

An Epic Tropical Birding Custom tour



Malaysia: The Peninsula & Borneo



This super-confiding **Oriental Bay Owl** behind our Sepilok lodge was, *for the guide at least*, one of the sightings of the tour

22 September – 17 October 2011

Guided by Sam Woods

All photos were taken on this tour by Sam Woods

Introduction:

*This private tour was arranged by John and Karen with some very specific objectives in mind: to pick up three possible new families for them, as part of a wider quest to see all of the world's bird families, to rack up as many lifebirds for them as possible in this, their first, venture into Southeast Asia, to target as many Bornean endemics in a visit to that island, and to track down as many mammals in the process too! We achieved all these objectives, due to some extraordinary luck, undeniable persistence, dedication, and field skills on behalf of Karen and John, and due to a lengthy trip in the region. We racked up **40 Bornean endemics** and **more than 50 mammal species**.*

*This being a bird tour I should, by rights, first talk of the birds, but this was a tour where mammals often took center stage, and it would be a travesty NOT to highlight them. Over **FIFTY MAMMAL SPECIES** were seen, a remarkable testament to the quality of Borneo as a mammal watching destination, and to the persistence and doggedness of John and Karen to put in the hours to find them. The clearly voted highlight of the entire tour was indeed mammalian, and not avian, and was universally agreed upon by both John and Karen and myself. When you see a **Clouded Leopard** in broad daylight, and get to gaze into its magnetic stare for some two hours, even pittas have a hard time getting a look in. The rarity and quality of the sighting made this impossible to beat by any bird! Borneo is the best region for mammals in Southeast Asia, and arguably, all of Asia for that matter. We were blessed with extraordinary luck on this tour, where we bumped into herds of **Bornean Pygmy Elephants** on no less than three separate occasions – twice we found herds (of twenty or more animals) around Sukau, and then finally a large animal blocked the road into the marvelous **Borneo Rainforest Lodge**. Indeed, the latter site, the most luxurious of our lodgings on the whole tour, provided some extraordinary opportunities to view mammals. In addition to the Clouded Leopard, and the en route elephant, we also enjoyed a very friendly troop of **Red Leaf-Monkeys** munching leaves that were visible from the lodge bar, a bug-eyed **Western Tarsier** on our opening night close to the lodge, a family party of **Bornean Gibbons**, a grizzled **Binturong** feeding in daylight within a large fruiting tree full of barbets, and at least nine different **Orangutans!***

*The tour covered the very best sites in West, or Peninsula, Malaysia, followed by the best birding areas within the Malaysian state of Sabah, in the north of the island of Borneo. Our tour began in Malaysia's capital, Kuala Lumpur, which comes with one of the most distinctive skylines in Asia, virtue of the enormous PETRONAS Towers, one of the world's largest buildings. Our first birding came within the steamy lowland jungle of **Taman Negara**, West Malaysia's flagship national park, and Southeast Asia's version of the Amazon: It comes with incredibly avian diversity and creates hunger within visiting birders that can rarely be satisfied with just a single visit. This self-declared "oldest rainforest on Earth" is one of Asia's premier birding sites, and we racked up some fantastic lowland species there, including several of John and Karen's priority birds: **Malaysian Rail-Babbler** and **Large Frogmouth**. The rail-babbler performed splendidly as it circled us, dipped its neck down to the ground, and gave out its high-pitched whistle as it did so, affording excellent, and memorable views. Other highlights from Taman Negara were a gorgeous male **Banded Pitta** that bounced past us as we glared intently at the leaf litter that left us in no doubt we were watching one of the world's most beautiful birds, a troop of **Crested Firebacks** (a flashy forest pheasant), which walked under the blind we were stood in, regular **Black-thighed Falconets** (a tiny, tiny raptor) near our comfortable air-conditioned cabins, the rare **Jambu Fruit-Dove** right within our resort, a spectacular male **Great Argus** (an even more flashy forest pheasant which boasts a tail of nearly 140cm/59in long), four species of dazzling trogons, including the rare **Cinnamon-rumped Trogon**, a hornbill-laden tree with at least eleven **Wrinkled Hornbills** and two massive **Rhinoceros Hornbills** perched alongside them, and a brace of brilliant and beautiful kingfishers with both a male **Banded and Rufous-collared Kingfishers** showing up on the same memorable morning.*

*After this prolonged stint in the Pahang lowlands to open the tour, we moved west and up into the hill dipterocarp forests around the old British hill station of **Fraser's Hill**. By splitting our time between there and The Gap at its base we covered a range of altitudes, and subsequently racked up a range of birds, from the rare **Rusty-naped Pitta** seen along the forest trails on the mountaintop, to the boldly-marked **Chestnut-naped Forktail** seen near the base there was plenty on offer, and almost all of which were different from those seen at Taman Negara.*

*Mammals featured heavily during this tour, especially at Danum in Borneo where this large **Borneo Pygmy Elephant** blocked our route in to the Borneo Rainforest*



*...And this cute, bug-eyed, **Horsfield's (Western) Tarsier** was seen close to the lodge on our first night*



*Other highlights included a **Brown Wood-Owl** seen in town at night, a resplendent **Red-bearded Bee-eater** hawking insects along the road at The Gap one afternoon, a further two trogon species, with **Red-headed Trogons** found up on the hilltop, and the very different **Orange-breasted Trogon** found down near the foot of the hill, and the outlandish **Fire-tufted Barbet**, most memorably seen from the restaurant table, during our final lunch, visiting the hotel garden. More than anything though up on the hill is the highlight of seeing waves of birds passing by in feeding flocks that are a sight to behold, one of which held among them half a dozen or so of the unique **Blue Nuthatch**. A bewildering variety of birds came to us in this area from **Black Laughingthrushes** to **Silver-eared Mesias** to **Bamboo Woodpeckers**, which made it abundantly clear why this a favored haunt of Southeast Asian birders who frequently return time and again to bird within these rich hill forests, walk among the old British buildings and past the famous red post box that give this site a truly different feel to the rest we visited on the tour.*

*Lastly, on the Peninsula anyway, we traveled westwards to the plains and mangroves of **Kuala Selangor** in the coastal Malaysian state of Selangor. The standout bird of the visit was a striking **Barred Eagle-Owl** found sitting in the open (seemingly taunting Sam for NOT bringing his camera out with him that day!), in broad daylight, just after dawn. In the mangroves specialties came in the form of **Mangrove Whistler** and **Mangrove Blue-Flycatcher**, and a reminder that we were there in migration season, when north Asian breeders were moving south to winter, came in the form of a **Siberian Blue Robin** that bounced along the boardwalk ahead of us.*

*Then we left West Malaysia behind, having racked up 300 species, and flew to the island of Borneo, and the Malaysian state of Sabah. We started our exploration of this endemic and mammal rich island, with a visit to Sepilok, in the lowlands of eastern Sabah. Famous among Eco tourists for the Orangutan rehab center which affords wonderful looks at these animals, we avoided that completely (safe in the knowledge we were going to track down wild ones later on the tour), and instead visited their cutting edge, modern canopy walkway. The reason for our visit was simple: this is currently the best place in the world to see the endemic species, **Bornean Bristlehead**, a one-species family that John and Karen needed in their quest for seeing a member of every bird family on the planet. A frustrating first visit left us empty-handed, but a second trip up on their walkway led Karen to find a flock of these strange forest birds appropriately enough from the well-named "Bristlehead Tower". The other major highlight from Sepilok came at night, when we venture out after a prolonged tropical downpour and came face to face with a remarkably tame **Oriental Bay Owl**.*

