



Issue No. 149
July - August 2023

Instagram: @danaugirang
Facebook: Danau Girang Field Centre



THE JUNGLE TIMES

The independent
newsletter of the
Danau Girang Field
Centre, Est 2008.



This Issue:

- 📍 Maz receives the Merdeka Award Grant for International Attachment! (Pages 2 & 3)
- 📍 Cardiff University Field Course (Page 4)
- 📍 The PTYs yearlong stay comes to an end! (Pages 5 - 8)
- 📍 Royal Holloway Field Course (Page 9)
- 📍 Volunteer Experiences (Pages 10 & 11)
- 📍 Publication Corner (Page 11)
- 📍 Photo Highlights (Page 12)

Maz receives the Merdeka Award Grant for International Attachment!



Credit: Merdeka Award

Our very own PhD student and research officer Amaziasizamoria Jumail (Maz) was recently awarded the prestigious Merdeka Award Grant for International Attachment! Maz sat down with one of our students Rhys, to talk about her achievement and you can read the full interview below.

Rhys: Congratulations on this achievement Maz you must be feeling so proud! First of all, for anyone who isn't familiar what is the Merdeka Award?

Maz: Thank you it has been a very exciting time! So the Merdeka Award Grant for International Attachment is designed to make it possible for qualified and deserving Malaysians, between the ages 22-35 to engage in short-term collaborative projects/programmes of up to three months, at an internationally-recognised host institution in select disciplines (education, arts, sports, community/social work, environment, health, science and technology). The attachment aims to help the recipient build on his or her expertise by undergoing a learning experience in an institution or organisation of international repute and improving the Grantee's body of work and achievements. The end goal is to promote thought leadership and innovation, foster a culture of excellence and encourage a world-view.

Rhys: So tell me about the applications process, why did you decide to apply and what did the process look like?

Maz: I decided to apply because I thought my work as a PhD student and manager of Regrow Borneo might give me a chance because I feel the studies we are conducting at DGFC have a significant impact on the environment. I submitted my application on April 28th, 2023 and I was selected as a semi finalist the day after. For the semi final, 21 out of 160 applicants were selected to go to Kuala Lumpur for a workshop on storytelling for pitching success and interview for the next round. For the pitching interview, we were given 5 minutes each to pitch our proposal in front of the panels. From the pitching interview, nine were selected for the final. For the final, all nine of us were asked to submit a 2-3 minute video to the Merdeka Award Trust Board of Trustees on our project. For the final selection, I was selected together with four other applicants. I was then notified I was a finalist on the 23rd of June and finally, the official announcement was made on the 25th of August where I was selected as one of the recipients of the Merdeka Award Grant for International Attachment 2023.

(Continued on next page....)

Rhys: How did you enjoy the experience? You must have felt quite nervous I would imagine?

Maz: It was a great experience and I am grateful for it. Meeting the other 21 semi-finalists during the workshop was an experience I would never forget and it felt like I have known them for ages because everyone was nice and it was a beautiful encounter. It was great meeting other people with the same mindset and vision and mission. I was indeed very nervous during the interview because I was afraid I would forget everything due to my anxiety but it went well!

Rhys: Then came the award ceremony on August 25th in KL receiving the award from the Sultan. That must have been a very exciting day with your family in attendance too?

Maz: Yes I accepted the award from His Royal Highness Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah, the Sultan of Perak Darul Ridzuan, who is the Royal Patron and Chairman of the Merdeka Award. When I was accepting the award from the Sultan, I was anxious I would make a mistake, especially during the bow, but it went very well and it was a very humbling experience to receive the award from the Sultan. My husband, younger brother and dad came to the ceremony and they were proud of me. It touched my heart seeing my dad trying to take pictures of me among the many journalists.

Rhys: You were also the first Sabahan to receive the Award which is a fantastic achievement too! How does it feel to be the first Sabahan to receive the award and would you have any words of advice for anybody thinking of applying in the future?

Maz: Winning the award grant as the first Sabahan is a tremendous honor. It represents a milestone not only for myself but for the community and region I come from. It's not solely my personal achievement; rather, it's an achievement for the entire community. To other Sabahans, I would like to say, never stop learning because life is a learning process. Be resilient. There will be obstacles, but resilience is essential. Do not be afraid to fail because failures teach us how flexibility and adaptability. Finally, stay grounded humble, and grateful. Do not forget your roots and the community that supported you.

Rhys: Finally, with the aim of this award being to allow Malaysians to complete a three month attachment program somewhere, where are you planning on using your grant to go and why?

