

Borneo's Orangutans

Naturetrek Tour Report

6 - 16 September 2018



Orangutan Male



Crested Green Lizard



Lantern Bug *Pyrops whiteheadi*



Red leaf monkey

Report compiled by Tim Low
Images courtesy of Helena Helemby



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Summary

Everyone was impressed by our many sustained encounters with Orangutans. We saw them up close on seven of our eight days in the field. Most were large adults, including males with facial flanges. We saw an excellent range of other mammals, including Elephants, Slow Loris, Binturong, Gibbons, Proboscis Monkeys, Collugos and two Malay Civets. Many mammals were seen at very close range, including Orangs, macaques, the loris, Malay Civet, Gibbon and Red Leaf Monkey all enjoyed from less than ten metres away. We saw spectacular birds, including Bornean Bristleheads (twice), Storm's Stork, White-crowned Hornbill, Rufous-backed Kingfisher, trogons and too many others to mention. The reptiles were memorable, especially our close encounter with a large Reticulated Python, and so were the invertebrates, including birdwing butterflies, a lantern bug, giant centipede and giant pill millipedes. We didn't just see animals, we saw revealing behaviours, including squirrels and a lizard gliding, a Gibbon and Binturong feuding over figs, a snake consuming frog eggs, and Orangutans engaging in many behaviours, including feeding on bark and sap, walking on the ground, nest-building, and probably courting. We marvelled at the skill of our guides, especially Hazwan, whose ability to detect animals seemed magical. We had wanted to experience the real Borneo rainforest and we returned home in no doubt we had.

Day 1

Thursday 6th September

Outbound to Kuala Lumpur

Travel from Britain for most of the group (and in Tim's case Australia).

Day 2

Friday 7th September

Flight to Sandakan and arrival at Sepilok;

After our flight arrived in Sandakan at 1.40 pm, we met our local guide Hazwan and were driven to the resort. After we had settled in Tim took the group on a short afternoon walk along a dirt road that runs from the resort into forest regrowth at the edge of an orchard. Nothing much was seen at first, then the place suddenly came alive. A flock of Bornean Brown Barbets arrived in trees close at hand, where they foraged actively for insects and allowed photos to be taken. Then a Copper-throated Sunbird astonished us, by feeding at flowers less than two metres from some of the group, remaining with us for a few minutes, providing ample opportunity to enjoy its iridescent purple and red plumage. On the other side of the road a Pygmy Squirrel was scampering up and down ginger stems, flicking its tail, just a few metres from us. Then just a few minutes after this show Tim called out 'Orangutan' as we saw one moving in a tree just ahead of us. It was an adult female moving through trees at the edge of the road. We soon noticed a second larger Orangutan moving towards her. The first one changed direction, moving away as the second Orang approached, a very sizeable male. It kept approaching the first Orang, which would watch it for a while, as if trying to assess its intentions, then move away. But the distance between them was decreasing and soon they were only a few metres apart, in a tree right above us, facing each other. Then the male clambered towards the top of a tree and began building a nest, snapping branches and folding them towards each other. After a few minutes he began another nest, while the female came very close, watching from as little as a metre away, at one point looking down on him from above. Deciding he was well-

intentioned she entered his nest where they sat together. We waited for some time then decided the show was over.

We were amazed by this experience, taking place only ten minutes' walk from our rooms, on our first afternoon! Tim explained that these Orangutans may have spent their childhoods as rehabilitated youngsters at Sepilok, which could explain why two Orangs would enter one nest. Hazwan said later that the behaviour was also consistent with Orangutan courtship, preceding mating, in which case we had seen something very special. The female was a mere ten metres from us when she passed through a Rambutan tree. We returned to our rooms, past a pair of sashaying Pied Fantails, feeling exhilarated. We had enjoyed almost an hour observing Orangutans, on a day that had begun on a plane!

Just before dinner Tim took guests to the veranda of his room, to see roosting Short-winged Flying Foxes grooming and stretching their wings, ready for the night's feeding. Rhinoceros Hornbills called at dusk.

Day 3

Saturday 8th September

Sepilok.

A few guests wandered up to the Orangutan nest at dawn without finding any occupants. Helena succeeded in photographing a Black-and-red Broadbill, Chestnut-breasted Malkoha, Blue-eared Kingfisher and Crimson Sunbird.

Shortly before 9am we began the short walk to Sepilok Nature Resort. Hazwan pointed out a Crested Green Lizard perched on a tree, though as soon as it saw us it went from lime green to drab brown and leapt onto a slender vine, where we had very good views through Hazwan's scope. Once we had entered the sanctuary Hazwan quickly found something impressive, a Colugo, or Flying Lemur, roosting on a bare tree. It also afforded excellent scope views.

The 10am Orang feeding was made special by two separate mother Orangutans visiting, each with a small baby. One of those Orangs rested on the boardwalk railing and we could see her cuddling and kissing her baby a short way from us. Pig-tailed and Long-tailed Macaques were also taking fruit.

We visited the nursery briefly, then returned to the feeding station when word came that a large male was visiting – our first male with large facial flanges. Hazwan then heard distinctive bird calls and led us along the boardwalk for spectacular views of the most famous of Borneo's endemic birds, Bornean Bristleheads. They were foraging around us and we saw them a couple of times holding or swallowing insects. This is a bird that is so distinctive it is placed in its own family. Tim explained that its nest and eggs have never been recorded. It is not an easy bird to locate and Hazwan and Tim were impressed that we had encountered this iconic bird on our first morning, achieving close and sustained views.

Something else that Hazwan found us, perched on a tree trunk, was a spectacular Lantern Bug (*Pyrops whiteheadi*). Borneo's large lantern bugs are renowned for their beauty, and ours had green and red wings with orange spots, and a bright blue 'horn' on its head.

