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Houston - We have no Problem

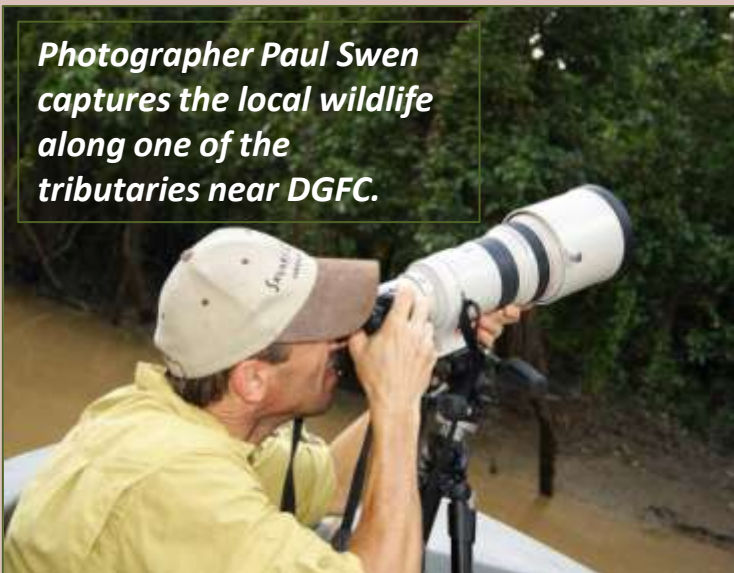
Old friends of director Benoit Goossens and DGFC; Peter and Sarah Riger came to visit this October; the couple have helped arrange much needed funding for DGFC to support projects such as the long term elephant project.

Peter, who visited DGFC previously in August 2008, is Director of Conservation and Science at Houston Zoo, and specialises in Non-Profit Organization Management Industry through his position as Field Conservation

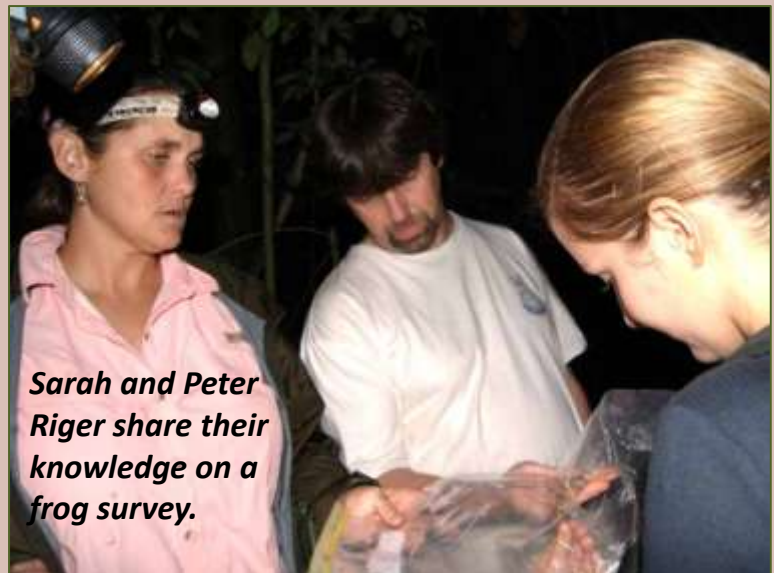
Program Manager, which he has held since January 2004. Peter has previously worked on projects such as the “Panama Amphibian Rescue and Conservation Project” and “Saving the Wild Chinchillas, Ecosystem Restoration North Central Chile”, the former came in handy when helping PTY student Alice plan her new project on Anuran (frog and toad) biodiversity. Peter’s wife Sarah also works at Houston Zoo as Carnivore Supervisor. She is concentrating on conservation projects

with big cats, (her favourite being the cheetahs!) and has helped raised money for DGFC by auctioning paintings by artists that are local to Houston Zoo – orang-utans and elephants. DGFC was lucky enough to have two of these paintings framed to brighten up the walls of the centre; one by an orang-utan and one by an elephant. To see more conservation projects and information on Houston Zoo, visit www.houstonzoo.org.

Photographer Paul Swen captures the local wildlife along one of the tributaries near DGFC.



Sarah and Peter Riger share their knowledge on a frog survey.