Maz: Yes so selected recipients will stand to benefit from full tuition fee, accommodation and travel during the short-term attachment period of up to three months, upon acceptance at the recipient's institution of choice. For me, it will cover all my expenses in Mexico which is where I plan to go. In the proposal, I highlighted the importance of including as many indicators as feasible to study the impacts of forest restoration on biodiversity, forest structure and ecosystem function. I also highlighted that in Malaysia, although there is a lot of restoration efforts, we lack large-scale assessments on the indicators above. Therefore, I do not have a model to refer to. The attachment with Mexico will expose me to novel methods which can enhance my work in Borneo. Mexico and Malaysia face similar challenges in terms of deforestation, climate change, and the socio-economic impacts driven by them hence, the reason why Mexico was chosen. Besides that, this attachment will also encourage South-south Cooperation which is highly encouraged by the United Nations.



Credit: JiaZhen Lim

Cardiff University Field Course



Credit: Zara Calvert

Cardiff University returned for their annual field course from the 24 June to 8 July. There were eight biological science undergraduates and four global conservation and ecology masters students who were all excited to spend two weeks intensively immersing themselves in tropical biodiversity research techniques.

The first week of the field course involved undertaking Jungle Survival training, getting experience with some of the ongoing projects and undertaking seminars about taxonomy and research techniques. This included: pangolin and leopard cat tracking, primate and night boat surveys, forest walks, small mammal trapping, tree measuring with botanical plots and seminars on entomology and bird mist netting. Ornithologist Suzanne Tommasi was kind enough to lend her time again to run the bird mist netting surveys, which were a particular highlight amongst the students.

The second week saw students design and collect data for their own projects, with topics such as: butterfly predation by birds, primate sleeping sites, orthoptera (crickets and grasshoppers) comparisons between different grassy areas, wading birds and frog surveys. Despite the intensity of the two weeks, the students thoroughly enjoyed engaging with jungle research and seeing the spectacular wildlife on offer such as the Orangutans, primates and several large saltwater crocodiles.



Credit: Rhys Davies



Credit: Bryce Johnson

The PTY's yearlong stay comes to an end!



Credit: Rhiannon Peacock

The month of August saw the four professional training year (PTY) and two graduate students from Cardiff University begin to leave after their yearlong adventure at DGFC, having arrived together on the 9th September 2022. When asked to reflect on their time - here were a few of their thoughts!

Rhiannon Peacock



“My original goal with coming to the field centre was to learn valuable field skills and gain experience working in one of the most incredible ecosystems on Earth – and the last year definitely gave me that! There were many challenges to overcome but overall, I can look back at my experience at DGFC and just feel so grateful for the amazing opportunities I had. From watching and hearing a herd of elephants directly outside our bedroom window to seeing a wild baby pangolin, this year has been unforgettable. More than anything, I’m grateful for the skills this year has given me to move forward in my career and I’m excited to see what the next chapter brings! I hope to return to Sabah very soon and continue working in this beautiful and diverse part of the world!”

Continued on next page...

Jack Gibbon

“I initially came to DGFC nearly a year ago looking to test myself in an unfamiliar and challenging environment, as well as to determine whether conservation research was a career I would be interested in pursuing. Almost a year later I am searching for research assistant positions in New Zealand, so it is fair to say my time in DGFC helped nurture a passion for monitoring and preserving species into a desire to make conservation research my profession. Collecting data for my own research project was a notable but exciting experience, particularly because it was my first time due to the COVID pandemic cancelling my field courses in university. I thoroughly enjoyed my time and while it was a challenge, the things I have been able to observe and participate in are truly once in a lifetime.”



Zara Calvert

“In a blink of an eye a year has already passed and what a year it has been! I was so nervous going into my placement year but I am at the end already. This year has been an amazing experience where I have learnt not only about research but also about myself and what I want from life. I am so grateful to be a part of all the PhD projects and research projects that were conducted here and a special thank you to the management team for being so helpful and kind to us! The dedication of the DG team really made the field centre a great learning experience and I feel more confident than ever to pursue conservation. This year has confirmed that I want to do research and explore more of what the world has to offer. This year hasn't been without challenges both physically and mentally but I would not change the year. A big thank you for the staff members making DGFC feel truly like home and all the fabulous students and volunteers who have stayed throughout the year. You have all made the year exciting and fun and I am glad to have been even a small part of your journey!”