After lunch we visited the Sun Bear centre as an optional extra. Three bears could be seen wandering about foraging. Soon after we arrived an Orangutan chose to rest on the boardwalk, effectively blocking the exit. Rehabilitated Orangutans rarely attack people but there are strict rules against approaching them because of the risk of disease spread from humans to Orangs, and from Orangs to humans. Cathy and Tim were late reaching the Sun Bear deck, and could not join the group because of this hairy barrier. They took a side boardwalk to see the bears, only to find themselves trapped when the Orangutan stationed itself at the entry point to this platform, while a troop of Pig-tailed Macaques approached from the other end, 40 metres away, led by a large male behaving aggressively. A member of staff, Haniff, was with Cathy and Tim, and he took a slingshot from his pocket and fired a series of pebbles at the metal fence beside the monkeys. They retreated, but the Orang showed no signs of leaving. Haniff made a call on his radio and the Orang was led away by a carer who arrived wearing a face mask and plastic gloves. Cathy and Tim were delighted that their visit had been so eventful.

After 5pm most of the guests left for an optional night walk at the Rainforest Discovery Centre. At the lagoon an Oriental Darter was drying its wings while a Water Monitor swam far out into the water. On the boardwalk, which extends high above the ground, Long-tailed Parakeets flew over and a pair of Rhinoceros Hornbills landed on two distant trees, giving us good though distant views of this iconic bird. Hazwan then aimed his scope at a lofty treehole and we could see a Red Giant Flying Squirrel peering out in the afternoon gloom. We had to wait for near-darkness before we saw it leave, and there were gasps when it glided over us and landed on a tree trunk far in the distance. Over the next half an hour we saw other giant squirrels exiting their holes and scampering up trunks, pausing on branches and making shorter glides. It was an impressive show, but the best was yet to come. On the walk back along the boardwalk Hazwan spotted a Slow Loris on a branch less than 10 metres away and not much higher than we were. There was great excitement as we admired and photographed this cute primate. It paid us no attention as it prepared for the evening by grooming itself, licking its chest and scratching its armpit. It then proceeded along a branch and showed increasing awareness of us, looking our way and blinking at Hazwan's light. It moved into thicker vegetation, but not before everyone had taken ample photos.

There was more to see. A bright green snake, an Oriental Vine Snake, was coiled in the foliage of a nearby tree, although we could not see its head. Further along the boardwalk Hazwan spotted a small flying squirrel moving along branches. It perched on a branch and we took photos. Hazwan said that in all his years as a guide he had not seen this species before and could not tell us what it was. Hazwan, Tim and Helena later studied books and online photos and decided it was a Whiskered Flying Squirrel, a species described as 'scarce'.

Day 4

Sunday 9th September

Sepilok, Kinabatangan, Sukau.

There was no organised morning activity but Tim took Helena and Ian on an after-breakfast walk around and beyond the resort. The highlights were a Crested Serpent Eagle moving from tree to tree, seeking breakfast, while another soared high in the sky, Velvet-fronted Nuthatches foraging along branches, and a bright red Assassin Bug. Other birds seen included a Brown-throated Sunbird, Little Spiderhunter and Long-tailed Parakeets flying over. Before breakfast Helena had photographed a Stork-billed Kingfisher and Greater Coucal.

At 11.30 we were driven to a restaurant for midday lunch, then taken to our boat. A Striated Heron landed nearby. On the river journey the birds we saw included Oriental Darters, terns, egrets of three species and a White-bellied Sea Eagle roosting in a tree.

After lunch at the resort, staff pointed out a Collugo with a baby roosting in a tree right beside the building. In the afternoon Tim pointed out a Wallace's Hawk-eagle and Black Hornbill perching in a tree just behind our rooms. The hornbill was noisy.

Just before 5 pm we went out in a boat, hoping for Proboscis Monkeys. We didn't have to wait. Hazwan found us a family group resting in trees on the other side of the river within sight of the resort. The male was closing his eyes and seemed to be nodding off to sleep, then rousing to wave away an insect, while his family relaxed around him. Hazwan then found us another species of monkey, a Silvered Langur. It was bright orange, an unusual colour form for an adult. We then saw a Proboscis Monkey sitting atop a tall decapitated trunk, and noticed Long-tailed Macaques in nearby trees. Hazwan took the boat further and found us three families of Proboscis Monkeys resting together. We were impressed by the high density of monkeys, all drawn to the riverside trees because they offered less risk of predation from Clouded Leopards and Reticulated Pythons. We were becoming increasingly aware of all the empty drink bottles at the water's edge, marking out fish traps submerged in the water by the local people, the Orang Sungai. The birds seen on this outing included our first pair of Pied Hornbills, a Black Hornbill, Green Imperial Pigeons and Purple Herons.

On a spotlight outing after dinner, Hazwan found us a Blue-eared Kingfisher asleep on a stem and steered the boat until it was only a couple of metres away. We were delighted to see two Buffy Fish Owls, plus a crocodile lying on a bank that, as we approached, ran straight towards us to reach the water, then disappeared from view, possibly passing under the boat. It was under two metres long, not big enough to alarm us. We found macaques sleeping in a tree above the stream. On the way back, Hazwan found a White-crowned Shama sleeping on a stem beside the river – a splendid sight with its black back, bright orange belly and white crown.

Day 5

Monday 10th September

Sukau, Kinabatangan, Gomantong Cave, Menaggol Creek.