The third visitor, Paul Swen is a life-time professional photographer, who visited DGFC to snap the extensive wildlife, the photographs of which will be donated to Houston Zoo to enhance its advertisement and the

understanding of the wildlife to its visitors. He is dedicated to wildlife conservation, and hopes his photos will help to save “the nature that reigns”. Paul, who has worked “from the Himalayas to Hollywood, from hot dirty steel mills

to cool cautious CEOs, from starlets to presidents” photographs all areas and aspects of the world, a quality of his work that he strives to maintain. To see some snapshots of Paul’s work, go to www.paulswen.com.



The sun filtering through to the oxbow lake, a rhinoceros hornbill in all its glory, and a proboscis monkey not happy with having his photos taken!



© Paul Swen

Above, a mother and baby macaque on the banks of the river Kinabatangan. Below, the orang-utan who kindly set up nest in DG during their stay.



© Paul Swen



The three visitors were lucky enough to get up close to a resident female orang-utan that had made her nest for the night (conveniently) right next to Benoit's multi-story tree house. The guests were able to walk up the steps and see eye to eye with the female orang, providing a perfect angle for Paul to shoot her close-up. Peter left

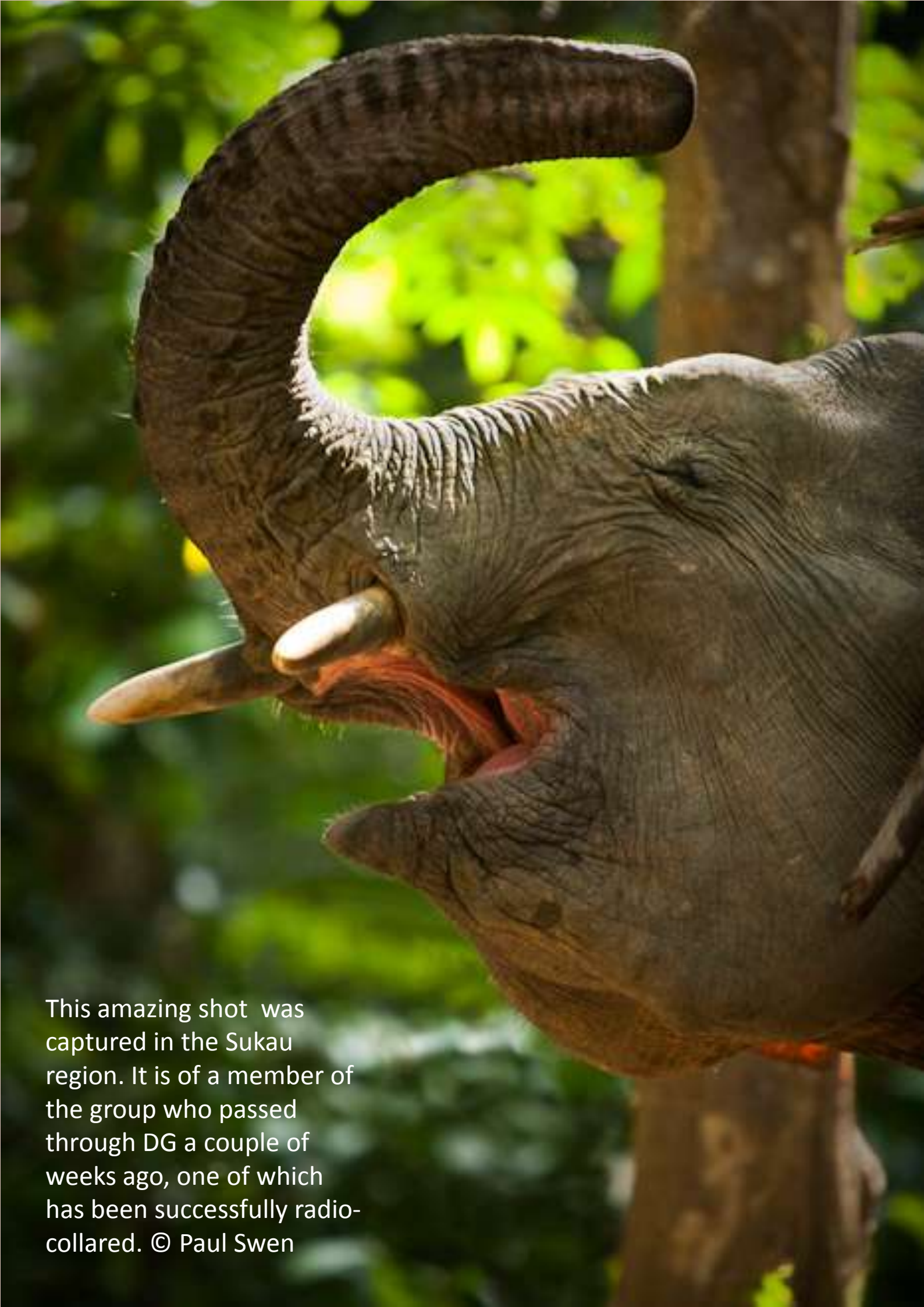
on the 16th to attend a conference, whilst Sarah and Paul stayed until the 18th, enjoying evening and early morning boat cruises (with excellent homemade doughnuts) which allowed them to sample the wildlife along the river. This included proboscis monkeys, macaques, river otters, monitor lizards and many species of impressive