*From there we traveled to Sandakan boarded a boat up the mighty **Kinabatangan River**, to **Sukau**, a rich area of riparian forest for both birds and other wildlife. It took us little time at all to see this first hand. News came through on arrival at our luxurious, riverside lodge of a herd of **Bornean Pygmy Elephants** and so we raced successfully to them. A glittering **Hooded Pitta** watched foraging in the dark leaf litter, multiple **Buffy Fish-Owls**, and a host of hornbills came to us in this area. This included a group of the scarce **White-crowned Hornbill**, along with a large crabby male **Orangutan** that vented his anger at us by breaking large branches to impress us. Which he did, of course! However, our final moment of magic at Sukau was perhaps the best of all: a gorgeous **Black-and-crimson Pitta** posed repeatedly behind our lodge, leaving us both with memorable photos, and lasting memories of this endemic deep purple, electric blue, and scarlet "jewel-thrush", (the old name for the pitta family).*

*Our final venture into the lowlands of the tour came in the **Danum Valley Conservation Area**, an extremely rich and diverse area of dipterocarp forest also in eastern Sabah. Our base for exploring this famous Asian birding site was the extraordinarily luxurious setting of the **Borneo Rainforest Lodge**. We enjoyed some truly exceptional luck here with both the aforementioned mammals, and the birds. The lodge is arguably one of the single best sites for pittas in Borneo and we understood this firsthand following our visit. One morning we got to see two different spanking male **Blue-headed Pittas** that gave everything but the leopard a run for its money on this tour, and after a difficult and slippery hike we managed to find a brilliant **Blue-banded Pitta** (thanks in no small part to our excellent lodge guide).*

*Although quite different from each other, the advantage of visiting West Malaysia and Borneo is getting second chances at a number of species. Here are two species we saw in the lowland jungles of the Peninsula and also later in Sabah...**Rufous-collared Kingfisher** was first seen along the steamy jungle trails at Taman Negara, and then showed up again in Sepilok...*



*...and **Banded Broadbill** was also first seen in the rich Amazonian-like jungles of Taman Negara, and then, like the above kingfisher, was photographed at the **Sepilok Rainforest Discovery Centre***



Although the lion's share of the Borneo endemics are located within the highlands, these lowland sites offered some too, and we duly picked up **White-fronted Falconet** (before we had even arrived at the lodge), **Bornean and Black-throated Wren-Babblers**, multiple glistening male **Bornean Blue-Flycatchers**, and yet more **Bornean Bristleheads**. Other highlights included a male **Large-billed Blue-Flycatcher** (a scarce and declining Sundaic endemic), and a male **Blue-banded Kingfisher** fishing behind John and Karen's lodge cabin.

Our final leg of the trip saw us visit the endemic-laden highlands of Borneo, by combining visits to **Tambunan**, with trips to higher elevation sites up on **Mount Kinabalu**. At the lower altitudes around Tambunan we found a brace of endemic barbets, though **Mountain Barbet** proved tougher than my previous visits to the area, while the diminutive **Bornean Barbet** performed with aplomb, observed calling at length on our 'scope. Persistence also yielded the wonderful **Whitehead's Spiderhunter** probing rich red blossoms in the forest canopy too, while the **Bornean Leafbirds**, having just recently been elevated to full species rank, were numerous in our visits there also. Up on Mount Kinabalu we enjoyed one of my most productive mornings on the mountain I had ever experienced opening with half a dozen or so **Bare-headed Laughingthrushes** (an increasingly scarce endemic montane species), with both endemic partridges seen (a male **Crimson-headed Partridge** being preceded by a good show from a **Red-breasted Partridge**), a couple of very confiding **Bornean Stubtails**, a showy party of **Mountain Wren-Babblers** to complete the triumvirate of endemic wren-babblers on the tour, and best of all a fantastic family of **FIVE Whitehead's Trogons** that lingered for some time along one of the trails near the HQ. At the end of it all the tour closed with a final lifebird for Karen and John, in the form of a **Malaysian Plover** (sitting alongside a vagrant **Common Ringed Plover** no less) watched from the dry and comfort of our vehicle during a heavy tropical downpour on our final afternoon. An ironic finish considering how little rain we had actually experienced, with little affect to our birding from the weather, from this tour that was time just before the onset of the wet season.

Itinerary:

22 Sept	Arrival in Kuala Lumpur (KL)/night KL
23 Sept	KL to Taman Negara/night Taman Negara
24-27 Sept	Taman Negara/nights Taman Negara
28 Sept	Taman Negara to Fraser's Hill/night Fraser's Hill
29-30 Sept	Fraser's Hill & The Gap/nights Fraser's Hill
1 Oct	Fraser's Hill to Kuala Selangor/night Kuala Selangor
2 Oct	Kuala Selangor to KL; P.M. flight to Sandakan, Borneo/night Sepilok
3 Oct	Sepilok/night Sepilok
4 Oct	Sepilok to Sukau/night Sukau
5 Oct	Sukau (Kinabatangan River)/night Sukau
6 Oct	Sukau & Gomantong Caves/nigh Sukau
7 Oct	Sukau to Kota Kinabalu (KK)/night KK
8 Oct	KK to Danum Valley/night Borneo Rainforest Lodge
9-11 Oct	Danum Valley/nights Borneo Rainforest Lodge
12 Oct	Danum Valley to KK (flight)/night KK
13 Oct	KK to Tambunan to Mount Kinabalu/night Kundasang
14-16 Oct	Mount Kinabalu area & Tambunan/nights Kundasang
17 Oct	Mount Kinabalu & Lok Kawi. Departure.

23 September **Kuala Lumpur to Taman Negara National Park**

Today we left the distinctive skyline of KL behind us and headed into the steamy lowlands, and West Malaysia's flagship park, **Taman Negara** (which literally means National Park). We visited three areas of lowland rainforest on the tour: this site on the Peninsula, and the three further sites in Borneo (Sepilok, Danum Valley, and Sukau). Although there is some overlap between them, they all have a distinct nature, with some very special birds easier at some than others. For our time at Taman Negara we focused on getting some of these. Taman Negara is one of the best places in Southeast Asia for many species, namely Large Frogmouth, Garnet and Banded Pittas, Malaysian Peacock-Pheasant, Cinnamon-rumped Trogon, Malaysian Rail-Babbler, and a whole host of babblers, including Large Wren-Babbler. For our time there we were based in luxurious comfort: spacious wooden cabins with air-con to escape the oft-oppressive humidity of this tropical zone. Straight off, we were visiting one of the sites for one of John and Karen's major target birds: that elusive denizen of the forest floor, the Malaysian Rail-Babbler. But, more of that *later*. Our first morning was spent traveling east to this park, (our journey being "rudely" interrupted by a dark morph **Changeable Hawk-Eagle** perched prominently by its large roadside nest, a stop that also yielded our first spectacular broadbills, a pair of **Black-and-yellow Broadbills**, a striking family that were to feature heavily on the tour), *photo right*. The afternoon was spent in the vicinity of our resort, and along the forested margins of it, picking up some of our first Peninsula birds: a passing flock held several rusty **Raffle's Malkohas**, the understorey gave up a few **Rufous-tailed Tailorbirds**, the resort held a nectar-hunting **Gray-breasted Spiderhunter**, and a large fruiting fig bustled with activity of frugivorous birds taking full advantage of the crop. This included striking **Asian Fairy-Bluebirds**, and an assortment of green pigeons, chief among them being the scarce **Large Green-Pigeon**. While we kept a keen watch for any other fruit-eating birds to dart in (and some did, such as several handsome **Bar-bellied Cuckooshrikes**), a party of pheasants walked right underneath the blind that we were in: it was to be our first encounter with the immaculate **Crested Fireback**. I was pleased to see some migrants had already arrived too, with the prominent forms of several **Tiger Shrikes** found in the area. Finally, another large raptor stopped us in our tracks again, this time a **Wallace's Hawk-Eagle** that cruised in and perched just out of eyesight from the blind. A good opener, with some common birds and a few scarcities thrown in to calm the nerves! A walk around the resort at night produced both few animals, and merely frustration with birds, as a lone calling **Sunda Scops-Owl** remained high in the trees and very well hidden. *However, we would come back to that species later...*