Our early morning boat cruise was centred on Menaggol Creek, which was atmospheric in the early morning light. Before we reached the mouth Hazwan brought us to the same troop of Proboscis Monkeys we had seen the previous afternoon; they were still within sight of the resort. The lead male yawned, while one of the females groomed her baby. The creek itself provided a parade of sightings, including more Proboscis Monkeys, and a troop of Long-tailed Macaques that were feeding and grooming on very low branches beside the water. Hazwan steered the boat so close that Mike, in the front, was only two metres from the closest monkeys. On one branch two macaque mothers were seated together and face to face, each with a baby held to her chest. One of these babies later made a tentative attempt to crawl along a branch, wobbling from side to side.

The bird highlights were a White-crowned Hornbill that perched obligingly on a bare branch beside the stream, a colourful group of Cinnamon-headed Pigeons, and a Storm's Stork that kept wheeling about in the sky above us, round and round as if it was a kite on a string attached to the boat. The IUCN estimates the global population of this endangered species to be a mere 260-330 mature individuals. A male Black Hornbill perched near us and we saw two Pied Hornbills at the same location, lured by a fruiting fig tree. Other birds included a Stork-billed Kingfisher, Little Green Pigeon and two Racket-tailed Drongos in flight. We saw a Plantain Squirrel, a Pygmy Squirrel, a couple of Water Monitors and a very young crocodile with only its eyes and nostrils above the water, although we could see part of its submerged body. Our boat came within two metres before it dived.

After a 10 am breakfast Hazwan took us on a walk around the resort boardwalk. Before even ten minutes had passed he noticed a shaking tree and led us to a mother and young Orangutan. The youngster, which Hazwan said was almost three years old, followed its mother as she moved through the trees. At one point the baby was dangling by one arm and struggling to find a branch to grab. After 20 minutes with these we continued walking until Tim spotted a Pygmy Squirrel. It had a mate that ran down the tree and we enjoyed exceptionally close views of this minute mammal, as it leapt to a low branch below the boardwalk where it remained long enough for photos, less than two metres from our feet. It was so quick that when it jumped it appeared to disappear from one branch and appear on another. We also saw a Plantain Squirrel, a Giant Pill Millipede, a termite mound and a Tree Nymph butterfly.

Before lunch a Collugo mother and baby were located in a tree. Those who lingered after lunch were rewarded with a second, even better view of the mother Orangutan and baby, feeding for more than hour on dangling fruits in a tree just outside the restaurant.

In the afternoon we took a short boat journey to Sukau, to a bus that was ready to take us to Gomantong Cave. We were full of anticipation because Hazwan had heard from other guides that the only Elephants seen recently were in an oil palm plantation by the main road where old palms were being removed. We pulled up and Hazwan pointed to a distant gap in some rainforest regrowth where we could see two Elephants standing beside an excavator. We could hear heavy machinery in that direction. Hazwan explained that oil palm trunks were being chipped into small pieces so they would quickly rot and render the site ready for replanting with young palms. After 25 to 30 years oil palms stop producing large crops of fruits, and become difficult to harvest because the palms are so tall. The top of a palm trunk contains a starchy heart, and the Elephants were waiting for chips of palm heart which they could eat. They seemed to be less than 20 metres from the excavator, though that may have been an illusion created by our limited vantage point. After a few minutes the Elephants moved out of view. Tim walked up the road and found a better gap in the vegetation where we could see them through a scope, and where those with long lenses could take impressive photos. The Elephants passed out of sight and we returned to the bus. We were relieved we had seen Bornean Elephants, but the circumstances had been strange.

At Gomantong, our short walk to the cave was very productive. A very large Orangutan moved quickly through small trees only 10 metres from some of us. Above the cave entrance, two Wallace's Hawk-eagles were perched in full view on a dead tree, and two Wreathed Hornbills flew into a higher tree.

Gomantong Cave was made famous by David Attenborough filmed sitting on an enormous pile of bat guano and also being suspended high in a stream of exiting bats. The cave provides roosting for 2,000,000 Wrinkle-lipped Bats, with another eight bat species present, which issue forth each evening in tight flocks that sometimes coalesce into a stream. The cave is equally well known for the harvesting of swiftlet nests for the production of soup, both Edible-nest and Black-nest Swiftlet. A *Borneo Post* article in 2016 said that 22 kilogrammes of swiftlet nests was worth 165,000MYR (more than £30,000).

The cave is something that visitors can love or hate, depending on how squeamish they become when they comprehend its contents. The boardwalk passes by enormous piles of bat guano and large congregations of huge cockroaches. There were long-legged centipedes (Scutigermorphs), freshwater crabs, rats, swiftlets flying around the cave entrance, and bats clinging to the walls or wheeling high above us. There was also a Bat Hawk flying about.

After we left the cave we watched thousands of bats streaming out. Hazwan set up his scope on two Bushy-crested Hornbills and saw a Thomas's Flying-squirrel in the same tree. We were driving out of the caves car park after dark when our driver suddenly braked. Just ahead of us was a giant snake slowly crossing the road – a Reticulated Python. We filed out of the bus for a closer look and to take photos. The road was two lanes wide and the snake was considerably longer than a lane was wide. It ignored us standing some metres away and continued its slow crossing. It had recently shed its skin and looked resplendent, with rich orange markings.

On an optional boat trip after dinner we saw more crocodiles, a Buffy Fish Owl, a swimming rat, and a sleeping Blue-eared Kingfisher which we approached so closely that Helena could have reached out and touched it. But the highlight of the outing came when Tim spotted bright eye shine. A Malay Civet was passing through the forest close to the bank. Hazwan and Abdu, the boatman, made loud sucking noises, which lured the civet towards us. It sped up as if it intended leaping into the boat, although Hazwan's bright light meant it could not see much in our direction. It veered away when less than two metres from the boat. Helena, sitting in the front, was so close she could see its teeth, and thought it was going to land on her. Most of us did not see its teeth, but we did see its beautiful spotted coat at very close range. We were so thrilled with this sighting that we were not especially excited when we passed a large crocodile on the way back to the resort.