birds, thanks to Research Assistant Budin who expertly weaved the boat through the narrow and fast-running tributaries.

DGFC hopes to have them all to stay again, fingers crossed for Paul that maybe next time the crocs won't be so camera shy!



Top left, Sarah and Carmen taking a hard earned break enjoying some of Reina's delicious doughnuts; top right, Budin navigating the Kinabatangan; bottom left, Carmen, Paul and Sarah happy after a successful river cruise with lots of wildlife sightings!



This amazing shot was captured in the Sukau region. It is of a member of the group who passed through DG a couple of weeks ago, one of which has been successfully radio-collared. © Paul Swen

Look What the Cat Dragged In...

Joanna Ross and Andrew Hearn paid a visit to DGFC on the 11th of November to scout out the area for potential research into wild cat biodiversity for the Bornean Wild Cat and Clouded Leopard Project. It is funded by The Clouded Leopard Project (supporting clouded leopard conservation and research) – to find out more about go to <http://cloudedleopard.org/default.aspx>.

The pair have been working at Danum Valley and Tabin Wildlife Reserve for the past three years on wild-cat research using camera trapping, with a great deal of success, as part of their Darwin Initiative project and are now looking to further their research in the Kinabatangan.

Camera trapping of wild cats has not yet been undertaken

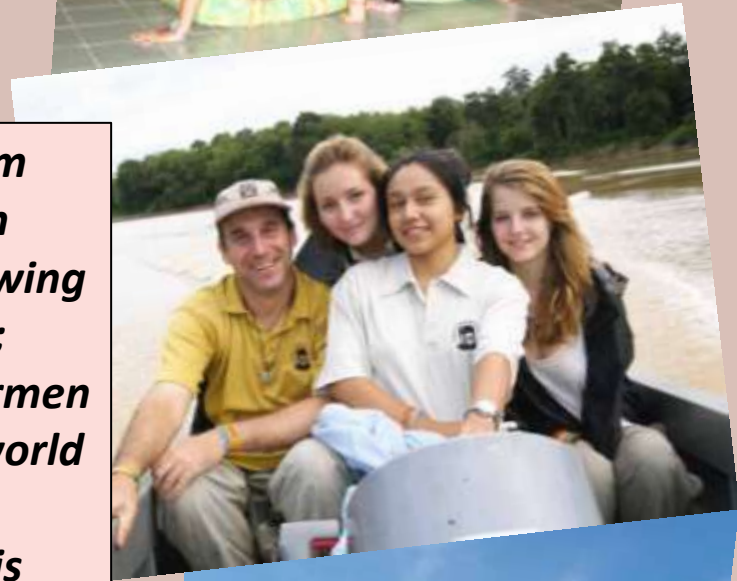
in the lower Kinabatangan, so their new findings, are sure to be interesting. During their stay, they were lucky enough to spot a wild cat of their own on their first trip out on an evening boat cruise led by director Benoit Goossens. The flat-headed cat (*Prionailurus planiceps*) was seen on the river bank of the Kinabatangan tributary, which they were particularly excited about as it was their first ever sighting! They also saw banded palm civet and a pretty big croc.