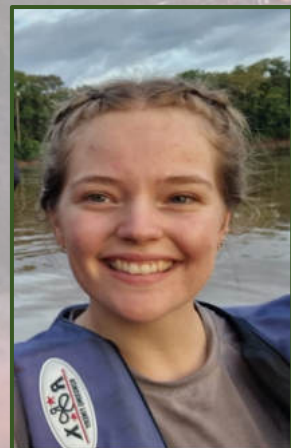
Hannah Shapland



“I came to DGFC to immerse myself in the jungle and explore what it means to be a tropical researcher. This year gave me an amazing insight into the challenges and opportunities that come with research and conservation. I have always wanted to research frogs and this year I was lucky enough to conduct my own project sampling Anura. One of my personal highlights included a multi-species breeding event, in which many different frog calls and jumping individuals surrounded me. This area can be difficult for field work with the widespread flooding and occasional elephant herd. However, this provided incredible personal experiences like these frog breeding events and waking up to wild elephants outside my bedroom window. I have left DGFC with my enthusiasm for herpetology and a big appreciation for everyone at DGFC and all its work.”

Bryce Johnson

“I wanted to come to DGFC to see if research was something I could do. I have learnt so much here and am now on the path to a career in wildlife research! I knew I would enjoy it here but I have surprised myself at how well I have adapted to life in the jungle, I love it here and I’m already planning on returning soon! There are so many incredible memories I have made with the amazing people here but one of my favourites has been joining Amanda’s cat team and running around the plantation in the dark trying to catch a leopard cat! Also, being woken up by elephants outside my bedroom window was something I will never forget. Celebrating Hari Raya by visiting the homes of the Field Assistants was my favourite day outside of the centre. I would encourage everyone who likes wildlife to try a PTY like this, I am so grateful for the experience I’ve had here!”



Rhys Davies



“When I heard about the opportunity to live in the rainforest for a year and gain fieldwork experience in such an amazing environment I jumped at the chance. I would be lying if I said it hasn’t been a very challenging year but overall, it’s been an incredible opportunity and one I wouldn’t change for the world. Learning different fieldwork techniques, taking part in different people’s projects, meeting and interacting with the constantly revolving door of visitors and volunteers and the countless memorable animal encounters has been a thoroughly enjoyable and rewarding experience. Carrying out my own project for the first time was a cool learning process and it’s safe to say I have developed a newfound appreciation for butterflies.”

A feast was enjoyed to mark the end of the year...



(Credit: Maz)



(Credit: Maz)

Royal Holloway Field Course



(Credit: Zara Calvert)

Seven undergraduate students from Royal Holloway, University of London, returned from 21 August to 2 September for their annual tropical biodiversity field course.

The group took part in the normal suite of available fieldwork such as camera trapping, boat surveys, mist netting and were able to take part in tree planting at Sungai Pin as well as a visit to the Supu caves! The field course is part of an animal behaviour module with various individual student projects focusing on behavioural aspects of different wildlife such as millipedes and fire ants.

Some highlights for the group included capturing a banded linsang on the camera traps and the spotting of yellow throated martens at the jetty!



Orangutan spotting! (Credit: Zara Calvert)



(Credit: Bryce Johnson)



Tree planting (Credit: Rayzigerson Chai)



(Credit: Rayzigerson Chai)

Volunteer Experiences

Liliana Snedden

Second year Cardiff University Zoology undergraduate Lili spent three weeks volunteering at DGFC in July after completing the Gaya Island marine ecology field course near Kota Kinabalu. Having heard about DGFC through lectures and not wanting to leave Borneo without experiencing its famous rainforests, Lili was keen to volunteer and get involved.



“My time at DGFC has been very rewarding, I have helped with a broad range of research projects from pangolin tracking to pitfall sampling and small carnivore trapping. All providing me with a chance to better understand a variety of field sampling techniques and directly apply knowledge I have gained from my course. I have found it very inspiring, and it has really expanded my ideas about what I might pursue after university. One of my main highlights was seeing a wild female orangutan up close, such a magical creature that I had always wanted to see, a truly memorable moment. Also, as an amateur ornithologist, the bird life around DG was definitely another of my favourite aspects. My experience at DG has been extremely beneficial and I am leaving feeling much more assured of my plans for the future. It has additionally served as great practice for my upcoming Professional Training Year in the jungles of Costa Rica and I now feel far more prepared for what to expect and what to pack.”

Eurydice Pefferkorn

Third year French veterinary student Eurydice, spent two months volunteering at DGFC during June and July to gain experience in the field of wildlife conservation.