We fell into our beds amazed by all we had seen this day.

Day 6

Tuesday 11th September

Sukau to Danum Valley.

We were awoken early for the journey to Danum Valley. The road took us past the plantation with the Elephants, and this time we had a better viewing experience. There was no machinery noise, and they were feeding in a more open location with more native vegetation. If we overlooked the fact that they were picking up pieces of plantation palms with their trunks, it was a satisfying view, especially when the sun came out.

At Danum we had time to have lunch and relax in our rooms before an afternoon outing with resort naturalists Ned and Olevia, with Hazwan also participating. Ned immediately showed us a male Orangutan building a nest beside the resort, and a female with her baby. This was an impressive beginning, which improved further when we walked to the front of the resort to see a Lesser Fish Eagle in a tree beside the river, and a large Water Monitor. Other sightings on that walk were a Pygmy Squirrel, Long-tailed Macaques, Bushy-crested Hornbills, Rufous-winged Philentoma, and a male and female Angle-headed Dragons perched on trees beside the resort boardwalk.

After dinner, while spotlighting from a truck, we saw a Yellow-bellied Prinia sleeping on a grass stalk beside the road, a Red Giant Flying Squirrel on a tree trunk, and an enormous lack Tarantula on a nearby tree trunk. The spider was seriously big - too big to have hidden in a tea cup! We were almost back at the buildings when Hazwan spotted a Malay Civet under a sparse shrub. It trotted about for a minute, seemingly indifferent to us, granting everyone a chance to admire its heavily spotted coat. Helen and Mike had missed the previous night's boat outing, so they were especially pleased to have close views of this beautiful mammal.

Day 7

Wednesday 12th September

Danum Valley.

During breakfast Long-tailed Macaques fed nearby, one climbing a Dillenia tree to eat the buds. A Pied Fantail was seen and Gibbons were heard calling loudly.

Our morning walk began with yet another large Orangutan, a 32 year old male known as Son. He was tearing chunks of bark from a tree and licking the sap from these. We then found a mother Orangutan and her baby. We saw a range of birds, including a Blue-crowned Hanging Parrot that we viewed through a scope, a Whiskered Treeswift, and eight Bushy-crested Hornbills travelling together. A Red Leaf Monkey (Maroon Langur) was relaxing on a horizontal branch, over which it was draped as loosely as if it was a floppy cloth toy. Butterflies were out in force, and Ned pointed out a Common Birdwing, Golden Birdwing, and best of all, a Rajah Brooke's Birdwing, the official butterfly of Malaysia, which landed before us, posing for photos. A few minutes later we were very fortunate to see a Flying Dragon glide across the road, from one tree to another. We visited the canopy boardwalk, part of which had been damaged by a recent lightning strike. Lingered here, Helena and Tim saw a bright red bird, a Temminck's Sunbird, which would prove to be Helena's bird of the trip. We were nearly back at the resort when we came across a large Orangutan pulling long thin strips of bark from a nearby tree, which it was eating. With no warning it suddenly came to the ground, and Ned insisted we back away, although it showed no interest in us, walking in a different direction. This morning had shown us Danum Valley at its best.

Ned left an afternoon walk and within minutes we were admiring a troop of Red Leaf Monkeys beside the road. They paused on a long cable that extended across the road, three of them lined up together. This cable was attached to a tall tree to ensure that, if the tree was weakened during a storm, it fell away from buildings. One monkey was carrying a baby that was whitish in colour. We saw a pair mate. Tim saw a Jerdon's Baza land high in a tree where it could be seen through the scope. We walked on a trail that took us to the river, and on our return saw a male Scarlet Trogon and heard a Blue-headed Pitta and some Rhinoceros Hornbills.

We had a nightwalk just after dinner. Tim led us to Helena's chalet to see a large flying (or rather 'gliding') gecko perched above the doorway. We could see the generous webbing between its fingers and toes, which helps it glide. Ned then took the group along the road edge and found an Angle-headed Dragon sleeping on a low stem and various invertebrates: a cicada in the very act of emerging from its nymphal case, two small stick insects of different species, a praying mantis, and a whip-scorpion. Ned led us to the ponds where two Harlequin Frogs were resting on leaves. These are frogs with massive webbing and qualify as yet another gliding animal, one featured by David Attenborough in *Conquest of the Skies*, along with a gliding Collugo. It then began raining with conviction and we aborted the walk.

Day 8

Thursday 13th September

Danum.

Our morning walk was delayed for the very best of reasons. From the restaurant veranda Hazwan spotted a Gibbon high in a tree across the river, then noticed a Binturong – the largest of the civets - lower down on the same tree. The trunk of this tree supported a Climbing Fig (*Ficus punctata*) with big round orange fruits. After some minutes the Gibbon climbed down until it was close to the much larger Binturong, which lunged at it, forcing the more agile Gibbon to withdraw. But the Gibbon soon came close again, until there was another

lunge. This happened again after the Gibbon came within a metre. It was difficult to understand why the Gibbon was coming so close when the tree had figs right along its trunk, all of which were bright orange, implying they were equally ripe. The Gibbon again approached the Binturong, from above, and made a swipe at it, appearing to slap it on the snout, although there was no way to be sure that physical contact had been made. There was no possibility of either species driving the other out of such a large tree, but it looked like the Gibbon was doing its best to provoke the Binturong.

When our walk was underway we were rewarded with a good selection of birds, which included a pair of Wreathed Hornbills and a second sighting of Bornean Bristleheads, busy in trees just above us. A Black and Yellow Broadbill landed nearby, and then we saw a Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher, Yellow-bellied Bulbul and Brown Fulvetta. After we crossed the river on a suspension bridge Ned and Hazwan soon heard a calling trogon. We waited and were rewarded with views of a magnificent male Red-naped Trogon. Soon after this we came upon a female Scarlet-rumped Trogon. Beside a rivulet we had a Rufous-backed Kingfisher perch just metres from us, giving us outstanding close views of its spectacular pink and orange plumage.