24 September **Taman Negara National Park**

Malaysia has done a great job of marketing some of its most treasured sites as destinations for ecotourism, and so **Taman Negara** has become their flagship reserve. However, for a birder this does not sound the death toll for *seeing* birds, as a short boat ride away from the resort (and the crowds), we found ourselves birding alone, along the best forest trail in the area. Actually, before we had reached the trailhead we had managed to add a **Black-bellied Malkoha** to our list from the boat. I was very excited to be on this trail again, one of my all-time favorite areas to bird. These thoughts were justified early on when a trogon began calling closeby. Just a little burst from my I-pod brought a spectacularly beautiful male **Diard's Trogon** into view, which was a great precursor of the phenomenal day that was to come...

Things were a little slow going after this initial colorful opener, with fruitless chases after calling **Garnet Pittas** yielding nothing except from scratches on our bodies from our scrambles through the undergrowth. However, we did add a second species of broadbill to our lists: the markedly different **Asian Green Broadbill** that repeatedly visited a tree in the area, indicating the presence of fruit nearby. As is so often in the southeast Asian jungles, this day was all about patience and persistence, and John and Karen should receive an award for this on the tour, as their strength in this undoubtedly helped yield the substantial bird and mammal list produced from the tour. Early on we picked up one of the less spectacular Taman Negara birds with our first **Gray-chested Jungle-Flycatcher**. However, it was the moment when a high-pitched whistle drifted from the forest floor to our ears that will most likely be remembered the longest by all. This alerted us to the presence of their main target bird nearby: **Malaysian Rail-Babbler**. Sometimes just hearing the bird is only half the battle, as this elusive bird can choose to stick in dense cover when it so desires. Thankfully, on this day, we found a *friendly* one. It took a little time but then suddenly this gorgeous rusty bird slinked into view on a patch of open leaf litter, where all our eyes locked onto it. Furthermore, it even began calling in front of us by dipping its long gangly neck down low and tilting its head up to produce that distinctive high-pitched whistle that sends a tingle down your spine when heard for the first time. Our first full day, and one of our main targets, and indeed one of the most difficult ones, was already “in the bag”. I was quietly ecstatic.

After the euphoria of this Southeast Asian gem a passing flock with **Spotted Fantails** and **Scarlet-rumped Trogons** in its midst did not really cut it (!) But then a loud “purring” alerted us to another denizen of the dark, dank leaf litter. What would become a familiar scene unfolded: we heard the call, crept in to the forest, played the call, and waited for a spectacular appearance. On this occasion Karen’s keen eyesight picked up the male **Banded Pitta** first (complete with fiery red brow and deep purple breast), although shortly after John and I enjoyed close views too. On any other day this would steal the headlines, but what with the quality of our rail-babbler viewing this was simply demoted to supporting cast! On our way back to the boat dock a **Garnet Pitta** bounced off the trail (though did not linger), and a pair of rowdy **Crested Jays** ensured we diverted our attentions towards them. The same area near the dock also brought us our first **Black-and-red Broadbills**, which boasts arguably the *broadest* bill of them all.

Rather belatedly, but full of elation at our first legendary morning at Taman Negara, we returned to the lodge for lunch. I tucked in greedily to a fine local dish of Rendang Daging, a spicy concoction of beef and rice flavored with coconut. In the afternoon, (as usual), things were rather quiet around the resort (although Karen did manage to find a tiny, tiny **Lesser Mouse-Deer**), aside from a **Black-thighed Falconet** showing up in front of the blind by the resort, and a significant headliner was found by our local guide late in the afternoon, when a young male **Jambu Fruit-Dove** appeared suddenly in the resort, where it lingered for walk away views.

In the evening we opted to chase after another major target: any of the Asian Frogmouths, as they seem to represent a distinct group from the Australian ones and thus may prove to be a separate family in time. About 700m from the resort darkness engulfed us and the distinctive cries of **Gould’s Frogmouth** emanated from the forest. I went in to see if I could find it, and was shocked to see the bird fly in and land over my head before I could even play its call. Luckily, John and Karen were on to it in a flash. We did try a spot for the considerably rarer **Large Frogmouth**, but were frustrated by a calling bird that never showed, and so vowed to return on another night. On the way back to the resort we managed to pick up movement around the campsite that revealed a typically slow-moving **Slow Loris** sitting out in the open, our first primate of the trip.

25 September **Taman Negara National Park**

For our next day at Taman Negara we chose to walk the other end of the trail we had walked the day before, which holds very different, more mature forest, indicated by some truly massive trees in the area. These larger trees often play host to numerous large woodpeckers and stunning hornbills. Once again, the first "big" sighting of the morning turned out to be another attractive Asian trogon, this time the sister species of the Diard's Trogon, the **Red-naped Trogon**, a male of which posed admirably for us. Then in typical Taman Negara fashion activity dropped for a while, but then picked up again later, just when we thought we had bummed out for the morning. Loud metallic



calls revealed the presence of a mob of magpies above, although not your average magpie, but the rainforest-dwelling **Black Magpie** that makes some very strange noises, that helped us to locate them. We were soon on to them and lined several up in the scope before they moved on away through the rainforest canopy. Not long later, a large dead tree came to life when it held a mixed flock of colorful Asian hornbills in its bare branches: at least eleven **Wrinkled Hornbills** sharing the stage with a pair of **Rhinoceros Hornbills**, *photo left*. The very best in Asian birding! **Fluffy-backed Tit-Babblers** found along there joined a burgeoning list of Asian babblers, (a group that were to become an almost daily feature of the tour). Woodpeckers were scarcer than I'd hoped for that morning, although we did get some choice views of **Crimson-winged Woodpeckers**. We could not go a morning just yet without adding another broadbill to our list, and Karen's keen eyes soon homed in on a calling

Banded Broadbill, (foraging close to a pair of **Asian Green Broadbills** no less!). Shortly after she also located a **Red-throated Barbet** feeding in the subcanopy! On the way back to the boat we found both a smart **Black-throated Babbler**, and a **White-crowned Forktail** feeding along the edge of a rainforest rivulet.

In the afternoon we checked in on the large fruiting fig in front of Bumbun Tahan (Tahan Hide), and found **Straw-headed Bulbuls** feeding among the melee of birds, while at least four **Black-thighed Falconets** clung to the dead trees above. The night birding/mammaling session though will stand out. Before dinner we checked the forest edge along the river and were rewarded with views of a calling **Malaysian Eared-Nightjar** flying above the treetops. Not long after dinner we ran into one of the resort staff who pointed us in the direction of a pair of **Malayan Tapirs** near the resort, and a check of the blind nearby produced multiple **Sambar Deer**, and the odd **Malay Civet**, in addition to great views of a calling **Sunda Scops-Owl**, (which on this day had traded his spot in the canopy for a far more accessible spot in the forest understory).

