were found, the pregnant female Orang-utan remained elusive, perhaps upset by the close presence of some noisy but invisible Gibbons.

After lunch, during which there was heavy rain, the group divided to pursue different interests once more. Orang-utans proved elusive again for those who accompanied Isnadil along various leechy trails. Despite rather murky and overcast conditions the birders managed to locate a Raffle's Malkoha and a flock of Dusky Broadbills amongst others and almost everyone enjoyed views of perched Helmeted Hornbills. Others accompanied Raimie to the Jacuzzi Pool and enjoyed a swim or paddle. At the small roadside pond near the lodge several File-eared Frogs were spawning as a couple of Red-sided Snakes looked on. At 18.45 a night drive commenced and proved a great success, not least because a mother and baby Colugo (aka 'Flying Lemur' - a strange and little known animal) were located, along with a couple of Red Giant Flying Squirrels and Sambar Deer.

Day 8

Saturday 16th September

Danum Valley

Weather: hot and sticky, sunny before and after heavy lunchtime

Our final day in the field began with the birders returning to the Access Road and the rest once again accompanying Raimie and Isnadil in a search for Orang-utans. Eventually a group of four Orangs were tracked down in the same tree at the start of the Sapa Bandradi Trail and gave great views so the mood at the breakfast table was buoyant. After breakfast the keener birders continued their pursuits as before, particular highlights being a pair of Chestnut-capped Thrushes and Diard's Trogons on the Nature Trail, while the more adventurous undertook a hike along the Viewpoint Trail (seeing the pregnant female Orang-utan en route) which, although considered rather hard going, was deemed worth the effort overall. Everyone else simply pottered about soaking up the atmosphere of arguably the finest tract of lowland tropical rainforest remaining anywhere, or went swimming at the Jacuzzi Pool

Lunch was soon succeeded by the now obligatory seeming tropical downpour but this had all but cleared up by the time of our 15.30 excursions. Orang enthusiasts were rewarded with a further three animals, making a remarkable eight for the day and perhaps as many as 15 different individuals in total during our three day stay!. The birders enjoyed Buff-rumped Woodpecker, Diard's Trogon again, and various others in a slow moving mixed species flock. Soon after darkness fell the group split in two to undertake night walks but remarkably the two parties saw almost exactly the same things with a couple of very diminutive Lesser Mouse Deer the highlight.

Days 9 - 10

Sunday 17th - Monday 18th September

Danum Valley to Kuala Lumpur via Tawau and Kota Kinabalu; Kuala Lumpur to London arriving 18th September

Weather: hot and sticky, mostly sunny, dry

We bade farewell to Borneo Rainforest Lodge straight after breakfast at 07.00 and began our journey to Tawau for our flight to Kota Kinabalu. With generally light Sunday traffic we made good time and arrived at Tawau Airport soon after noon having had a packed lunch en route. The forty minute flight to Kota Kinabalu was followed for most by an onward flight to Kuala Lumpur where a few hours in transit allowed for some shopping.

We set off for London around midnight and arrived at Heathrow just before 07.00 BST next day and returned to our respective corners of the UK after a particularly successful and enjoyable tour.

Species lists

Species in square brackets were not seen by any group members or were not certainly identified. Species labeled N/L, where not seen by the leader or guides and those designated L/O where seen only by the leader or guides

Mammals

Nomenclature and species order follows Payne and Francis's A Field Guide to the Mammals of Borneo (corrected 1994 version)

Large Flying Fox *Pteropus vampyrus natunae*

One was seen during the night cruise at Sukau

Wrinkle-lipped (Free-tailed) Bat *Tadarida plicata plicata*

Countless thousands left their roost cave at Gomantong; two million are estimated to roost there and we probably saw at least half of these

[Other Bats

Several unidentified bats of various sizes were seen at various sites]

Colugo (or 'Flying Lemur') *Cynocephalus variegatus natunae*

A mother and baby were a rare treat during the night drive at Danum Valley

Red Leaf Monkey (or Maroon Langur) *Presbytis rubicunda rubicunda* &/or *chrysea*

Several showed very well at Gomantong Caves and a couple more were at Danum Valley

Silvered Langur *Presbytis cristata*

Several were seen during our time at Sukau and a handful more were at Danum Valley