“I am a third-year student at the National Veterinary School of Toulouse. I went on an internship at DGFC as part of my studies to discover the activities of a veterinarian in research. This experience was particularly important and eagerly-awaited for me, as my goal would be to work in wildlife conservation, and being a veterinary researcher is a career path that could fulfill my desires. So, I chose this centre for the diversity of the projects taking place there, and the area made it a privileged ground in terms of richness of biodiversity, which is unfortunately endangered due to increasing deforestation... During this internship, I came face to face with myself and my physical skills while working in the hostile terrain of the jungle. This made me realize that I really enjoyed being out in the field and confirmed my desire to work there in the future. I liked the diversity of the projects I was involved in, and I got to see many ways of doing conservation research such as ecotoxicology and radio tracking.”



Simon Rohner & Moritz Jochum

Wildlife veterinarians Simon and Moritz spent three weeks volunteering during August. Simon is interested in the anthropogenic effects on wildlife and population health, having studied the Eurasian otter for his PhD. Moritz is currently studying for his PhD focusing on emerging infectious diseases in Sub-Saharan Africa, working with Western Chimpanzees and Western Lowland Gorillas. In their own words on why they chose to visit “We were looking for a nice place to go to for vacation this year and apparently both of us prefer to getting eaten up by mosquitoes rather than relaxing on a beach, so we decided to apply for a stay at DGFC!”.



(Left to right) Jerry, Simon, Maz & Moritz

“We surely expected it to be a nice place boosting of wildlife but definitely weren’t prepared for the beautiful setting, the lovely team and loads of unforgettable experiences. Since there are two vets currently working at DGFC, we tried to join them as often as possible during capture and sampling procedures. We got to participate in the collaring of leopard cats and the sampling of civets and small mammals as well as joining the necropsies of a pangolin and a proboscis monkey. Besides this, we participated in all other activities and learned a lot about reforestation aims, ecotoxicology, radio tracking etc. Time flies at DGFC and three weeks passed incredibly quick - we learned a lot here and made new friends. In sum, it was just a great experience and we hope to be back at some point in the future!”

Publication Corner

JOURNAL ARTICLE

The fast-food effect: costs of being a generalist in a human-dominated landscape

Available Open Access: <https://academic.oup.com/conphys/article/11/1/coad055/7242363#>

A new study by Guerrero-Sanchez et al. 2023 published in Conservation Physiology used the Asian water monitor lizard (*Varanus salvator*) as a model species for understanding the health consequences when living in an anthropogenically dominated landscape. Agricultural plantations are dominated by generalist species who benefit from the reliability of certain food resources; however, these deviations in diet from that of a natural landscape, can impact the health of populations because of metabolic changes in diet and the exposure to new parasites.

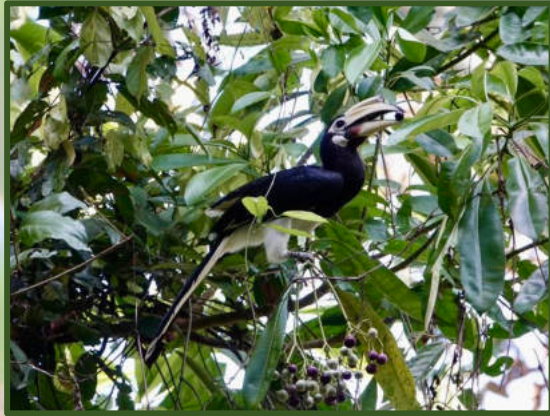
Photo Highlights



Everett's Tiger Tarantula (*Phormingochilus everetti*) (Credit: Rudi Delvaux)



Common bluebottles (*Graphium sarpedon*) (Credit: Liliana Snedden)



Oriental pied hornbill (*Anthracoceros albirostris*) (Credit: Liliana Snedden)



Bornean orangutan (*Pongo pygmaeus*) (Credit: Liliana Snedden)



Buffy fish owl (*Ketupa ketupu*) (Credit: Liliana Snedden)



Common Palm Civet (*Paradoxurus hermaphroditus*) (Credit: Rudi Delvaux)



A leaping male Proboscis monkey (*Nasalis larvatus*) (Credit: Kenneth Keuk)



Lantern bug (Fulgoridae) (Credit: Liliana Snedden)



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.

Director of Publication:

Benoit Goossens

Chief Editor:

Rhys Davies

Contact Us:

Danau Girang Field Centre
Lot 6
The Jungle
Lower Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary
Sabah

Email: contact@dgfc.life

Web Page Address: www.dgfc.life



The opinions expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of Cardiff University.