26 September **Taman Negara National Park**

On this day we once again returned to the same, swampy, trail we had done the day before, knowing there was still plenty more on offer. The jungle of Taman Negara in Malaysia is like the Amazon rainforest in South America in that you simply cannot see everything in a single visit, as there is simply so much on offer. This was quickly confirmed by a male **Tickell's Blue-Flycatcher** just after docking, and then a loud babbler call led us to a **Large Wren-Babbler**. We were especially happy to pick up this latter one as it does not occur in Borneo, (where it is replaced by the endemic *Black-throated Wren-Babbler*). Another new babbler joined our long list of these oft-confusing birds, when a **Short-tailed Babbler** appeared nearby.

It also turned out to be a rare day for kingfishers too. Not long after emerging from the forest after our successful wren-babbler chase a **Banded Kingfisher** called close to the trail. We were happy that for once we did not need to

actually “go in” after a bird and could watch this stunning male kingfisher right from the trail itself. This was an especially pleasing sighting as we had heard, and tried for, numerous ones over the previous days to no avail. A brace of very cool, and very colorful, forest kingfishers was completed when the dashing **Rufous-collared Kingfisher** was taped just an hour later. For me one of the best looking Southeast Asian birds, *period*. In between these headliners we also caught up with the strange **Crested Partridge** that we had heard calling by the trail, and were later coaxed in. This strange gamebird currently sits within a monotypic genus that some tout as distinct enough to be made into a monotypic *family*. As John and Karen are keen family listers this was a clear case of “banking” one for later maybe!?

This was a day that more about quality than quantity with long breaks between the good ones that were of course though well worth the wait. Heavy rains moved in during the afternoon leading us to abandon another attempt to see the **Large Frogmouth** that night.

27 September **Taman Negara National Park**

We spent our last full day in West Malaysia’s lowland jungle returning to the same trail, and specifically focusing on plugging some of the more significant gaps on our list. It actually though turned out to be a rather frustrating morning, with activity low and little new revealing itself until late in the morning, when a gob smacking male **Great Argus** walked into spectacular view in front of us. We were so shocked and stunned by this exciting find that none of us took a photo, as we simply gawped at it, and took in its extraordinarily long tail, and finely patterned plumage. The standout sighting in an otherwise quiet morning. This late morning flurry also produced a male Cinnamon-rumped Trogon (the scarcest of the species on the mainland, and arguably the most difficult of the seven species we had on offer on this tour), and a stunning pair of **Rufous-chested Flycatchers**, that had initially frustrated in the early hours of the morning, but finally excited us hours later when we could take in their striking pied plumage with fiery orange splashed down the front. In the afternoon, after another round of tasty Malaysian cuisine, we headed up another trail from the resort, which runs along the Sungei Tahan, picking up a pair of spiffing **Green Ioras** around the campsite en route. Around the popular swimming area we also laid eyes on our first vibrantly-colored **Blue-eared**

Kingfisher, photo right. We got in an early “dinner” in the afternoon so that we could remain up this trail until darkness and try once again for Asia’s largest frogmouth. Some late afternoon birding on the trail was again quite quiet except for a surprise group of **Sultan Tits**, which are generally scarce and rarely encountered in lowland rainforests like Taman Negara, (much more



expected, for example, in the hill forests around Bukit Fraser). After a long wait darkness finally fell, and it was not long before we heard our main quarry, the **Large Frogmouth**, giving its eerie call. However, seeing it proved another matter entirely. It was highly responsive, frequently moving rapidly and directly in response to playback, but seemingly always landing in an impossible spot to see it. Credit must go the staying power of John and Karen

here (and not for the first time), as perseverance paid off once more. Just before we lost the will to live, it finally relented, and landed in a marvelous spot where we could marvel at it for some time. There was a definite skip in our step as we returned to the resort after this one. We may have had to work for it, but the views and the bird made it all very worthwhile!

28 September **Taman Negara to Fraser's Hill**

There was not a lot of time, (before our morning departure), to do a great deal at Taman Negara, but this incredibly diverse lowland jungle still held more than a few lifers for John and Karen, many of them possible right around our resort. So we took a walk around the resort itself, finding a fig tree bustling with frugivorous birds such as **Gold-whiskered Barbets** (much to my relief as barbets had been noticeably thin on the ground and atypically quiet during our stay at Taman Negara), **Straw-headed Bulbuls**, and **Thick-billed Pigeons**. A dead snag within our resort was also graced by a very confiding **Black-thighed Falconet** that gave us our best views yet.

We then high-tailed it to the western side of Pahang province, picking up a startlingly bright male **Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker** during the journey, and the promise of a whole new suite of higher elevation bird species, at the legendary Southeast Asian birding site of **Fraser's Hill**. We reached there in time for a late lunch and a spot of afternoon road birding. Fraser's Hill is an old British hill station in the Titiwangsa Range that allows exploration of pristine hill forest from the highest peak at around 4925ft/1500m all the way down to The Gap, at its base, which is at around 2625ft/800m. The result is a bird list of over 270 species, markedly different to those experienced previously in the lowlands. With more than a little excitement we set out swiftly after lunch to kick start our list of montane species. Birding at Fraser's Hill is done by way of good, paved roads, with the occasional foray into the forest proper by way of a well-maintained trail network that criss-crosses the mountain. However, for the most



part, all but a few interior forest species can be seen right from the comfort of the road, by patrolling the roads on the hill, and stopping at the first sign of activity. The hill forests are loaded with multi-species feeding flocks that roam the forests, and often give themselves away by their calls, and an obvious, sudden burst of activity in the trees. And so this is what I aimed to prove that afternoon: we could get some of the best birds right from the road by slowly driving the roads, and hopping out at the first indication of passing flock or "bird wave". We started our exploration of the hill top by driving the **Telekom Loop**, a circular road that bypasses some telecom towers. By checking this and other roads at the top of the hill we hit several of these waves which brought with them a flood of new birds to our list. Some of these were common, but dazzling, species like **Silver-eared Mesia**, **Black-eared Shrike-Babbler**, **Orange-bellied Leafbird**, and **Chestnut-capped Laughingthrush**, intermixed with scarcer fare such as both **Greater and Lesser Yellownapes**, (two striking woodpeckers), and the amazing and unique **Blue Nuthatch**. Away from the flocks, the distinctive, *cicada-like* buzzing calls of **Fire-tufted Barbets** could be heard emanating from the trees, one of our main target species that is thankfully quite common on the hill top. It did not take long for us to have one of these striking barbets lined up in the 'scope. A good day for barbets also yielded some sterling looks at several calling **Black-browed Barbets**, which

could be seen well calling from the treetops from the well-placed road of the Telekom Loop that allows some good views of the canopy, in one of the highest areas on Fraser's Hill. A **Javan Cuckoo-shrike** prominently perched on a street light in town, pointed out by Karen, was a little easier than this bird can be sometimes too! On top of that we also bagged our first primate of the trip, with a troop of **Banded Langurs** loafing in the treetops not far from town.

Our birding did not finish with dinner that night though, as we ventured out in search of nightbirds or animals. On the animal front we failed miserably, finding nothing at all. However, bird-wise we were out on the hunt for a Brown Wood-Owl that had recently taken to hunting of a night from the street lamps in the town, (and reportedly in view of the picturesque town center that comes complete with an old English style red post box). However, a glance at all the lamps found them to be owl-less. Birding, or bird-watching, as they still refer to it in Malaysia, is big business in Fraser's Hill, and I thought someone in town might just know the habits of this owl, and help us in our quest. A quick chat with a helpful receptionist in a neighboring hotel led us to check some pine trees in the center of town, where there on an open branch, glaring impressively back at us, was the **Brown Wood-Owl**, (*photo page before*)!