Proboscis Monkey *Nasalis larvatus*

Up to thirty were found during our cruises at Sukau

Long-tailed Macaque (or 'Crab-eating' Macaque) *Macaca fascicularis*

One at Sepilok was followed by several at Sukau with a few more at Danum Valley

Pig-tailed Macaque *Macaca nemestrina*

Several attended the Orang feeding sessions at Sepilok, a small group were in the grounds of the hotel near there with a few others seen along roadsides as we traveled

Bornean Gibbon (or Mueller's Gibbon) *Hylobates muelleri muelleri*

Small numbers were seen each day at Danum Valley by most group members; others were heard at Danum and Sepilok

Orang-utan *Pongo pygmaeus pygmaeus*

The semi-wild individuals at Sepilok were typically obliging, though in rather variable numbers during our three visits to the feeding platform. Sightings of wild individuals at Danum Valley were exceptional with five or six found on our first full day there and at least eight on our final day, including a group of four in one tree!

Giant Squirrel *Ratufa affinis sandakanensis*

A couple was seen by some at Danum Valley

Prevost's Squirrel *Callosciurus prevosti pluto*

Quite common and widespread but most prominent at Danum Valley

Horse-tailed Squirrel *Sundasciurus hippurus pryeri*

One was seen at Danum Valley

[Low's Squirrel *Sundasciurus lowi lowi*

A couple of briefly seen mid-sized Squirrels at Sukau were probably this species although several others are very similar in appearance]

Plain Pygmy Squirrel *Exilisciurus exilis exilis*

A small handful were seen at Danum Valley

Red Giant Flying Squirrel *Petaurista petaurista nigrescens* &/or *rajah*

A couple were spotlighted during the night drive at Danum Valley

[Rat species *Rattus* sp.

A couple were at Danum Valley]

[Common Pencil-tailed Tree-mouse *Chiropodmys gliroides*

Two mice running along the rafters in the restaurant at Sepilok were probably this species]

Bearded Pig *Sus barbatus barbatus*

A habituated individual was an ever present feature at Borneo Rainforest Lodge, Danum Valley and a couple of others were seen nearby

Lesser Mouse-deer *Tragulus javanicus klossi*

At least three were found at Danum Valley

Sambar Deer *Cervus unicolor brookei*

At least half a dozen were seen at Danum Valley

Birds

Although the primary focus of this tour was primates, keener birders saw rather a lot of birds too; in fact going out looking for birds is probably one of the best ways to actually find many mammals. Species order, taxonomy and nomenclature follow Mackinnon and Phillips' A Fieldguide to the Birds of Borneo, Sumatra, Java and Bali (1993) unless otherwise indicated.

Oriental Darter *Anhinga melanogaster*

Quite common along the river at Sukau where up to 30 were seen during cruises. A couple more were on the Segama River at Danum Valley

Striated Heron *Butorides striatus*

Only seen at Sandakan where one was perched on a mooring rope as we prepared to leave for Sukau

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis coromandus*

Most of those seen were alongside airport runways but small numbers were also present in wetter cleared Oil Palm plantations

Great Egret *Casmerodius albus modestus*

Several were found on the Kinabatangan River during our cruises from Sukau, others were at scattered wetland sites

Intermediate Egret *Mesophoyx intermedia*

Very small numbers were seen on the saltier lower reaches of the Kinabatangan River as we traveled by boat between Sandakan and Sukau

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Quite large numbers were in wetter areas of cleared oil palms near Gomantong with smaller numbers at wetlands elsewhere

Cinnamon Bittern *Ixobrychus cinnamomeus*

One was seen in flight between Sandakan and Sukau

Storm's Stork *Ciconia stormi*

Two showed at close range in failing light during our first cruise at Sukau and presumably the same two were seen soaring from the restaurant as we prepared to depart for Lahad Datu two days later

Jerdon's Baza *Aviceda jerdoni borneensis*

One was perched in a tree during our morning cruise at Sukau

Oriental Honey Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus probably torquatus*

One was seen briefly at Sepilok

Bat Hawk *Machaeramphus alcinus*

Up to six were watched hunting the emerging bats at Gomantong Caves

Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indicus*

Small numbers were around the population centres of Sandakan and Lahad Datu with just occasional birds elsewhere

White-bellied Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster*

After the first two at Sepilok a couple more were seen en route to and at Sukau

[Fish-eagle sp *Ichthyophaga* sp.]