At a small waterfall the group divided into those who continued up to Coffin Hill (Mike, Helen, Olesya, David, Tim, Ned) and those who returned to the resort along with Hazwan. Ned showed us two small wooden coffins on the cliff face and pieces of several human crania. He talked about the Dusun people colonising this valley, living off the land and trading with the Chinese. We ventured to the top of the hill and were rewarded with commanding views. We had not been there long when a Gibbon ascended a fig tree and looked at us. Olesya was staring at it from only eight metres away. It climbed into branches above Mike's head and we all had amazing close views. It was one of the peak experiences of the holiday for those who were closest.

During lunch back at the restaurant Hazwan impressed us once again by noticing a small slender snake sliding across the veranda of the restaurant. Unsure of the species, he assured us it was a harmless tree snake. Cathy and Ian were trusting enough of Hazwan's judgment to let it slide over their bare feet while they took photos. Tim and Ian later identified it from Ian's photos as a Keel-bellied Vine Snake.

On an afternoon walk along the road we glimpsed a few birds foraging in the vegetation – an Asian Brown Flycatcher, Grey-cheeked Babbler, Little Spiderhunter and Striped Wren-babbler. On a trail inside the forest a Maroon-breasted Philentoma landed close to us and a Red Leaf Monkey climbed on a branch. Back at the resort we checked out the fruiting fig and could see the Binturong curled up on a burl of wood as if asleep. As we watched it lifted itself up, ready for the night. Helen was distracted by a Long-tailed Macaque in a tree just four metres away. Down on the river edge, a Water Monitor was resting.

Day 9

Friday 14th September

Danum Valley.

At breakfast we discovered that the Binturong was still in the same tree. It climbed up a distance than came down, in search of ripe figs. At one point it was very stretched out, with its prehensile tail wrapped at its tip around one vertical liana, while its legs gripped another vertical liana, as it nibbled a fig growing on a third vertical liana. We had more than half an hour of observation, though it sometimes crawled behind the trunk, before it descended to another, much smaller, tree and was lost from view. At one stage during its descent its tail was coiled around and around the supporting liana.

Once we were inside the forest on our morning walk Hazwan spotted a Pygmy Squirrel, which scampered down a tree and over the ground before ascending a second tree. He then spotted a Horse-tailed Squirrel, a new species for the trip. Hazwan spotted an Angle-headed Dragon on a tree then drew our attention to a large Orangutan moving through nearby trees, which provided good scope views. We heard bristleheads calling nearby.

Sandy noticed blood dribbling down her hand. She had been walking with a stick and a leech had evidently squeezed in between her hand and the stick to have a feed. Ned promptly opened his first aid kit and bandaged the base of her thumb. The leech was nowhere to be seen, but we could see eager Tiger Leeches on low foliage at several sites along the trail.

Ned spotted a Giant Squirrel that was glimpsed only by Ian. Hazwan flicked some bark off a tree to reveal an enormous centipede which, unaware that it was exposed, remained in place, allowing everyone to take photos. A small Angle-headed Dragon was perching on a stem nearby. We then came upon the star bird of the outing, a Bornean Blue Flycatcher. This scarce endemic Bornean bird was happy to perch near us, allowing everyone close sustained views. A Red-throated Skink was seen at the side of the road on our return.

Just before lunch Helena photographed an attractive tree snake, a Striped Bronzeback. Just after lunch Red Leaf Monkeys moved into trees right beside the restaurant. They could be admired from less than 10 metres away. We had already enjoyed these monkeys on a few occasions but this was an outstanding opportunity to see them up close.

We had an afternoon walk beginning at 3.30 and when we went downstairs to begin a very large Barking Gecko was on the ground, allowing us to stand over it to take photos. Rain began falling so we waited for that to stop, then Ned took us to the nearby pond, where we saw a File-eared Frog, White-lipped Frog, and a small snake, a Red-sided Keelback, swimming a few metres from us. It was pushing its head into the foamy white egg mass of a frog, to prey on the eggs. We could see the snake's head emerge through the froth, then retreat as it made a further search for eggs. It began raining again so we returned to the resort. The rain soon stopped so we ventured out to the river edge where Tim spotted the Binturong asleep high in the same tree, curled up at the point where a very large branch met the trunk. The number of figs on the trunk was diminishing.

A one-hour night-drive in the truck proved unproductive, with nothing seen apart from a sleeping prinia, probably the same bird from three nights ago. When we returned Tim and Ned took some guests to the river edge where bright eye shine indicated two Sambar Deer crossing the grassy field. They came close enough to be seen clearly before they waded across the river. During dinner Hazwan interrupted our discussion of the best desserts to point out Sambar Deer at the edge of the river close to the restaurant.

After dinner Tim, Helena, Helen and Ian revisited the ponds. A small snake was swimming in the water and two more were perched on ginger plants, all of them Red-sided Keelbacks. Frogs were plentiful, notably Four-lined Frogs, File-eared Frogs, calling White-lipped Frogs and a Giant River Frog, which impressed everyone with its size. So did the huge tarantula on a pillar of the nearby shelter. On the way back to their rooms, Tim and Helen spotted a young Barking Gecko on the wall of Tim's chalet.

Day 10

Saturday 15th September

Outbound to Kuala Lumpur and on to Sandakan.