29 September **Fraser's Hill & The Gap**

The nature of the birding on top of Fraser's Hill and down at the bottom, around The Gap is quite different, with some species only occurring at the higher elevations around the hill resort, while others can only be found by birding around the base of the hill. Subsequently, we decided to mix it up on this day, spending the morning birds the roads and trails on the hill top, and the spending the afternoon combing the lower altitude forests lower down for other species only found there. After an early morning pair of **Large Niltavas**, feeding along the forested roadsides a short time after daybreak, and our first **Black-and-crimson Oriole**, we breakfasted, then parked up by one of the trails on the hilltop...

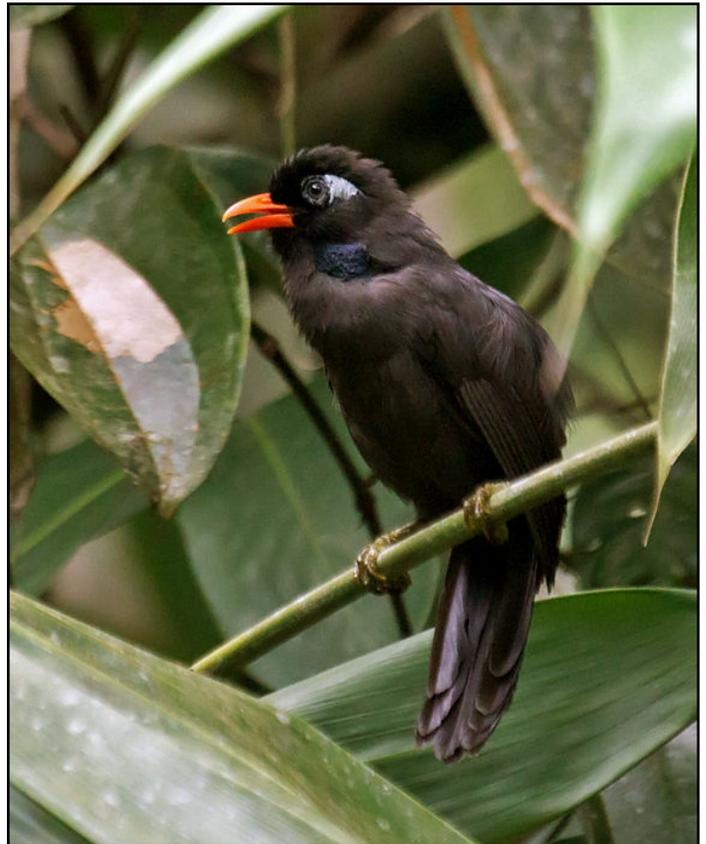
Bishop's Trail is one of the best birding trails up on the hill top, and as we were looking for some interior species, which would be hard to find from the roads, we decided to take a walk on this trail. Leeches are unfortunately, often a big feature of Southeast Asian birding, and so we donned our leech socks, noted our first rusty **Rufous-browed Flycatchers** perched by the road, and then made our way down the trail. Here we encountered our first **Red-headed Trogon**, sitting motionless in the understorey, but occasionally betraying its presence with its soft call. We also found a pair of **Pygmy Blue-Flycatchers** from one of the shelters along the trail, a genuinely scarce bird in these parts. We also had a pair of striking **Bay Woodpeckers** there too. However, the purpose of trail work was to find one of the interior birds less likely along the road network at the hill station, unlike these species. After a time we hit the jackpot with a very responsive **Streaked Wren-Babbler** which came in remarkably close on several occasions. Although, the biggest find of the morning, all be it a brief sighting, was a **Rusty-naped Pitta** that responded to my overtures and was even seen from the trail! This is very rare for this very difficult to see species, which rarely responds, and even more rarely comes within viewing distance of the trail. The toughest pitta on the Peninsula bounced onto our list, and we were very happy about it!





As we returned to our vehicle, retracing our steps back up the trail we bumped into a feisty **Collared Owlet** perched above the trail, *photo left*, which even showed us its “fake” head pattern on the back of the neck. Late morning was much quieter, although we did have a marvelous experience with a **Mountain Leaf-Warbler** one of the higher elevation birds that can only be found around the higher parts of the hill station (*photo page 12*). On playing the tape at a site where I had seen them previously, this angry leaf-warbler shot in at knee-height, narrowly missing my knees as it came in to sing back, which left us with memorable photos and good memories of this attractive “phyllosc”. This was also interesting for us, as later on the trip we were to see the markedly different endemic race of “Mountain” Leaf-Warbler on Mount Kinabalu in Borneo, which lacks the strong yellow and green color tones of the mainland Southeast Asian birds.

After lunch at our hotel we hurried downslope towards The Gap, stopping for a gliding raptor that turned out to be the hoped-for **Blyth’s Hawk-Eagle**. Huge stands of bamboo dominate the understory of much of the forest down near the base of the hill, and it was here that we found a rowdy group of **Black Laughingthrushes**, (the scarcest of the three laughingthrush species around Fraser’s Hill), *photo right*. And so began a very enjoyable afternoon at the lower elevations around The Gap. The very same stand of bamboo yielded another good target bird, a gorgeous male **Orange-breasted Trogon**, (*photo next page*). This was our sixth trogon species of the trip (along with **Red-headed** on the hilltop, and **Diard’s, Red-naped, Scarlet-rumped, and Cinnamon-rumped Trogons** all seen at Taman Negara), and our final possible species on the Peninsula. Just one very special, and endemic trogon awaited us in the highlands of Borneo. Another bird that favors these bamboo patches was found later that afternoon, when some quiet tapping within a bamboo stand led us to a **Rufous Piculet**, a tiny, rusty-colored woodpecker. We also managed to locate a large fig in fruit, which yielded some activity, including our first **Yellow-crowned Barbet** of the trip, and so we made a mental note to return to this on another day. Arguably the best bird of the afternoon though was a **Red-bearded Bee-eater** observed hawking insects from the roadsides, a large and spectacular bee-eater if ever there was one. With all of our night excursions of late taking a toll on our sleep patterns, and energy, we took a welcome break from this.



30 September **The Gap**

As we had done so well thus far around the hill station for the higher elevation species we opted to spend most of the day at the lower altitudes around The Gap. We were especially on the look out for the well-named Bamboo



Woodpecker, a specialist of the bamboo zone. Before we dropped down though, we got only cursory looks at a **Buff-breasted Babbler**, which steadfastly remained within deep cover, and a dashing male **Hill Blue-Flycatcher** that, rightly, delayed our journey to the base of the hill. Virtually our first bird once we reached The Gap was a wonderful party of **Collared Babblers** foraging, and calling, from within the bamboo, a scarce species I was far from sure we would find in just a few days on site. Glancing around from this spot also yielded our first **Green-billed Malkoha** of the trip, perched up prominently, and a passing party of **Large Woodshrikes** also came through while we were there. Moving back along the road to the same fruiting fig tree we had found the evening before we soon realized the activity there was quite different from the afternoon before: the branches regularly vibrated from the movement of birds foraging within it and excitedly grabbing at the ripe orange fruits. A good time was spent working our way through the birds held within its branches that included three or four **Brown-backed Flowerpeckers**, multiple **Blue-winged Leafbirds**, a single, striking **Spectacled Spiderhunter**, half a dozen or so **Brown Barbets**, three or four **Gold-whiskered Barbets**, a single **Yellow-crowned Barbet**, and several **Blue-eared Barbets**! Some scrutinizing of a distant

hillside by John led us to first a pair of glorious **Rhinoceros Hornbills**, complete with bold orange “rhino horns” on their bills, and a single blackish-colored **White-handed Gibbon** that was sharing the tree with these massive birds.