A juvenile bird soaring at Sukau could not be positively identified, being either a Lesser Fish-eagle *I. humilis* or Grey-headed Fish-eagle *I. ichthyaeetus*]

Crested Serpent Eagle *Spilornis cheela pallidus*

One of the more frequently seen raptors with three at Sepilok and several more at Danum Valley

Crested Goshawk *Accipiter trivirgatus*

One was at Sepilok and another at Danum Valley

Black Eagle *Ictinaetus malayensis*

At least one was over the lodge at Danum Valley one morning

Wallace's Hawk Eagle *Spizaetus nanus*

A pair was seen briefly at Danum Valley

Blyth's Hawk Eagle *Spizaetus alboniger*

A pair was in flight over Borneo Rainforest Lodge one morning

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus ernstii*

At least two hunted bats and swiftlets at Gomantong Caves, though not with such aplomb as the Bat Hawks there

Crested Fireback *Lophura ignite nobilis*

Up to six, mostly males, fed near the chalets at Danum Valley at dawn each morning

Great Argus *Argusianus argus*

A male with a part-grown 'tail' showed superbly well near the Canopy Walkway at Danum Valley, where it came to within just a few feet of us

White-breasted Waterhen *Amauornis phoenicurus*

A couple at Sepilok were the only ones seen

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

Ones and twos were at Sepilok and Sukau

[Great Crested Tern *Sterna bergii*

One was seen fishing in Sandakan Bay (L/O)]

Pink-necked Green Pigeon *Treron vernans*

One was seen well at Sepilok. Several other unidentified Green Pigeons were seen briefly or in flight only (N/L)

Green Imperial Pigeon *Ducula aenea*

Regularly seen after the first was observed at Sepilok, most boat trips at Sukau produced a handful and several others were found at Danum Valley

Spotted Dove *Streptopelia chinensis tigrina*

Small numbers were along roads near Sandakan with larger numbers along the road to Gomantong Caves

Emerald Dove *Chalcophaps indica*

At least three were seen along the Access Road at Danum Valley early morning

Red-breasted Parakeet *Psittacula alexandrinus*

A couple flew over at Sepilok

Long-tailed Parakeet *Psittacula longicauda*

A handful seen in flight at Sepilok were followed by about a dozen at Danum Valley

Blue-crowned Hanging Parrot *Loriculus galgulus*

After the first at Sepilok several more were found at Danum Valley

Asian Koel *Eudynamys scolopacea*

A couple were noted at Sepilok (N/L)

Black-bellied Malkoha *Phaenicophaeus diardi borneensis*

At least three were seen at Danum Valley

Raffle's Malkoha *Phaenicophaeus chlorophaeus fuscigularis*

One seen from the boardwalk at Sukau was followed by an elusive individual at Danum Valley

Red-billed Malkoha *Phaenicophaeus javanicus*

Singles were found at Danum Valley on two occasions (N/L)

Chestnut-breasted Malkoha *Phaenicophaeus curvirostris microrhinus*

A pair at Sepilok was followed by one at Sukau and a handful of singles at Danum Valley

Greater Coucal *Centropus sinensis eurycercus*

At least three were seen along the roadside between Lahad Datu and Danum Valley

Buffy Fish Owl *Ketupa ketupu*

One showed very well during our night cruise at Sukau and another was found at Danum Valley

Brown Wood Owl *Strix leptogrammica leptogrammica*

A roosting bird showed very well on two dates near the lodge at Danum Valley

[Swiftlet species *Collocalia* sp.