Jo and Andy set up three preliminary “Stealth Cam” cameras on the Yellow Trail around DGFC to see what they could see (see see) in flat areas near a path or a pool, which they said are most suitable for seeing cats. With the help of PTY students Jenny and Alice the memory cards will be checked and

replaced regularly to see if the hidden cameras have caught anything on film. Hopefully they will capture something other than the PTY students and Budin wandering past...! They plan to return next year and set up a whopping 80 cameras throughout DGFC to study the wild cat populations, as part of a larger project into the abundance and diversity of cats over the whole Kinabatangan. We hope that the surrounding area of DGFC will be suitable for Jo and Andy’s camera trap research, and that the local cats aren’t camera shy.

Left: Jo and Andy setting up the first camera trap. Right: PTY student Jenny learning how the cameras work





Clockwise from top left: Budin and Alice showing off their guns; Jenny and Carmen viewing the world upside down; Benoit with his girls!; The oxbow lake; Carmen dominating the chilli challenge; frogs; Budin cooking up some delicious treats; The Kinabatangan



Species of Interest: The Blue-Headed Pitta

The PTY students and volunteer Carmen bumped into the small male Pitta (right), which was tucked up in a ball sleeping, when they were wandering through the undergrowth of DGFC on their nightly frog catching quest...



NAME: Blue-Headed Pitta

APPEARANCE: With a conspicuous white bar on the black wings, maroon-red back, bright blue crown and tail, black upper breast and eye-stripe contrasting white throat; the Blue-Headed Pitta was hard to miss. The female is duller with brown-ish upper parts, blue tail, pale brown under parts and pale grey throat. The iris is grey, bill black and feet horn.

DISTRIBUTION: This species which is endemic to Borneo, occurs throughout the island in lowland forests up to 600m and is locally common.

BEHAVIOUR: It searches for insects under fallen leaves on the ground, which explains why we bumped into it catching 40 winks on a branch near the forest floor.

A Week in Paradise...

The PTY students were lucky enough to fly to Bali this November for a week of beaches, bordies, and Bintang.

The predominantly Hindu island is one of the 33 provinces that make up the lower string of islands of Indonesia, and is described by Lonely Planet as “a brand unto itself, an island that has long out grown its cramped spot on the map to become the very epitome of the tropical paradise”. The

girls spent the week in Kuta, the budget accommodation capital of Indonesia, enjoying a well-earned break by the sea. Kuta has become the playground for 18-30 year olds from all over the world over the last 10 years, coinciding with the corresponding boom in the popularity of the life style that is surfing. When heading to Kuta expect nothing more than fast-pace, live-for-the-moment fun; do-now-think-later.

Other parts of the island that the girls were able to see could indeed be described as paradise, from idyllic beaches of Uluwatu, to winding country roads with artistic local Hindu temples and colourful celebrations, to the coastal temple of Tanah lot and quiet surf spots along the west coast; Bali is surely one of the most beautiful places on earth.

Left: Alice and Jenny in front of a rice paddy. Right: a perfect end to a perfect week.



Orang-utan Conservation Colloquium

On the 1st and 2nd of October, Benoit Goossens attended an Orang-utan Conservation Colloquium themed “Developing Models for Orang-utan Conservation Within Fragmented Ecosystems”, at the Shangri-la’s Rasa Ria Resort. The colloquium was jointly organized by the Sabah Wildlife Department, the Borneo Conservation Trust, the NGO Hutan, the Malaysian Palm Oil Council, the Sabah Land and Survey Department and the Sabah Forestry Department. The colloquium aimed to present and discuss current knowledge about orang-utan status within the oil palm landscape of eastern Sabah with representatives from governments, private industry, NGOs, scientists and media from Malaysia and from the international community; to discuss possible models that could be developed for orang-utan conservation in fragmented habitats; and to produce and endorse an official resolution that will be tabled before the State Government and will present follow-up actions to minimize the negative impacts of habitat fragmentation as a result of agriculture development.

Danau Girang Field Centre is located in the Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary, where there is a master plan to establish a wildlife corridor along the Kinabatangan River. Genetic data from

previous work carried out by Benoit Goossens and collaborators including Dr Marc Ancrenaz, from the NGO Hutan, showed the importance of corridor establishment along the Kinabatangan to restore gene flow between isolated orang-utan populations. At the end of the colloquium, Minister of Tourism, Culture and Environment Datuk Masidi Manjun, while accepting the final resolution from the participants said “We are here together to do one thing, to make sure future generations can see wildlife in their natural habitats and enjoy what we are able to enjoy now”.