Late in the morning we worked our way down the road from The Gap towards the town of Raub, and checked a rushing mountain stream for another quarry, which Karen was quick to pick up and therefore led to some great looks at our third (after a **White-crowned** in the lowland jungle at Taman Negara, and **Slaty-backed Forktails** repeatedly around the hill station), and arguably *best*, forktail of the trip, with a smashing female **Chestnut-naped Forktail** working the edge of this forest stream.

After lunch back at our highland hotel, we made our way down towards The Gap again, stopping for a roadside flock of striking **Sultan Tits**, and to successfully track down a party of **Rufescent Prinias**. In the afternoon we worked the lower slopes of the **Old Gap Road** once more for a bit that saw us run into some interesting bird waves which produced new birds like the handsome **Chestnut-breasted Scimitar-Babbler**, the striking **Bar-winged Flycatcher-Shrike**, the beautiful **Velvet-fronted Nuthatch**, and the strange **White-bellied Erpornis**. This latter species has confounded taxonomists for decades trying to work out its true where its true affinities lie, with latest thinking now allying this within the *vireo* family! We also got brief looks at a newly arrived wintering male **Mugimaki Flycatcher**, still boasting breeding colors and only recently arrived from its breeding grounds in northern Asia. The same magic bamboo stand that had yielded the scimitar-babbler earlier in the afternoon, and that had produced both the Black Laughingthrush and Orange-breasted Trogon the day before, then turned up a brace of cool woodpeckers, with the highly-desired **Bamboo Woodpecker** (that had been leading us a merry dance until then), and a pair of confiding **Buff-rumped Woodpeckers** too, along with another **Rufous Piculet** to

boot. Walking further up the road we disturbed another pair of surprise **Chestnut-naped Forktails**, and got repeat looks at **Black Laughingthrush**, and both the highland trogon species: **Red-headed** and **Orange-breasted Trogons**.

1 October **Fraser's Hill to Kuala Selangor**

Today was to be our last day in the highlands before we moved onto the coastal plain of western Selangor province, to search for mangrove birds, and open country species. And so we had another final stab at finding the regular **Malayan Whistling-Thrush** near the upper gate. Unfortunately, though despite this and several previous attempts



and in spite of hearing it in the area we never got to see it feeding on the road as hoped. The lack of any wet weather while we were up at Fraser's Hill may have been a factor, with less to forage on, on the road, as a result of this? We did though finally catch up with another, much more common species while checking this area, with the recently-split (from Chestnut-crowned) **Malayan Laughingthrush** seen well, while singing prominently from a roadside tree at dawn. Pairs of both **Large Niltavas** and **Rufous-browed Flycatchers** were also seen taking advantage of the tranquility on the roads at this time, by foraging along their edges. And a remarkably responsive **Pygmy (Wren-Babbler) Cupwing** came in to check us out there too (*photo left*). A foray around the **Telekom Loop** once again produced an

arresting pair of **Blyth's Shrike-Babblers** (formerly lumped within White-browed Shrike-Babbler), several gorgeous **Golden Babblers**, and close perched **Large (Bock's) Hawk-Cuckoo** and **Mountain Imperial-Pigeon**. Checking other areas before lunch produced nothing new but a fine, vermilion-washed, male **Red-headed Trogon** all the same.

We then had a final lunch back at our hotel, where the staff had finally seen fit to stock the bird table with food, which immediately brought in a fantastic **Fire-tufted Barbet** and **Long-tailed Sibia**, all visible right from the restaurant table. It was the time to hit the highway and head westwards towards the state of Selangor. Of course this meant we would have to pass by The Gap en route and through a gorgeous forest-lined highway. This led us to make several stops. Firstly, for a group of **Whiskered Treeswifts** watched regularly sallying conspicuously from their chosen roadside snags to snatch insects on the wing. The same area also held our first **Scarlet Minivets** of the trip. Another stop was needed too so that we could finally nail **Rufous-bellied Swallow**, a group of which were found nesting under a highway bridge en route.

In the late afternoon we arrived to chaotic scenes at **Kuala Selangor**, with the weekend crowds up **Bukit Melawati** making it only possible to check this spot out in the early evening. Here we got very close contacts with the regular troops of **Silvered Langurs** that roam the hill top. These have become remarkably habituated by the mobs of people that choose to feed them, making for great photo opps. Especially of the bright orange juvenile animals that were in attendance at the time, in striking contrast to their dull, ash-colored, attendant parents (*photo next page*). We also picked up our first **White-bellied Sea Eagles** and **Collared Kingfishers** in this coastal zone before the flame-colored sun dropped down below the horizon.

2 October

Kuala Selangor (Peninsula Malaysia) to Sabah (Borneo)

With a late afternoon flight planned out of Kuala Lumpur to Borneo, we had just a morning left on the Peninsula to search for open country birds, coastal species, and mangrove birds around the Taman Alam Kuala Selangor (or simply Kuala Selangor Nature Park). However, this is not a big area, and with John and Karen having visited Singapore just prior to their arrival in Malaysia their target list was small and very achievable in the time we had. In spite of only a single morning in this area, we added a significant number of birds in the area. None were more impressive than our very first trip addition of the day: a bold **Barred Eagle-Owl** stared back at us in broad daylight as we entered the coastal woods, and instantly chastised me with its stare as if to say “why on Earth would you leave your camera (*as I had*) at the hotel on a day like today!?”



Making our way into the mangroves, we soon picked up one of the main targets: a **Mangrove Whistler**. A female **Siberian Blue Robin** hopping along the boardwalk ahead of us reminded us that it was still very much migration season in this area, with birds on the move all the time. A party of **Great Tits** moved through the mangroves while several **Coppersmith Barbets** posed high above. Our burgeoning woodpecker list received another boost this day with three new species seen: **Sunda (Brown-capped) Woodpecker**, and **Greater and Common Flamebacks**. The mangrove zone also yielded a male **Mangrove Blue-Flycatcher**, a number of **Ashy Tailorbirds**, a pair of **Common Ioras**, and several “**Flyeaters**” (now officially known as **Golden-bellied Gerygones**).

In the late afternoon we rolled into the chaos of Kuala Lumpur, after the tranquility of our recent days in the lowland jungles, montane forests, and mangroves of Peninsula Malaysia, and looked ahead to **Borneo**, with its promise of island endemics and mammals galore...We flew into **Sandakan** in darkness and transferred to a comfortable resort in the rainforest of **Sepilok**.

3 October **Sepilok Rainforest Discovery Centre (Borneo)**

Aside from the fact that Karen and John were keen on seeing as much as they could possibly cram into these days, they had clearly stated targets, based around the fact they were on a mission to see all of the bird families on Earth. And so we had successfully observed the Malaysian Rail-Babbler in Taman Negara, along with several species of Asian Frogmouth (that may one day be a family-level split from the Australasian Frogmouths). Now came their next major family target: the monotypic bristlehead of Borneo, simply known as **Bornean Bristlehead**. As this was such a big motivation for them coming to Borneo we fashioned this part of the trip around this bird, spending two nights in Sepilok, near the **Rainforest Discovery Centre (RDC)**, where a state-of-the-art canopy walkway gives the very best chance at finding this treetop dwelling species. Thus, we began our Bornean leg by going after one of the biggest target birds of the trip. However, the best laid plans of mice of men...we did NOT find it during a full morning on site. En route to the centre (a mere five minute journey from our resort), we ran into a roadside flock of **Black Hornbills** that had us out of the vehicle in a flash. Our time was not wasted as we found a showy party of young **Banded Broadbills** feeding low in the understorey and also found our first "**Bornean**" **Black Magpies**, (a widely touted split from their mainland cousins, as the endemic form lacks the white wing patches of their Peninsula relatives). We did add another endemic too, with several **Yellow-rumped Flowerpeckers** seen visiting a flowering tree in the forest. A group of boisterous **Great Slaty Woodpeckers** were also observed from the canopy walkway while we were on "Bristlehead duty". After lunch we were re-energized for another try for the bristlehead, only to be thwarted by a tropical rainstorm that came through in the afternoon that had us fleeing the walkway and abandoning our plans for a nightwalk on site too for mammals and owls. All we added before the rain hit was a confiding group of **Fiery Minivets** posing by the aptly-named "Bristlehead Tower". As we fled the walkway as rain started to come down in force we did manage to find a **Red Giant Flying Squirrel**.