Swiftlets are the most frequently seen birds in Sabah but there is no reliable means of identifying most of them unless they are attending their species diagnostic nests. During our visit to Gomantong Caves relatively few swiftlets were nesting and harvesting of used nests had recently been completed. Those that were nesting were near the cave entrance and therefore Glossy Swiftlets (which can be identified in the field anyway) as this species lacks the bat-like echolocation powers of the other species and does not therefore venture so far into the cave depths. Of the non-Glossy-types it is more than likely that we saw some individuals of at least the following species: Edible Nest Swiftlet *C. fucifaga*; Black-nest Swiftlet *C. maxima*; and Mossy-nest Swiftlet *C. salangana*]

Glossy Swiftlet *Collocalia esculenta*

In addition to the birds nesting near the entrance to Gomantong Caves mentioned above, this relatively easily identified species was seen well at Sepilok and from the verandah of the Borneo Rainforest Lodge, Danum Valley

Silver-rumped Needletail *Rhaphidura leucopygialis*

Small numbers were present throughout with some giving particularly good views when drinking at the lake at Sepilok Nature Resort

Grey-rumped Treeswift *Hemiprocne longipennis*

Up to 20 were seen at both Sepilok and Danum Valley

Whiskered Treeswift *Hemiprocne comata comata*

One of these delightful birds was on overhead wires at Gomantong and several more showed similarly well when perched at Danum Valley where many more were seen in flight

Diard's Trogon *Harpactes diardii*

A pair showed very well on and near the Nature Trail at Danum Valley on two occasions

Red-naped Trogon *Harpactes kasumba impavidus*

Two were along the Segama Trail at Danum Valley (N/L)

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

One was at Sepilok

Blue-eared Kingfisher *Alcedo meninting verreauxii*

A couple were seen during our night cruise at Sukau with a couple more then seen there in daylight

[Blue-banded Kingfisher *Alcedo euryzona*

A female was briefly on the river by the lodge at Danum Valley (L/O)]

'Black-backed' Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher *Ceyx (erithacus) erithacus*

One at Sukau was followed by a couple of encounters at Danum Valley. All of those seen well were closest in appearance to the blackish-backed form *erithacus*. Some authors split the black backed and rufous backed forms as separate species but many birds in Sabah show mixed characters

Stork-billed Kingfisher *Pelargopsis capensis capensis*

This striking species was seen at both Sukau and Danum Valley; about five were seen in total

Red-bearded Bee-eater *Nyctornis amictus*

Up to four were in a loose flock at Danum Valley, one in particular showed superbly in the scope at eye level; stunning looking birds

Blue-throated Bee-eater *Merops viridis viridis*

Small numbers were found at all sites visited

Dollarbird *Eurystomus orientalis*

One was seen in flight at Sepilok but several more, including a couple of perched birds were seen during our river cruises at Sukau

Bushy-crested Hornbill *Anorrhinus galeritus galeritus*

Up to 10 were found at each of Sukau, Gomantong and Danum Valley

Wrinkled Hornbill *Aceros corrugatus corrugatus*

A handful were seen at Sukau and one at Danum Valley

Asian Black Hornbill *Anthracoceros malayanus*

Just a couple were seen during our first river cruise at Sukau

Oriental Pied Hornbill *Anthracoceros albirostris convexus*

About six at Sukau were followed by a couple at Gomantong

Rhinoceros Hornbill *Buceros rhinoceros*

Altogether we came across about four of these amazing birds. One noisy pair near the lodge in Danum Valley were occasionally seen and much more frequently heard

Helmeted Hornbill *Buceros vigil*

A total of four were found at Danum Valley with two particularly obliging perched birds lingering one afternoon near the staff quarters, a wary species that is often hard to see or see well

Rufous Piculet *Sasia abnormis abnormis*

After one at Sukau at least two more were seen at Danum Valley

Rufous Woodpecker *Celeus brachyurus badiusus*

A group of four or five was watched along the Access Road at Danum Valley

Crimson-winged Woodpecker *Picus puniceus observandus*

One was seen along the Access Road at Danum Valley

Buff-rumped Woodpecker *Meiglyptes tristis grammithorax*

A pair at Sepilok was followed by one or two along the Access Road at Danum Valley

Dusky Broadbill *Corydon sumatranus brunnescens*

Loose flocks containing up to 10 birds were seen on consecutive days along the Access Road at Danum Valley

Black-and-red Broadbill *Cymbirhynchus macrorhynchos macrorhynchos*

Three at Sepilok were followed by a couple at Sukau and a handful at Danum Valley

Black-and-yellow Broadbill *Eurylaimus ochromalus kalamantan*

Although much more often heard than seen we did see two or more at Sepilok and another at Danum Valley

[Blue-headed Pitta *Pitta baudii*

Heard but not seen at Danum Valley on a couple of occasions]

