

The Jungle Times



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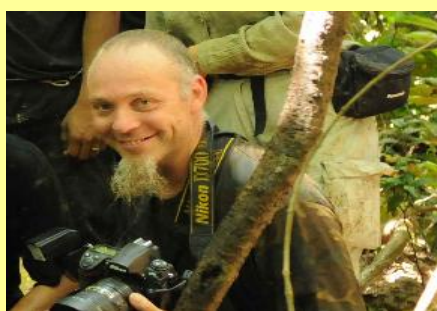
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Aqeela the Elephant gets a collar!



To our excitement this month the elephants have been fairly close the centre, with a few even coming onto some of our trails, resulting in the project run by the Sabah Wildlife Department, HUTAN and DGFC to come down to the centre to attempt to track and collar the elephants. Members of The Elephant Conservation Unit (ECU), the Sabah Wildlife Rescue Unit and DGFC, were all involved in successfully satellite collaring a female elephant (given the name Aqeela, after PhD student Nurzhafarina Othman's 6 month old daughter) in Lot 7 of the Lower Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary.

They use satellite and VHF technology to locate collared elephants such as this one and are currently testing a new unit, providing 24 GPS locations per day and using a local network to send the data to a server three times per day.

The project is funded by the US Fish and Wildlife Service Asian Elephant Conservation Fund, Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund, Elephant Family, Houston Zoo and Columbus Zoo. Part of the project is also to build the capacity of young scientists and conservationists in Sabah, and so it involved many enthusiastic and passionate student volunteers, which each had their role to play in the help of collaring the elephant. The data collected from this project will provide important information on the remnants of suitable habitat for the species, and therefore allow conservation departments to protect and rebuild crucial areas of the region, of which include landscape connectivity along the Kinabatangan river.

Three PhD students, associated with DGFC, enrol at Cardiff University

A Malaysian student, **Nurzhafarina Othman**, was also involved in the team of elephant-collaring and has a great interest in environmental conservation. She has recently registered her PhD at Cardiff University, after graduating from University Malaysia Sabah and will be tracking the collared female Bornean elephant to observe social interactions and mating systems, having gained experience from her trainee work with the Darwin Initiative project with Michael Bruford and Benoit Goossens. Farina obtained a scholarship from Houston Zoo. She will be co-supervised by Benoit Goossens and Rob Thomas during the project.



Bruford and Benoit Goossens. Farina

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Dr Senthivel Nathan, from Sabah (Malaysia), is the Chief Wildlife Veterinarian for the Sabah Wildlife Department and was present to assist the elephant collaring. He has many years of experience working with wildlife in Sabah, especially elephants and Sumatran rhinoceros. He is starting his PhD on the conservation genetics of the proboscis monkey in Sabah, under the co-supervision of Benoit Goossens and Michael Bruford, and with funding from Sime Darby Foundation and their Big 9 Program.

Penny Gardner, a British citizen, carried out her Master of Research at the University of Aberdeen with a NERC-funded studentship. During her PhD, she will work on the population ecology and social organization of the banteng, an endangered species of wild cattle in Sabah. She will use satellite telemetry, remote camera trapping and molecular analysis. Houston Zoo also funds her scholarship and she will be co-supervised by Dr Benoit Goossens and Professor Michael Bruford.



Local Orangutans get a new Bridge



After previous successes of bridges used for orangutan crossings in tributaries near Sukau village, and after a lot of planning, an orangutan bridge was set up across Sungai Takala, around 8 km up river from DGFC. The Borneo Conservation Trust (BCT), Japan, funded the project and with them Director Simon Amos of Ropeskills Sdn Bhd, brought along a couple of his professional riggers to help set up the bridge. The bridge took a total of 3 days to set up and stretched across the 40m wide river and was put 12m high in the trees. Camera traps were also attached to their trunks so that evidence of the bridge being used by orangutans could hopefully be captured. The PTY students were trained to climb up to the bridge and will be checking the Bushnell cameras throughout the duration of the project. This bridge is a great asset to conservation, as it's intention is to prevent in-breeding of orangutans within the fragmented forest. Hopefully the bridge will be a success and there will be a lot of orangutan pictures to come!



Visit of a PhD student from Birmingham University



Liz and Dave are analysing soil and water samples. Most of the samples were taken from small side rivers and streams off the Kinabatangan, excluding the Ox-bow lake. They spent a lot of time in the lab for the analysis looking specifically at denitrification, nitrogen assimilation and other geochemical processes. They stayed just over a week collecting the samples and analysing them before heading back to Sukau.

Thibaut's Tree Team returns

Three members from HUTAN came to continue work on surveying the tree plots around DG, including taking measurements and updating the data records of the different tree species in the different habitats and monitoring them over time. This project is funded by the Waterloo Foundation in UK. They also spent their evenings and free time entertaining the DGFC staff with their guitar skills and local toys and puzzles!

Orangutan identification at DG



A group of students at Cornwall College Newquay are interested in trying to identify individual oranges at DG. The students, who are about to take – or have just taken – a unit of Primate Biology, are interested in the idea that it might be possible to identify individuals based on ‘full face’ images.

Benoit has agreed to start a logbook of sightings and to link this to a database of images to try to investigate how often different animals pass through the area around the field centre. To start things off, we would like to gather all the full-face images of different animals that anyone has into a collection that can be held at DG for reference.

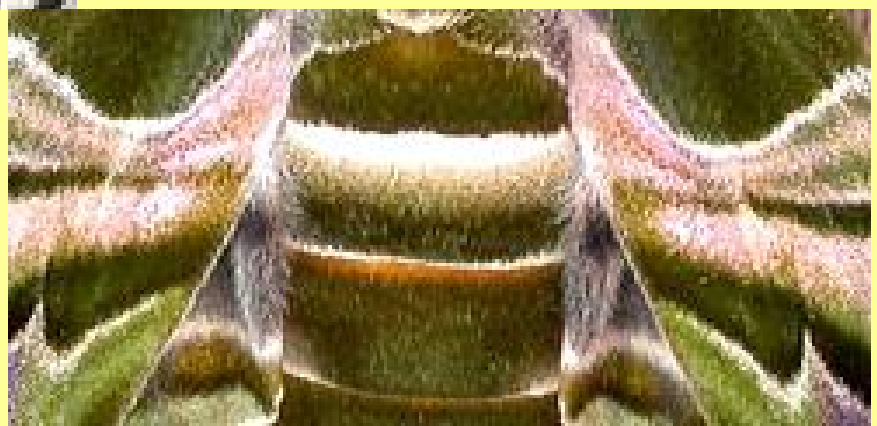
If you have any ‘full-face’ pictures that may be of use please send them, along with any information you have on: date taken, time of day, approximate location, number in any ‘groups’, plus any other useful information to: orang@cornwall.ac.uk

Rudi's Portfolio





New in this issue – which animal is this?



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

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