After returning to the resort, and dining I realized the heavy rain had moved on and the night was calm...John and Karen could not resist checking the forest behind our resort for owls. We were not to be disappointed. Shortly after

walking into the forest and playing the call of **Oriental Bay Owl**, we received a clear reply from a nearby owl. We moved on up the trail, and the sound was closer, but still not right by the trail as hoped. A couple more bursts and it was clear the owl was rooted to the spot, and that spot was not visible from the trail. So I decided to go off trail and search for it while John and Karen waited, impatiently, on the trail. I got closer and closer, and had a quick sweep with the beam, only to find the bird sitting blinking back at me at eye level, and completely unperturbed by my presence. In spite of



my extreme excitement, and my fear of the bird moving on I called the others in. They were as shocked as I as the bird remained there, in full resplendent view, where it was watched calling the spotlight, before we begrudgingly pulled ourselves away and left it sitting there in plain sight, calling away.

The forests along the banks of the Kinabatangan River in eastern Sabah are rich in wildlife, and a great place to see the odd endemic **Proboscis Monkey**...



This magical view of this spectacular owl was my personal bird of the trip. However, it was Not my overall sighting of the trip which fell to something else entirely (read on for that). As we arrived back around our cabins we heard another owl, **Brown Hawk-Owl** calling from beside Karen's cabin and soon enjoyed a second owl for the night blinking back in the spotlight. So the day had not exactly started well, but had ended spectacularly, and we went to bed with renewed vigor for our continued search for the *bristlehead* that beckoned in the morning...

4 October **Sepilok to Sukau (Kinabatangan River)**

So the plan for the day was this: Sepilok in the morning for another try for the Bornean Bristlehead before we departed upriver for Sukau, an area of lowland riparian forest on the banks of the Kinabatangan River, a haven for birds and other wildlife on Sabah's eastern side. And so we met with our Sukau guide who accompanied us once more onto the walkway at the RDC. An hour and a half went by and then suddenly Karen gestured excitedly from the Bristlehead tower: appropriately she had a flock of Bornean Bristleheads in her sights that made their way to the canopy walkway, posing admirably before moving on. Fantastic. With this bird under the belt we moved down and onto the forest trails, where we had stunning views of another stunning **Rufous-collared Kingfisher**, found



another group of **Bornean Black Magpies**, and picked up two new *shamas*: the endemic **White-crowned Shama** and scarcer **Rufous-tailed Shama**, as well as a **Buff-necked Woodpecker** moving through with a passing feeding flock. We also added yet another babbler to our list, which peaked at over *forty* species in total by the trip end, with the beady-eyed **Gray-headed Babbler**. After bumping into another, or the same, roving band of bristleheads later in the morning it was time to leave.

In the early afternoon we boarded a motor boat at Sandakan on Sabah's east coast, and blasted our way eastwards, inland, up the **Kinabatangan River** to **Sukau**. **Whiskered Terns** hawked insects above the river, and we even sighted the river's most famous resident, the comical **Proboscis Monkey** (*photo, page before*) before docking at the lodge, in addition to other odds and ends such as **Gray-headed Fish-Eagle** and **Jerdon's Baza**. However, the explosive news that greeted us on arrival at the luxurious

surroundings of our new home for the next three nights, was that a herd of **Bornean Pygmy Elephants** had just recently been sighted and might still be gettable...We did not hang around and were soon in a smaller, motorized canoe speeding our way down the mighty Kinabatangan River in hot pursuit. We were not the only ones, and quite the crowd of people greeted us when we got there. However, we, nor the elephants seemed to mind, as they fed

away within close range of the line of gathered happy Eco tourists. What a start to our time there! In the evening we took a night cruise along a smaller tributary of the main river searching for wildlife, and although we found not animals to speak of we did get repeated looks at **Buffy Fish-Owls**, with at least four different birds seen (*photo page 19*).

5 October

Sukau (Kinabatangan River)



We spent the day birding by boat, checking the main Kinabatangan River, and various tributaries off it for lowland birds and other animals. Drifting down a quite rainforest-lined creek in the morning brought us a glittering prize in the form of a jewel-like **Hooded Pitta** lighting up the forest floor. This same tributary also produced a perched **Jerdon's Baza**. In many ways this was a classic Sukau day, with a healthy batch of kingfishers (half a dozen or so **Stork-billed Kingfishers**, and the odd **Blue-eared Kingfisher**), a good spread of raptors (including **Gray-headed and Lesser Fish-Eagles**, and **Jerdon's Baza** among others), and a sprinkling of hornbills, with a pair of **Rhinoceros Hornbills** along with **Oriental Pied and Black Hornbills**. However, a

Chestnut-winged Cuckoo seen in some riverside oil palms before a heavy afternoon downpour was much less predictable, being a rarely seen migrant to Sabah. Other highlights included a late morning sighting of two **Lesser Adjutants** and a couple of **Storm's Storks** riding a thermal, and a good variety of birds along a short trail behind our lodge that included **Bold-striped Tit-Babbler**, **Black-winged Flycatcher-Shrike**, and **Chestnut-rumped Babbler** among others.

6 October

Sukau (Kinabatangan River) & Gomantong Caves

A quiet morning opened with a group of **Bushy-crested Hornbills** perched up by the main river, and continued with a very photogenic **Blue-eared Kingfisher** that allowed us to drift right underneath it. We also got some cracking looks at one particular **Storm's Stork** that was perched by the river close to our lodge, which provided an upgrade from our flight views from the day before (*photo above*). Late morning saw us venture into the rainforest behind our lodge once more that yielded a striking male **Van Hasselt's Sunbird**, along with several **Ruby-cheeked Sunbirds**. However, the headliner at the lodge was a superb pair of **Striped Wren-Babblers** that did everything but jump on to the boardwalk with us!

After lunch we took a short boat ride across the main river, jumped in a bus and rode to the Gomantong Caves, the famous swiftlet nesting caves near Sukau. Heading toward the mighty dark cavern itself we were soon called back when our local guide had located the rather grumpy large male **Orangutan**, who took offence at our benign

presence and vented this by breaking branches aggressively. This was quite amusing as merely a show of strength that offered nothing we should be afraid of, until it took a different turn and it started throwing its own feces in our direction, at which point we decided to make a rather hasty retreat!