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica gutturalis*

Common along wires in the vicinity of oil palm plantations but generally absent in wilder areas

Pacific Swallow *Hirundo tahitica abbotti*

Quite common everywhere, this species showed particularly well at Sepilok where up to ten perched on snags in the small lake below the restaurant

Black-winged Flycatcher-shrike *Hemipus hirundinaceus*

Two at Sukau were followed by one along the Access Road at Danum Valley

Large Woodshrike *Tephrodornis gularis*

About four were seen along the Access Road at Danum Valley

[Minivet Species *Pericrocotus* sp

Rather distant unidentifiable Minivets were seen in treetops at Sukau (when we were rather distracted by watching an Orang-utan!) and along the Access Road in Danum Valley, presumably either Scarlet or Fiery Minivets]

Green Iora *Aegithinia viridissima viridissima*

A couple at Sepilok were followed by several more along the Access Road at Danum Valley

Lesser Green Leafbird *Chloropsis cyanopogon cyanopogon*

Several were found at Sepilok and especially at Danum Valley where up to 10 per day were noted

[Black and White Bulbul *Pycnonotus melanoleucus*

One was seen briefly and a couple of others heard at Danum Valley (L/O)]

Yellow-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus goiavier gourdini*

Although this was a very common garden bird at Sepilok only very small numbers were found in more natural habitats elsewhere

Cream-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus simplex*

Two were noted at Danum Valley

Red-eyed Bulbul *Pycnonotus brunneus brunneus*

Small numbers of this unassuming, some would say dull, species were seen daily at all sites

Spectacled Bulbul *Pycnonotus erythrophthalmos*

One seen briefly at Sepilok was followed by at least two more at Danum Valley

Grey-cheeked Bulbul *Alophoixus bres*

At least half a dozen were found at Danum Valley

Hairy-backed Bulbul *Tricholestes criniger*

After a couple were found along the boardwalk at Sukau a few more were then seen each day at Danum Valley

Bronzed Drongo *Dicrurus aeneus*

Small numbers were seen at Danum Valley

Greater Racket-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus paradiseus*

About five were seen at Danum Valley when in a loose flock with Black Magpies and others

Dark-throated Oriole *Oriolus xanthonotus*

A couple were found at the Canopy Walkway and along the Access Road at Danum Valley

Asian Fairy Bluebird *Irena puella criniger*

About fifteen were seen at Danum Valley after one had been seen earlier in a shrubbery at Kota Kinabalu Airport, though that one was perhaps more likely an escaped cagebird

Black Magpie *Platysmurus leucopterus*

Three or four were in a mixed species flock at Danum Valley one morning

Slender-billed Crow *Corvus enca*

Small numbers were seen most days at all sites

White-chested Babbler *Trichastoma rostratum frontalis* or *macropterum*

Overall this was the commonest of the Trichastoma Babblers with several seen at the Sukau boardwalk and at Danum Valley.

Ferruginous Babbler *Trichastoma bicolour*

After a couple at Sukau boardwalk another showed well along the Nature Trail at Danum Valley

Short-tailed Babbler *Malacocincla malaccensis feriata*

A couple was seen along the Nature Trail at Danum Valley

Abbott's Babbler *Malacocincla abbotti*

One at Sukau was followed by another at Danum Valley

Sooty-capped Babbler *Malacopteron affine*

Quite common and rather noisy at Danum Valley

Scaly-crowned Babbler *Malacopteran cinereum cinereum*

Small noisy flocks were encountered fairly regularly at Danum Valley

Rufous-crowned Babbler *Malacopteron magnum saba*

Less frequently seen than the last species and usually in ones and twos, although occasionally present in mixed species feeding flocks

Bornean Wren-babbler *Ptilocichla leucogrammica*

One was noted at Sepilok (N/L)

Chestnut-rumped Babbler *Stachyris maculata*

One at Sepilok was followed by a handful at Danum Valley

Chestnut-winged Babbler *Stachyris erythroptera bicolor*

A couple were glimpsed at Sukau boardwalk and two showed rather well along the Nature Trail at Danum Valley