We had a 7 am departure from the resort, followed by flights home, so we weren't expecting to see anything on this day, but there were several memorable sightings. At breakfast a Bearded Pig wandered past the restaurant and a Lesser Fish Eagle flew by. On the drive out some guests glimpsed one or more of the following: a female Bornean Crested Fireback Pheasant, an Emerald Dove, a Greater Coucal and a Bearded Pig. And everyone saw the Pig-tailed Macaques sitting on telephone wires when we reached the major road.

At the Lahad Datu airport, through the windows, Tim and Helena spotted a Scaly-breasted Munia, a very late addition to our bird list.

Day 11

Sunday 16th September

Arrive UK

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Collugo & Baby



Cosmolestes



Dragonfly *Neurothemis ramburii*

Species Lists

No one participant saw all the species listed in the tables hereunder. Kinabatangan includes Gomantong Cave, Sungai Kinabatangan and its tributaries. Species listed but not noted for any location were seen in transit only.

Mammals [S = seen; H = heard only; E = Endemic. Nomenclature follows Phillipps (2016), some alternative names are provided

Common name	Scientific name	Sepilok	Sukau	Danum	Comments
Short-nosed Fruit Bat	<i>Cyanopterus brachyotis</i>	S	-	-	Under chalet roofs
Wrinkle-lipped Bat	<i>Tadarida plicata</i>	-	S	-	Thousands leaving Gomantong Cave
Malaysian Collugo	<i>Cyanocephalus variegatus</i>	S	S	-	Mother & baby at Sukau
Bornean Slow Loris	<i>Nycticebus menagensis</i>	S	-	-	One at night
Maroon Langur (Red Leaf Monkey) E	<i>Presbytis rubicunda</i>	-	S	S	Several sustained sightings
Silvered Langur	<i>Trachypithecus cristatus</i>	-	S	-	Several
Proboscis Monkey E	<i>Nasalis larvatus</i>	-	S	-	Along river including near resort
Long-tailed Macaque	<i>Macaca fascicularis</i>	S	S	S	Around Sukau & Danum buildings
Sunda Pig-tailed Macaque	<i>Macaca nemestrina</i>	S	S	S	Sepilok, Gomantong & leaving Danum
East Bornean Grey Gibbon E	<i>Hylobates funereus</i>	-	H	S	Two sightings
Bornean Orangutan E	<i>Pongo pygmaeus</i>	S	S	S	Many good sightings
Giant Squirrel	<i>Ratufa affinis</i>	-	-	S	Glimpsed by Ian
Horse-tailed Squirrel	<i>Sundasciurus hippurus</i>	-	-	S	In tree
Prevost's Squirrel	<i>Callosciurus prevostii pluto</i>	S	S	S	
Plantain Squirrel	<i>Callosciurus notatus</i>	-	S	-	
Plain Pygmy Squirrel E	<i>Exilisciurus exilis</i>	S	S	S	Some excellent sightings
Whiskered Flying Squirrel	<i>Petinomys genibarbis</i>	S	-	-	On night walk
Red Giant Flying Squirrel	<i>Petaurista petaurista</i>	S	-	S	Good sightings at Sepilok
Thomas's Flying Squirrel E	<i>Aeromys thomasi</i>	-	S	-	Found by Hazwan at Gomantong
Rats	<i>Rattus</i> sp.	-	S	-	In cave
Malay Civet	<i>Viverra zangalunga</i>	-	S	S	Two sustained close sightings
Binturong	<i>Arctictis binturong</i>	-	-	S	Repeatedly in tree with figs
Asian Elephant	<i>Elephas maximus</i>	-	S	-	In palm plantation on two days
Bearded Pig	<i>Sus barbatus</i>	-	S	S	One at Danum lodge & on road

Common name	Scientific name	Sepilok	Sukau	Danum	Comments
Sambar	<i>Rusa unicolor</i>	-	-	S	Around resort at night

Birds (S = seen; H = heard only; E = Endemic; I = Introduced) Names in brackets indicate some alternative common names

Common name	Scientific name	Sepilok	Sukau	Danum	Comments
Crested Fireback	<i>Lophura ignita</i>	-	-	S	On road leaving Danum
Storm's Stork	<i>Ciconia stormi</i>	-	S	-	Flying above creek
Striated Heron	<i>Butorides striata</i>	S	-	-	Sepilok boat landing
Eastern Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus coromandus</i>	-	S	-	
Great-billed Heron	<i>Ardea sumatrana</i>	-	-	S	Seen beside lodge
Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	-	S	-	
Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	-	S	-	Many on Kinabatangan
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	-	S	-	
Oriental Darter	<i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>	S	S	-	
Jerdon's Baza	<i>Aviceda jerdoni</i>	-	-	S	Atop tall tree by road
Bat Hawk	<i>Macheiramphus alcinus</i>	-	S	-	Flying in cave
White-bellied Sea Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucogaster</i>	-	S	-	Kinabatangan in tree
Lesser Fish Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus humilis</i>	-	-	S	Seen twice beside lodge
Crested Serpent Eagle	<i>Spilornis cheela</i>	S	-	-	Sepilok & leaving Sukau
Wallace's Hawk-Eagle	<i>Nisaetus nanus</i>	-	S	S	Sukau lodge, above caves, Danum
White-breasted Waterhen	<i>Amaurornis phoenicurus</i>	-	S	-	Seen by road at Sukau
Common sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	-	S	-	Flying along river
Great Crested Tern	<i>Thalasseus bergii</i>	-	S	-	
Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>	-	S	-	Flying along river
Rock (Feral) Pigeon I	<i>Columba livia</i>	-	-	-	In town
Spotted Dove	<i>Spilopelia chinensis</i>	-	-	-	In towns
Common Emerald Dove	<i>Chalcophaps indica</i>	-	-	S	Leaving Danum
Cinnamon-headed Green Pigeon	<i>Treron fulvicollis</i>	-	S	-	Group in tree beside creek
Little Green Pigeon	<i>Treron olax</i>	-	S	-	One in tree
Green Imperial Pigeon	<i>Ducula aenea</i>	-	S	-	
Blue-crowned Hanging Parrot	<i>Loriculus galgulus</i>	-	-	S	Scope view at Danum
Long-tailed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula longicauda</i>	S	-	-	Twice in flight

