

JUNGLE TIMES

Independent Newspaper of Danau Girang Field Centre

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DGFC Established 2008

FLOOD HITS KINABATANGAN!



Flooding in the Kinabatangan causes difficulties for both locals and visitors.

Water levels along the river rise every year during the rainy season, but early 2009 saw some particularly wet weeks at Danau Girang Field Centre.

The water pump at the jetty, which usually towers above the water level, was completely submerged under sev-

eral metres of water as was the slipway. Sections of the path were flooded and a ladder was required to gain access to Zainal's house without getting very wet.

Floods upriver at Batu Putih



The path at Danau Girang was wetter than usual.

mean that the use of boats was necessary for access to the Mescot building. Further

downriver at Sukau, high water levels caused erosion of the riverbanks, leading to part of the tarmac road falling away into the river. Spirits at Danau Girang remained high and staff members were seen to erect fishing nets between buildings as fish were not an unusual sight in the forest.



Zainal greets guests in the floods at Batu Putih.

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Ein Schwein und Vielen Fledermausen (A pig and lots of bats)

Representatives from the Institute of Zoology, Tiho Hanover, Germany came to Danau Girang Field Centre in March.

Elke Zimmermann, Ute Radespiel, Sabine Schmidt and Jürgen Pillat spent six days at Danau Girang for consideration of future collaboration between the Institute of Zoology and the field centre.

During their time here the group took river cruises, embarked on jungle walks through a very soggy forest, laid traps for capturing small mammals and witnessed the problems associated with wild pigs dying underneath the main building, as well as the abundance of monitor lizards that



An Acuminate Horseshoe Bat, A tree shrew caught whilst small mammal trapping and the visitors with members of the Danau Girang team.

(Shrew and group photography: E. Zimmermann)

arrived over the following days to investigate.

Sabine and Jürgen were particularly interested in the bats found around the centre and, after setting up mist nets in heavily populated areas, were able to identify two species: *Megaderma spasma*, the Lesser False Vampire Bat and *Rhinolophus acuminatus*, the Acuminate Horseshoe Bat. Bats can be seen hanging behind the studio accommodation and underneath the main building as well as flying at dusk.

Ute Radespiel said "I loved it being here! I will come back!" and Jürgen signed the guestbook as having particularly enjoyed his birthday cake, made by Danau Girang's resident baker Chloe Parker.

IN OTHER NEWS...

- *Potential students, Megan English and Nicola Abram, who are hoping to study at Danau Girang visited the centre in January to explore future possibilities.*
- *PTY Student Rachel's parents came to visit briefly whilst exploring Sabah in February.*

DID THEY REALLY SAY THAT?

"We like this lady." Chloe, buying fruit.

"Yes, but you are not going to eat the lady." Benoit

"I found a donut in the sea, my life is complete." Tun-Min Poh

PHOTO



Clockwise from top: Millipede, Crocodile, Mr Henson in the floods, an interesting invertebrate, Staff and students celebrating cook Zila's birthday and a mouse in a trap.

New Arrivals at DGFC

Three new arrivals at Danau Girang Field Centre have kept everyone busy with new faces and new projects.

João Alves from the Instituto Gulbenkian de Ciência, Portugal, has come to Danau Girang for three months to gain experience as a volunteer, helping with various projects being undertaken in the field. After a month of assorted duties at the centre he is now helping Farina with her work on elephants in Sukau and will return later in April.

Rachel Munds from Oxford Brookes University in the U.K. has also arrived this month to study nocturnal primates. Her particular interests lie in the Western Tarsier (*Tarsius bancanus borneanus*) and the Slow Loris (*Nycticebus menagensis*). She was joined briefly by Richard Moore, also interested in nocturnal primates and their evolutionary relationship with possible nearest living relatives: the Colugo (*Cynocephalus variegatus*) and the Pentail Treeshrew (*Ptilocercus lowii*). Rachel has been

busy creating new transects so that the study can begin in the next few weeks.

Ridzwan Ali has come from the Institute of Tropical Biology and Conservation, University Malaysia Sabah to help with the nocturnal primate work. He has previously studied time budgets of the Proboscis Monkey (*Nasalis larvatus*), also found in the Kinabatangan.

The team have already sighted both a tarsier and a loris, but trapping attempts have not been successful to date. New trapping ideas are currently being considered as well as adaptations to existing traps and night walks for direct observation of both species. The nocturnal primates are notoriously difficult to study, leaving Rachel and Ridzwan to face various challenges. Although the Tarsier is rarely found at heights exceeding 5-7 metres, the Slow Loris prefers to spend time much



João Alves, Dr Benoit Goossens and Chloe Parker

higher up in the trees. Despite being closer to the ground, tarsiers present different problems; their eyes don't reflect light in the same way that lorises do and so they can't be spotted by their eye-shine. They are also very difficult to trap as they only eat live bait, and so the easiest and preferred options of non-living baits are of no use. Pick up the next issue of *Jungle Times* to find out how they get on...