Striped Tit-babbler *Macronous gularis montanus*

A handful were seen at Sepilok and Danum Valley

Fluffy-backed Tit-babbler *Macronous ptilosus reclusus*

Sukau's boardwalk and Danum Valley produced a handful each

Brown Fulvetta *Fulvetta brunneicauda*

Two were seen at Danum Valley

White-bellied Yuhina *Yuhina zantholeuca*

A small group was seen feeding high in the canopy near the Borneo Rainforest Lodge, Danum Valley

Oriental Magpie-robin *Copsychus saularis adamsi* or *pluto*

Very small numbers were found everywhere; some males near Sepilok had glossy black underparts while others had duller, greyer bellies more suggestive of the pattern of the white-bellied mainland races

White-crowned (or White-browed) Shama *Copsychus stricklandii*

More often heard than seen but several showed very well at Sepilok and Danum Valley.

Chestnut-naped Forktail *Enicurus ruficapillus*

Singles were seen in flight on two occasions at Danum Valley

Chestnut-capped Thrush *Zoothera interpres*

A superb pair gave several great views on the Nature Trail at Danum Valley on one day

Dark-necked Tailorbird *Orthotomus atrogularis*

Small numbers were along the roadsides in Danum Valley

Ashy Tailorbird *Orthotomus ruficeps borneoensis*

The commonest Tailorbird, several were seen almost each day, particularly prominent at Sepilok but noisy everywhere

Rufous-tailed Tailorbird *Orthotomus sericeus*

Seen almost daily in rather smaller numbers than the last species, several others were heard

Brown-streaked Flycatcher *Muscicapa williamsoni*

A couple were seen on each of our full days at Danum Valley including a particularly obliging bird at the Canopy Walkway and a moulting juvenile near there that perhaps indicated a local rather than migrant origin. This species was formerly considered a subspecies of the widespread Asian Brown Flycatcher *M. dauurica*

Verditer Flycatcher *Eumyias thalassina*

One was noted at Danum Valley on two occasions (N/L)

Bornean Blue Flycatcher *Cyornis superbus*

One was at Danum Valley (N/L)

[Spotted Fantail *Rhipidura perlata*

One singing along the Nature Trail at Danum Valley was the only one seen (LO)]

Pied Fantail *Rhipidura javanica*

Common and conspicuous at Sepilok, less so elsewhere

Black-naped Monarch *Hypothymis azurea prophata*

A couple was seen at Danum Valley

Maroon-breasted Philentoma *Philentoma velatum*

One was along the boardwalk at Sukau and two were at Danum Valley

Rufous-winged Philentoma *Philentoma pyrrhopterum pyrrhopterum*

One was along the Nature Trail at Danum Valley

Asian Glossy Starling *Aplonis panayensis eustathis*

Good numbers were seen in mostly urban contexts

Crested Myna *Acridotheres cristatellus*

This introduced species was seen in small numbers at Sepilok

Hill Myna *Gracula religiosa religiosa*

A couple were seen at Danum Valley

Brown- (or Plain-) throated Sunbird *Anthreptes malacensis borneensis*

This was a rather common species at Sepilok and a couple were also seen at Sukau

Ruby-cheeked Sunbird *Anthreptes singalensis*

At least two were at Danum Valley

Purple-naped Sunbird *Hypogramma hypogrammicum hypogrammicum*

One at Sepilok was followed by a couple at Danum Valley

Olive-backed Sunbird *Nectarinia jugularis*

A couple at Sepilok was followed by scattered ones and twos elsewhere

Crimson Sunbird *Aethopyga siparaja*

Sepilok produced the majority of sightings of this attractive Sunbird although a couple more were seen elsewhere

Little Spiderhunter *Arachnothera longirostra buettikoferi*

Small numbers were at both Sepilok and Sukau with larger numbers at Danum Valley

Spectacled Spiderhunter species *Arachnothera flavigaster*

At least two were seen at Sepilok

Yellow-eared Spiderhunter *Arachnothera chrysogenus*

Three were recorded at Danum Valley

[Spiderhunter species #2 *Arachnothera* sp.]