Common name	Scientific name	Sepilok	Sukau	Danum	Comments
Chestnut-bellied Malkoha	<i>Phaenicophaeus sumatranus</i>	-	S	-	
Raffles's Malkoha	<i>Rhinorthis chlorophaea</i>	S	-	S	In trees
Chestnut-breasted Malkoha	<i>Phaenicophaeus curvirostris</i>	S	S	S	
Greater Coucal	<i>Centropus sinensis</i>	S	-	S	
Buffy Fish Owl	<i>Ketupa ketupu</i>	-	S	-	Menaggol Creek
Plume-toed Swiftlet	<i>Collocalia affinis</i>	S	S	S	Seen often
Mossy-nest Swiftlet	<i>Aerodramus salangana</i>	-	S	-	Seen at cave (& elsewhere)
Black-nest Swiftlet	<i>Aerodramus maximus</i>	-	S	-	Seen at cave (& elsewhere)
Edible-nest Swiftlet	<i>Aerodramus fuciphagus</i>	-	S	-	Presumably seen at cave (& elsewhere)
Silver-rumped Spinetail	<i>Rhaphidura leucopygialis</i>	S	-	-	
Whiskered Treeswift	<i>Hemiprocne comata</i>	-	-	S	On Boardwalk cable
Red-naped Trogon	<i>Harpactes kasumba</i>	-	-	S	Male seen
Scarlet-rumped Trogon	<i>Harpactes duvaucelii</i>	-	H	S	Male & female seen
Oriental Dollarbird	<i>Eurystomus orientalis</i>	-	S	-	Atop tree by river
Stork-billed Kingfisher	<i>Pelargopsis capensis</i>	S	S	-	
Collared Kingfisher	<i>Todiramphus chloris</i>	-	S	-	On telegraph wires leaving Sukau
Rufous-backed (Oriental Dwarf) Kingfisher	<i>Ceyx erithaca</i>	-	-	S	Perched very close
Blue-eared Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo meninting</i>	S	S	-	
Blue-throated Bee-eater	<i>Merops viridis</i>	-	-	S	Seen by Cathy and Olevia
White-crowned Hornbill	<i>Berenicornis comatus</i>	-	S	-	In tree above creek
Bushy-crested Hornbill	<i>Anorrhinus galeritus</i>	-	S	S	
Oriental Pied Hornbill	<i>Anthracoceros albirostris</i>	-	S	-	In trees by river
Black Hornbill	<i>Anthracoceros malayanus</i>	H	-	S	Two pairs seen at a distance
Rhinoceros Hornbill	<i>Buceros rhinoceros</i>	S	H	H	Seen at dusk from boardwalk
Helmeted Hornbill	<i>Rhinoplax vigil</i>	-	-	H	
Wreathed Hornbill	<i>Rhyticeros undulatus</i>	-	S	-	Pair above cave
Brown Barbet	<i>Caloramphus fuliginosus</i>	S	-	-	Flock seen near resort
Common Flameback	<i>Dinopium javanense</i>	S	-	-	Near Orang feeding platform
Black-and-red Broadbill	<i>Cymbirhynchus macrorhynchos</i>	S	-	-	Photographed by Helena
Black-and-yellow Broadbill	<i>Eurylaimus ochromalus</i>	-	H	S	Seen near river
Blue-headed Pitta E	<i>Hydroornis baudii</i>	-	-	H	
Rufous-winged Philentoma	<i>Philentoma pyrhoptra</i>	-	-	S	Two sightings

Common name	Scientific name	Sepilok	Sukau	Danum	Comments
Maroon-breasted Philentoma	<i>Philentoma velata</i>	-	-	S	One sighting
White-breasted Woodswallow	<i>Artamus leucorhynchus</i>	-	-	-	Seen on wires after leaving Sukau
Common Iora	<i>Aegithina tiphia</i>	-	-	S	In tree by river
Greater Racket-tailed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus paradiseus</i>	-	S	-	Two flew over creek
Malaysian Pied Fantail	<i>Rhipidura javanica</i>	S	-	S	Sepilok resort garden, Danum
Black-naped Monarch	<i>Hypothymis azurea</i>	-	S	-	Seen by Helena & Tim
Greater Racket-tailed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus paradiseus</i>	-	S	-	Two flew over creek
Slender-billed Crow	<i>Corvus enca</i>	-	S	H	Seen by Helena & Tim
Bornean Bristlehead E	<i>Pityriasis gymnocephala</i>	S	-	S	Two groups seen well by all
Brown-throated Sunbird	<i>Anthreptes malacensis</i>	S	S	-	
Red-throated Sunbird	<i>Anthreptes rhodolaemus</i>	-	-	S	Feeding chick in clearing
Copper-throated Sunbird	<i>Leptocoma calcostetha</i>	S	-	-	By Sepilok dirt road
Crimson Sunbird	<i>Aethopyga siparaja</i>	S	-	-	
Temminck's Sunbird	<i>Aethopyga temminckii</i>	-	-	S	Seen by Helena & Tim
Streaky-breasted Spiderhunter	<i>Arachnothera everetti</i>	-	-	S	One sighting
Little Spiderhunter	<i>Arachnothera longirostra</i>	S	-	S	In Sepilok resort garden on flowers
Thick-billed Spiderhunter	<i>Arachnothera crassirostris</i>	S	-	S	
Yellow-breasted Flowerpecker	<i>Prionochilus maculatus</i>	-	-	S	
Yellow-rumped Flowerpecker E	<i>Prionochilus xanthopygius</i>	-	-	S	
Greater Green Leafbird	<i>Chloropsis sonnerati</i>	S	-	S	
Lesser Green Leafbird	<i>Chloropsis cyanopogon</i>		-	S	
Velvet-fronted nuthatch	<i>Sitta frontalis</i>	S	-	S	Seen by Ian, Helena, Tim
Dusky Munia E	<i>Lonchura fuscans</i>	-	-	-	In township
Scaly-breasted Munia I	<i>Lonchura punctulatus</i>	-	-	S	Lahad Datu Airport
Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>	S	-	-	Common in villages & towns
Javan Myna I	<i>Acridotheres javanicus</i>	-	S	-	Roadside past Sukau
Common Hill Myna	<i>Gracula religiosa</i>	-	S	-	Flew over creek
Asian Glossy Starling	<i>Aplonis panayensis</i>	-	-	-	Roadside past Sukau
White-crowned Shama E	<i>Copsychus stricklandii</i>	-	S	S	
Bornean Blue Flycatcher E	<i>Cyornis superbus</i>	-	-	S	Excellent sighting
Asian Brown Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa dauurica</i>	-	-	S	
Grey-headed Canary-flycatcher	<i>Culicicapa ceylonensis</i>	-	-	S	
Yellow-vented Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus goiavier</i>	S	S	-	