Sabah has 11,000 orang-utans with a majority living outside protected areas, this picture shows a mother and child living within the protected area of the Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary.



As part of the conservation effort into further understanding of Orang-utan behaviour and ecology, Sabah Wildlife Department have now successfully implanted transmitters into three Orang-utans at Sepilok Orang-utan Rehabilitation Centre. Research into this technique first began in March this year, when scientists Dr. Christian Waltzer and Dr. Thierry Petit performed preliminary experiments in France with Orang-utans in captivity. Fortunately, the method was successful, and so the Oreo-sized transmitters have now been implanted into the thick fatty tissue of the neck of these three Orang-utans at Sepilok. This method is more successful than radio collaring as Orang-utans are clever enough to be able to remove radio collars easily, and

transmitters are able to be turned on and off by magnets without the need for unnecessary surgery on the Orang-utans. By tracking their movements, researchers can gain a greater understanding of Orang-utan conservation, and use data gained from transmitters to support the need for Orang-utan habitat conservation in the ongoing battle for rainforest survival. Danau Girang Field Centre and Hutan are collaborating with the Sabah Wildlife Department on this project and have provided radio-transmitters and antennae to follow the orang-utans after release in the forest. Hutan has also carried out a survey in Tabin Wildlife Reserve to identify the best release site for these orang-utans.



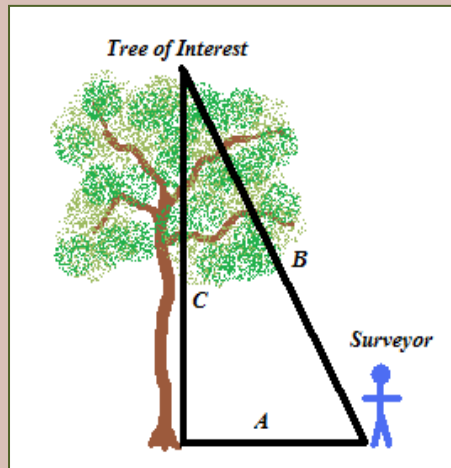
The transmitter implanted into the orang-utans are 35 millimetres in diameter and 10 millimetres wide.



An x-ray of the neck region of one of the orang-utans shows the transmitter in the fatty tissue and away from the skeleton of the primate.

How To: Conduct a Vegetation Survey

When an animal is sighted in a tree, a vegetation survey gives important information about the area the animal was found in, which gives clues to the kind of environment the species is likely to be found in again. It involves measuring dimensions of all the trees above 1m within a 5 metre radius of the tree in which the animal was sighted.



1. Locate tree in question from compass coordinates given.
2. Measure a 5m circle around the tree
3. For each sapling over 1m tall, measure the breast height diameter.
4. By using a clinometer, the height (C) of a tree can be calculated. It works by measuring the angle from the observer's eye to the top of the tree (B), and then using the distance of the observer from the tree (A) and the height of observer's eye, Pythagoras theorem allows the height of the tree (C) to be calculated.
5. After each tree has been measured, scratch some bark off to prevent trees being re-measured.

Ridzwan Ali Returns...

Ridzwan Ali, a UMS graduate from Peninsular Malaysia is well and truly familiar with DGFC after spending several months in the dry season here this year working side by side with Rachel Munds on the long-term nocturnal primate project. After gaining a degree in Primate Conservation Ecology he wishes to pursue this interest further by undertaking an MA at Oxford Brookes University. By spending time at DGFC over the following months, Ridzwan will hopefully gain all the data he needs to write his dissertation once he gains his place at Oxford Brookes.

He is currently performing nocturnal primate surveys along the trails of DGFC, recording mammal sightings. After having only been back for a few days he has already sighted a tarsier! The traps which are currently being modified and hoisted up around DGFC by PTY student Jen (and her team of merry workers) were originally designed and made with the help of Ridzwan. His wide knowledge of rainforest biodiversity and the need for its conservation makes Ridzwan a valuable student to Malaysia. If you ever need help on scientific names, Ridzwan is your man.



*The tarsier
Ridzwan
spotted
along the
yellow trail
in DGFC*



*Ridzwan
cutting
back an
overgrown
trail*



The studios, where long term volunteers and important guests live.