A Spiderhunter feeding in the garden of the Borneo Rainforest Lodge, Danum Valley was evidently either Grey-breasted *A. affinis* or Bornean Spiderhunter *A. everetti*. The two species are seemingly indistinguishable in the field (and differ only subtly in measurements) though *everetti* is usually regarded as occurring at higher altitudes (only above rather than only below 900m). Our observation was below 900m but there is so much uncertainty about these two species that confident identification is presently impossible. Adding further confusion is the fact that Smythies' *The Birds of Borneo* (4th ed.) recognises a third very similar species that, although reportedly occurring only well to the west in Borneo, takes precedence in naming over Grey breasted Spiderhunter (which then becomes *A. modesta*) leaving this third species as Streaky-breasted Spiderhunter *A. affinis*. More research on these birds is clearly required, with some recent suggestions being that Bornean Spiderhunter might actually be the only form occurring anywhere in Sabah]

Yellow-breasted Flowerpecker *Prionochilus maculatus maculatus*

One was briefly seen at Danum Valley

Yellow-rumped Flowerpecker *Prionochilus xanthopygius*

A single at Gomantong Caves was followed by another at Danum Valley

[Yellow-vented Flowerpecker *Dicaeum chrysorrheum*

One was seen briefly at Danum Valley (L/O)]

Orange-bellied Flowerpecker *Dicaeum trigonostigma*

Small numbers were found at Sepilok and one was at Danum Valley

Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker *Dicaeum cruentatum*

A handful were seen in flowering trees at Sepilok

Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*

Small numbers of these introduced birds were seen at a range of urban settings

Dusky Munia *Lonchura fuscans*

Small numbers of this unassuming Bornean endemic were seen at each site visited

(Southern) Black-headed Munia *Lonchura atricapilla jagori*

Quite common at Sepilok where nest building was in progress but just a few were seen elsewhere

Other Wildlife

The forests of Borneo represent some of the richest wildlife habitats on earth and some living thing is almost always in view, many of which can only be identified by specialists in particular fields. The following is a short list of some of the other more striking or distinctive animals found by us

Reptiles and Amphibians

Wagler's Pit Viper

Two were seen at Sepilok

Green Tree Pit Viper

One was at Sepilok

Reticulated Python

A youngster, probably just a few feet long, was on an overhead branch at Sukau

Mangrove Snake

One was seen in an overhead tree during our night cruise at Sukau

Dog-toothed Water Snake

One identified as a Dog-toothed Cat Snake by local guides consumed a File-eared Frog at the pond on the Danum Valley Access Road; that species is, however, meant to live in trees and only eat birds so it was presumably the species listed here instead

Bronze-backed Snake sp

One was watched at close range at Sukau boardwalk

Red-sided Snake

At least two were on the roadside pond at Danum Valley

Lizards and allies

Various unidentified reptiles were seen; these included a couple of Agamid-type lizards (including a 'Crested' Agami), several Geckos and a Chameleon that changed from rather bright green to reddish with blue spots in the space of few seconds

Water Monitor Lizard

Several were seen at Sukau and one or more inhabited the garden of the Sepilok Nature Resort. They ranged in size from about half a metre to nearly two metres in length

Asian Saltwater (or Estuarine) Crocodile

Most boat trips at Sukau produced one or two sightings, most looked small but a couple of bigger individuals probably exceeded 2 metres in length

Tortoise sp

One was seen at Sukau boardwalk on a couple of occasions

Frogs

A couple of ground dwelling frogs were seen, one being named as an introduced 'Taiwan' Frog by our guides but several File-eared Tree Frog were seen at Danum Valley

Insects

Lepidoptera

A wide range of stunning butterflies were encountered, most were not identified to species but of several Birdwings seen Common Birdwing was particularly prominent and we were lucky to come across at least four rare and very spectacular Rajah Brooke's Birdwings at Danum Valley

Other insects

Some of the more striking insects seen were a couple of Praying Mantises and Stick Insects, some rather large spiders, a Scorpion at Sepilok and large numbers of crunchy Cockroaches in Gomantong Caves. Chainsaw Cicada's filled the air with noise in the rainforests visited, fire flies were seen during our nocturnal excursions and Giant Forest Ants, amongst

many other species, were seen at Danum Valley. Centipedes and Millipedes were both seen (including one deemed to be a Pill Millipede) while another species identified by our excellent guides was a Memphis Bug

Leeches

One was encountered at Sepilok but by far the worst/best place was the infamous Danum Valley, especially after regular rain there. Tiger Leeches seemed to be particularly prominent this year and most of the group were entitled to a certificate acknowledging their contribution to the local ecosystem