Common name	Scientific name	Sepilok	Sukau	Danum	Comments
Olive-winged Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus plumosus</i>	S	-	-	
Asian Red-eyed Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus brunneus</i>	-	-	S	
Hairy-backed Bulbul	<i>Tricholestes criniger</i>	-	-	S	
Yellow-bellied Bulbul	<i>Alophoixus phaeocephalus</i>	-	-	S	Once at Danum
Grey-cheeked Bulbul	<i>Alophoixus bres</i>	S	-	S	
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	S	S	-	
House (Pacific) Swallow	<i>Hirundo tahitica</i>	S	S	S	Common
Chestnut-winged Babbler	<i>Stachyris erythroptera</i>	-	S	-	
Chestnut-backed Scimitar Babbler	<i>Pomatorhinus montanus</i>	-	-	H	
Rufous-fronted Babbler	<i>Stachyridopsis rufifrons</i>	-	-	H	
Fluffy-backed Tit-Babbler	<i>Macronus ptilosus</i>	-	-	S	
Moustached Babbler	<i>Malacopteron magnirostre</i>	-	-	H	
Rufous-crowned Babbler	<i>Malacopteron magnum</i>	-	-	S	
White-chested Babbler	<i>Trichastoma rostratum</i>	-	H	S	
Striped Wren-babbler	<i>Kenopia striata</i>	-	-	S	
Ashy (Red-headed) Tailorbird	<i>Orthotomus ruficeps</i>	S	S	-	
Rufous-tailed Tailorbird	<i>Orthotomus sericeus</i>	S	S	S	Many sightings

Reptiles (S = seen; H = heard only; E = Endemic); Names in brackets indicate some alternative common names.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Sepilok	Sukau	Danum	Comments
Saltwater Crocodile	<i>Crocodylus porosus</i>	-	S	-	A few seen by night
Crested Green Lizard	<i>Bronchocela cristatella</i>	S	S	S	On trees
Horned Flying Lizard E	<i>Draco cornutus</i> .	-	-	S	Seen gliding
Bornean Angle-headed Dragon E	<i>Gonocephalus bornensis</i>	-	-	S	Several seen
Frippy House Gecko	<i>Cosymbotus platyurus</i>	S	-	-	On buildings
Barking (Green-eyed) Gecko	<i>Gekko smithii</i>	-	S	S	On buildings & floor
Asian House Gecko	<i>Hemidactylus frenatus</i>	-	-	S	On buildings
Horsefield's Gliding Gecko	<i>Ptychozoon horsfieldii</i>	-	-	S	On chalet wall
Striped Bornean Tree Skink E	<i>Apterygodon vittatus</i>	S	-	S	On trees
Red-throated Skink	<i>Mabuaya rugifera</i>	-	-	S	On fallen leaf by road

Tree skink	<i>Sphenomorphus sp</i>	S	-	-	Near resort
Water Monitor	<i>Varanus salvator</i>	S	S	S	Several seen in and near water
Reticulated Python	<i>Broghammerus reticulatus</i>	-	S	-	Crossing road near cave
Oriental Vine Snake	<i>Ahaetulla prasina</i>	S	-	-	In tree above boardwalk
Striped bronzeback	<i>Dendralaphis caudolineatus</i>	-	-	S	Photographed by Helena
Keel-bellied Vine Snake	<i>Dryophiops rubescens</i>	-	-	S	On restaurant veranda
Red-sided Keelback	<i>Xenochrophis trianguligerus</i>	-	-	S	In and around pond near lodge

Amphibians (S = seen; H = heard only; E = Endemic); Names taken from *A field guide to the frogs of Borneo* (Inger & Stuebing 2005)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Sepilok	Sukau	Danum	Comments
Tree Hole Frog E	<i>Metaphrynella sundana</i>	-	-	H	Heard during night drive
Giant River Frog	<i>Limnonectes leporinus</i>	-	-	S	On island in pond at night
White-lipped Frog	<i>Rana chalconota</i>	-	-	H	In tree at night near viper
Four-lined Tree Frog	<i>Polypedates leucomystax</i>	-	-	S	At pond at night
File-eared Frog	<i>Polypedates otitophus</i>	-	-	S	Seen at pond
Harlequin Tree Frog	<i>Rhacophorus pardalis</i>	-	-	S	Several around pond at night



Red assassin



Rajah brookes



White-crowned Hornbill