EXTREME MAKEOVER: DGFC

For 6 weeks, contractors worked hard to give DGFC a new lease of life. The jetty was slowly sinking into the Kinabatangan; so much needed repair work was done to keep it afloat. The main centre building had a shiny new coat of

paint, a total re-wiring of the electrics, and new tiles put down on the stairs outside. The hostel and studios were also re-wired and then painted a lovely bright shade of orange—no missing them now! They also undertook the major

task of replacing all the wooden stilts for Benoit's tree house, so DGFC is now looking smarter and functioning better than ever thanks to the Sabah Wildlife Department!

Mel drops in for some Jungle Fun!

Melissa Schiele paid a visit to DGFC this November for just 3 nights, to get a greater idea of the ins and outs of running a field centre as she hopes one day to be able to set up a facility of her own like DGFC. Melissa who is a Geology with Science Communication graduate from Royal Holloway now works at the Natural History Museum in London as a paleontological conservator, but is planning to embark on a research career in marine biology and shark fossils. After contacting director Benoit when she happened to come across a friend's

photos of their trip to the Kinabatangan, she decided to come and have a look for herself. She was greeted by the thunderous storms that frequent the rainforest on her arrival in the evening, but was able to spend the next day exploring the forest with the two PTY students and researcher Ridzwan. In the afternoon she navigated the thick slippery mud of the river banks with the PTY girls and Benoit to take samples of Proboscis monkey poo for DNA analysis back at Cardiff Uni. She was happy to have not been the victim of leech attack, and was very much

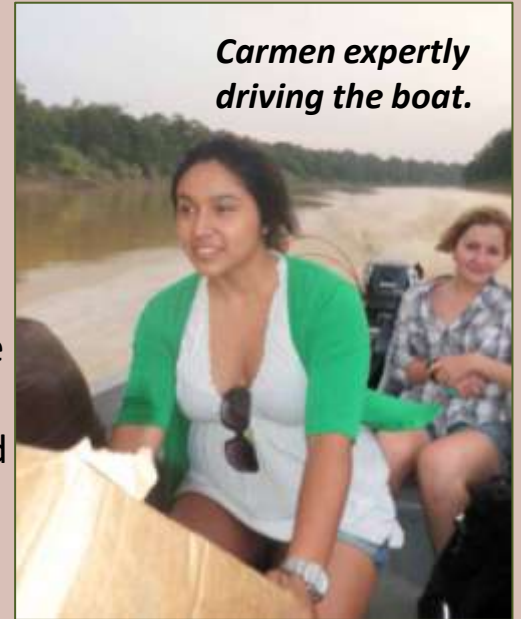
pleased to have seen a few crocodiles lying on the Kinabatangan banks; "oooh and we saw crocodiles – that's nearly a shark!" as well as the local monitor lizard; "and we saw Cash the monitor lizard, he was pretty pimp doing his thing." She will be taking back her photos, experiences and memories to the Natural History Museum, and can now use the knowledge from the field centre to help her set up her own, ideally in Papua New Guinea or Australia. We wish her the best of luck! (shotgun visiting her in Australia).



Return to Qatar

The 14th November saw staff and students bid volunteer Carmen a fond farewell. After her 3 months in the jungle she was ready to return home to hot baths, home cooked vegetarian dishes, and a cuddle from her Mum! During her stay she helped the PTY students with their projects; assisting on

night surveys, a gruelling trapping regime, and enjoyed catching frogs. Inspired by her time here, she has enrolled on a photography course, and plans to study for a degree in the field of environmental science and journalism. Thanks to Carmen for all your help, we will miss you!



Carmen expertly driving the boat.

Did they really say that.....?!

Alice: How does he know which way Mecca is?

Jen: With a compass.

Alice: WOW you can get a special Mecca compass!?

Alice: Wow PIZZA I'd forgot that even existed...

IN OTHER NEWS...

•The 3 volunteers had a chili eating contest; Jenny failed miserably, Carmen and Alice battled it out with Carmen emerging triumphant. Budin then showed them how it was done by munching down 2 without batting an eyelid.

•Another group of around 30 elephants passed through DGFC whilst Alice and Jenny were in Bali this November causing some mild mischief between stomping on a few facilities and knocking about pots of paint. Luckily staff were on hand after their departure to help clean up the mess, however vandalistic the local elephants are, they are always pleased to be seen at DGFC.

CONSERVATION CORNER...