SPECIES IN FOCUS: The Bearded Pig

Common Name: Bearded Pig or Wild Boar

Scientific Name: *Sus barbatus*

Distribution: Malaysia, Sumatra and the Philippines.

The bearded pigs of the Kinabatangan are often found wandering near the buildings of Danau Girang Field Centre.

One of their distinguishing features is the 'beard' that consists of a series of bristles on either side of the jaw.

The bearded pig feeds on fruits, roots, worms and carrion and are known to follow groups of macaques, feeding on fruit fallen from the trees.

Female pigs build nests from vegetation when expecting a litter and the striped piglets stay with the mother for up to a year.

There are several pigs that regularly visit the centre including Pumbaa, Miss Piggy and Quasimodo.



Photo: E. Henson

Quasi looking quite unhealthy in his final days (top) and even less healthy after being discovered under the field centre (bottom)

Obituary

'Quasimodo'

19??- March 2009

Quasimodo the Bearded Pig passed away in early March 2009. He had been unwell for some time, becoming thin and tired, but his presence at Danau Girang will be missed. He lay at peace below the main building and was discovered by Dr. Goossens on Monday 16th March at 4:35pm.

Visitors from Around the World

Danau Girang has been especially busy throughout March, welcoming visitors from around the world, including Mr. Masazumi Tanaka from the Japan Eco Planning Service, Mr. Toshinori Tsubouchi from the Borneo

Conservation Trust, Japan and Mr. Roland Niun, the District Head Officer of Sabah Wildlife Department. The visitors were interested in discussing possibilities for future conservation work with Japanese University and school students.

Tomas and Karin Schwärzler and Jim and Wendy Hoerner managed to time their visit very well, as a young female orangutan decided to spend the night in a tree outside the accommodation. They were able to watch her enjoy a breakfast of Belian (*Eusideroxylon zwagerii*) leaves before an approaching group of macaques made so much commotion that 'Jane' was lost once more.



An orangutan swings by the hostel at Danau Girang Field Centre.



Taking a break to ask questions on a jungle walk.

(Photo: Jim Hoerner)

HOW TO: Negotiate a flooded journey from Batu Putih to Danau Girang *Nuggets of knowledge from the jungle...*

1. Drive Boat into carpark at Batu Putih.

2. Wade to dry land.

3. Transport luggage from car to boat.



4. Travel slowly along the river with an experienced boatman.

5. Remember what the destination jetty looks like, minus any features below 5m in height as these



Photo: K. Henson

are likely to be submerged. Land boat.

6. Wade along path.

7. Enter building, using ladders to bridge areas of water where necessary.



Photo: Z. Abidin Ja'afar

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Goossens (Pictured below, right of
elephant).



Danau Girang Field
Centre

Danau Girang Field Centre

*Danau Girang Field Centre was opened in July 2008.
It is located in the Lower Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary,
Sabah, Malaysia.*

Danau Girang is owned by the Sabah Wildlife Department and supported by Cardiff University. Its purpose is to further scientific research with the aim of contributing to long-term conservation projects in the area, and develop a better understanding of our environment and the living things we share it with.

JUNGLE JOKES

Q) What sort of armoured vehicles are used in

Guerilla warfare?

A) Orangutanks!

Q) Which jungle animals are the best

photographers?

A) Crocodiles, they enjoy snapping.

The Slow Loris

(‘Loris’ means ‘clown’ in Dutch and the nocturnal primate team are yet to trap one, and so I find them quite amusing.)

Director Visits Elephants of Thailand

Farina and I traveled to Chiang Mai, Thailand, from 11 to 19 February 2009 to attend the third conference of the Association of Tropical Biology and Conservation (ATBC), Asia-Pacific Chapter. The theme of the conference was “Assessing and Restoring Biodiversity in a Human Dominated Landscape”.

Farina presented our work on the conservation genetics of the Bornean elephant in Sabah and I advertised the field centre and made some important contacts with members of the ATBC. I hope that Danau Girang Field Centre can become a host for future ATBC field courses. The next meeting will be in Bali in July 2010.

After the 4-day conference we visited the Elephant Nature Park (www.elephantnaturefoundation.org) located in the Mae Taeng Valley, about 1 1/2 hours drive from Chiang Mai. The Park was established in 1995 by Sangduen ‘Lek’ Chailert to welcome elephants that suffered terrible injuries from accidents, abuse and ignorance during their working lives. Here, they can live each day in a peaceful environment. Elephant Nature Park offers an eco-tourism experience of conservation and education where tourists and local people can observe the elephants interacting naturally, but also feed them with fruit and vegetables, bathe them in the river, and walk with them in the bush.

We spent three days and two nights at the Park, maximising our time with the elephants and with the staff who were delighted to have guests from Sabah where elephants are not working and roam freely in the tropical forest. And I can now confirm that the mainland Asian elephant is definitely taller than our Bornean elephant...



Farina, with the elephants

By Dr Benoit Goossens