Wild Cats of Borneo

Three of the five wild cats endemic to Borneo; the Sunda Clouded Leopard, the Bay Cat and the Flat-Headed Cat have now been classified by the IUCN (*International Union for Conservation of Nature*) as **ENDANGERED.**

Four of these five wild cats found in Sabah (the Sunda Clouded Leopard (*Neofelis diardi*), the Bay Cat (*Pardofelis badia*), the Flat Headed Cat (*Prionailurus planiceps*), the Leopard Cat (*Prionailurus bengalensis*) and the Marbled Cat (*Pardofelis marmorata*)) have recently been proven to be threatened by habitat loss due to encroaching palm oil plantations. This is thanks to extensive research undertaken by Jo Ross and Andrew Hearn (see page 7, “Look What the Cat Dragged In...”)

through the UK's Global Canopy Program's Bornean Wild Cat and Clouded Leopard Project. These five species found in Borneo have been studied in five locations in Sabah over the past three years; Ulu Segama Forest Reserve, Danum Valley Conservation Area, Malua Forest Reserve, Tabin Wildlife Reserve, and an oil palm plantation, with more than 17,000 nights of camera trapping helping to reach this conclusion.

This in depth research

which was the first of its kind undertaken in Sabah, showed that only one of the five wild cats; the Leopard Cat, is able to utilise the palm oil plantations, the other four residing only in primary and disturbed forests. The plantations seem to be a no-go area for the other four species of wild cats, even just for migration, supporting yet another reason for protecting the dwindling remaining rainforest.



A flat-headed cat in captivity. Very little is known about this species, but that it likely hunts frequently by water. © Jim Sanderson.



***Above: The marbled cat: this species has never been fully studied. Very little is known of its ecology. © Global Canopy Programme. Photo by: Jo Ross and Andrew Hearn.
Below: The leopard cat in Borneo is considered a unique subspecies. © Global Canopy Programme. Photo by: Jo Ross and Andrew Hearn.***



“NO OTHER PLACE HAS A HIGHER PERCENTAGE OF THREATENED WILD CATS - (BUT) NOT ONE OF THESE WILD CATS POSES A DIRECT THREAT TO HUMANS”

However, the palm oil plantations are not the only thing Sabah’s wild cats have to worry about. Jim Sanderson; an expert on small cats pointed out the other threats facing these endangered animals *“unmitigated massive habitat loss caused by palm oil plantations, unregulated destructive logging practices including*

widespread small-scale illegal logging, unchecked poaching even in conservation areas and wildlife reserves, destruction of fresh water rivers and streams from logging, dumping of debris from oil palm plantations, bottom dredging for gold, and pollution caused by the use of streams as sewers, and the

widespread use of nets for fishing”. He also points out how illogically close to extinction these wild cats are compared to other places in the world *“No other place has a higher percentage of threatened wild cats! ...[but] not one of these wild cats poses a direct threat to humans.”*



Bay Cat: © Global Canopy Programme. Photo by: Jo Ross and Andrew Hearn.



***Sunda clouded leopard (the largest cat species in Borneo) caught in a camera trap:
© Global Canopy Programme. Photo by: Jo Ross and Andrew Hearn.***

Research undertaken by Ross and Hearn has had a particular focus on the Sunda clouded leopard (only recently classified as a separate species to the Peninsular clouded leopard) using not only the camera traps, but also following individuals by radio collaring. As the top predator in Borneo, this species serves as an umbrella species for designing conservation strategies targeting

extensive habitat areas. The figures Ross and Hearn came up with were these: for clouded leopards to sustain a viable population of just 250, they require an area of 3,000 to 8,600 km². Rainforest is being lost at around 1,000km² a year in Malaysian Borneo according to a study from 2005, so without extensive forest management and conservation working with the Malaysian Government

and oil palm plantation owners, four out of the five of Borneo's wild cats won't be around for long. Luckily such conservation is beginning to be underway thanks to the hard work carried out by the Sabah State Government through its Sabah Wildlife Department and many other organisations.

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.*

Danau Girang Field Centre

Lot 6
The Jungle
Lower Kinabatangan Wildlife
Sanctuary
Sabah

Email:

danaugirangfieldcentre@yahoo.com

*Editors: Jenny Shepperson and Alice
Evans*

*(sheppersonjl@cf.ac.uk,
evansa27@cf.ac.uk)*

*Director of Publication: Benoit
Goossens*



**Danau
Girang Field
Centre**