A quick check of the cave entrance saw us disturb a ginger young **Wallace's Hawk-Eagle** that was waiting with intent at the opening of the dark chasm to catch any unwitting bats or birds as they tried to leave the cave. However, the swiftlets were not settled and so we walked the quite road that is flanked by rich lowland forest, and returned to the cave later in the afternoon. A short distance from the car park, another ginger animal stopped us in

our tracks, as a large troop of **Red Leaf-Monkeys** was found feeding by the roadside, our first encounter with this attractive endemic primate that sports not only a rich rufous pelage but also a powder blue face, making it a very handsome monkey indeed. Other birders staying at Sukau at the same time had visited the day before and had managed to find the area's rarest hornbill, White-crowned, at around the same time we were visiting. As if to confirm this, the low hooting sound of a **White-crowned Hornbill** came drifting to us from the forest a short time after these thoughts were racing through my mind. A quick burst of playback revealed



them to be super-responsive, with at least three birds, including a handsomely crested male, sailing into the trees above us (*photo above*). We had spent quite a bit of time and energy trying to locate this low density bird around Sukau thus far, and so it was very satisfying to finally see one, and see them so well.

Returning to the cave itself a short time before dusk there was a hive of activity as the swiftlets had returned to their nesting walls, where finally they could be identified by their distinct nests (otherwise all three species in this cave, which are common in the area are inseparable on plumage alone). Interestingly the three species seem to segregate out into different zones within the cave, the white nests of the **Edible-nest Swiftlets** being found in one distinct area, while the black nests of **Black-nest Swiftlet** being found in another, and the messy, and mossy, nests of the **Mossy-nest Swiftlets** being located on another corner. It was good to be able to finally put a name to these common swiftlets that had been seen countless times away from their nests in the lowland jungles visited previously, but could not be identified with certainty. We lingered at the gaping cave entrance at dusk, for as the light began to fade a thick, pulsating line of Wrinkle-lipped Bats started to stream out of the cave, appearing much like a line of smoke emanating from the top of the cave. This was the cue for the arrival of several **Bat Hawks** that regularly plunged into the bat plume to pick off some easy prey. A **Peregrine Falcon** was also seen taking advantage of the abundance of easily available prey too. After dark the area echoed with the sound of nightbirds, which were all too elusive unfortunately: a **Reddish Scops-Owl** taunted us, then fell silent, and a **Sunda Frogmouth** called from the treetops. The latter was seen by Karen and John at least as it moved from one dense

canopy to another, a good result considering the difficult nature of this bird, (it favors the difficult to view canopy zone).

7 October

Sukau to Kota Kinabalu



As this was largely a travel day we had precious little time around the lodge at Sukau before departure. So we were up early, as one of the most spectacular residents of the lowland Bornean rainforest had thus far eluded us at Sukau and we were keen to leave on a high...

It did not take long for the monotone whistle of the endemic **Black-and-crimson Pitta** to reach our ears just a pace or two onto their short boardwalk (*photo left*). We hurried up further until we were in a direct line with the sound, and it did not take Karen long to announce she had the bird. Pretty soon we were all onto this striking denizen of the forest floor, resplendent in bright scarlet, with a subtle sheen of purple, and bright electric blue "horns". It was a magical sighting to end our time along the banks of the Kinabatangan that yielded both a memorable encounter, and wonderful photo opportunities...

An afternoon check of the muddy estuaries around Sabah's tiny capital, Kota Kinabalu, revealed a host of shorebirds, and importantly, several **Chinese Egrets**, an endangered species that still winters in northern Borneo in reasonable numbers.

8 October

Kota Kinabalu to Danum Valley

On this day we traveled to our third and final area of lowland jungle of the trip, and arguably the richest of them all: the lowland dipterocarp forest of the **Danum Valley Conservation Area** that surrounds the super-luxurious **Borneo Rainforest Lodge**. This exceptionally rich area of rainforest offered not only some endemic birds of lowland Borneo, but also some decent chances at other wildlife, being a notable site for Orangutans and other animals. This is certainly one of the top few venues in Southeast Asian birding, due to the seemingly infinite possibilities on offer, and also the excellent lodging from which to explore these. The Borneo Rainforest Lodge has always been one of the finest lodges in Asia, and just a few years back it underwent an extensive refurbishment, making it even better. One of the notable changes that occurred then was the equipping of all the guides with radios, and the hiring of rangers who are tasked to go and find wildlife for the lodge guests. The upshot of all of this is that there are now even greater chances at seeing some of the incredible animals that roam this diverse habitat.

Even the ride into the lodge is exciting, as we found out for ourselves, as it cuts through selectively logged, though rich, forest in the buffer zone, before entering the pristine, unlogged rainforest within the conservation area. I was especially vigilant for any tiny birds perched on any of the many dead trees on the way in, and this finally paid off when one of these was found to be the endemic **White-fronted Falconet** that use these promontories to hunt for insects. Our driver then took over the finding responsibilities, as he stopped first for a **Bornean Pygmy Elephant** that blocked our way into the lodge, and then to point out a young **Orangutan** dangling playfully by the roadside, our best view yet (*photo next page*). A healthy flock of **Dusky Munias** may have been overshadowed by all of this other action, but were still much appreciated, as it provided our first decent looks at this near-endemic species. And this was merely the drive in to the lodge!



After a bumpy, yet joyful, few hours making our way through the rainforest to the lodge we finally arrived and took in the wonderful setting: this handsome wooden building is positioned on the forest edge overlooking the rushing Segama River. A wooden walkway runs from the main building to the luxurious cabins, many of which have their own private view of this scenic waterway. John and Karen were only too pleased to find that their cabin was one such room! Staff bustled around us, catering to our every need (as they did from that point on), and we were soon enjoying the view of the river from the restaurant, and the first of many of their very tasty buffets. We also met our excellent local guide, Vivian, who took in our “shopping list” of hard target birds with remarkable calm, and began hatching plans to see them.

After lunch we were all eager to get cracking on this target list, and begin exploring this fantastically rich area. The beauty of this was we could do this by walking right from cabins into the forest closeby. It did not take long to find another key bird, and another endemic birds for us with our first male **Bornean Blue-Flycatcher**, glittering blue in the forest understorey. Entering the forest proper we then found a group of vocal Dusky Broadbills, which were new for our list, and got further looks at both **Red-naped Trogon** and **Spotted Fantail** before the heavens opened, rain came crashing dramatically down (as it can in the tropics), and we made a hasty retreat to the lodge. The main lodge building can provide a good place to shelter during such times, as the flowering blooms in the garden can attract nectar-loving birds, like the **Little Spiderhunter** we found from their covered balcony, and the river occasionally produces a **Great-billed Heron**, as it did for us that day as we sat out the rain. As the rain eased a little in the late afternoon we found two juvenile **Wallace’s Hawk-Eagles** perched close to our cabins just before darkness fell.

We had found out on arrival that another birding group had been graced by the presence of a Western Tarsier the night before close to the lodge, a diminutive and scarce primate that I had longed to see for some years. John and Karen shared my keenness to see it, and our local guide informed the rangers so that they could prioritize searching for it while we ate a hearty dinner. Sadly, by the time we had finished dinner, (during which we had also taken in the sight of a young **Buffy Fish-Owl** begging in the lodge garden), the rain began to fall once more, and the ranger had come up empty-handed. And so we headed back to our rooms for bed, only to be called hurriedly back just moments later, as the ranger had called in once he had the **Horsfield's (Western) Tarsier** in his sights (*photo page3*). Just a few minutes walking into the forest brought us extreme close ups of this big-eyed beauty as it stared down at us and clung to a vertical sapling. A magical close to our first night at **Borneo Rainforest Lodge**. It certainly felt like we were having some extraordinary luck on this tour, and especially here at Danum, and so it continued the next day...

9 October **Danum Valley**

This was simply one of those days that guides dream of...lots of target birds gave themselves up easily, along with a shock sighting thrown in too. Indeed, this sighting was my best of the year, and possibly of the last few years. But for that you need to read on...

Due to some sterling work by my Borneo Rainforest Lodge guide we were hugely successful in the morning at finding many of our target birds from our "shopping list":

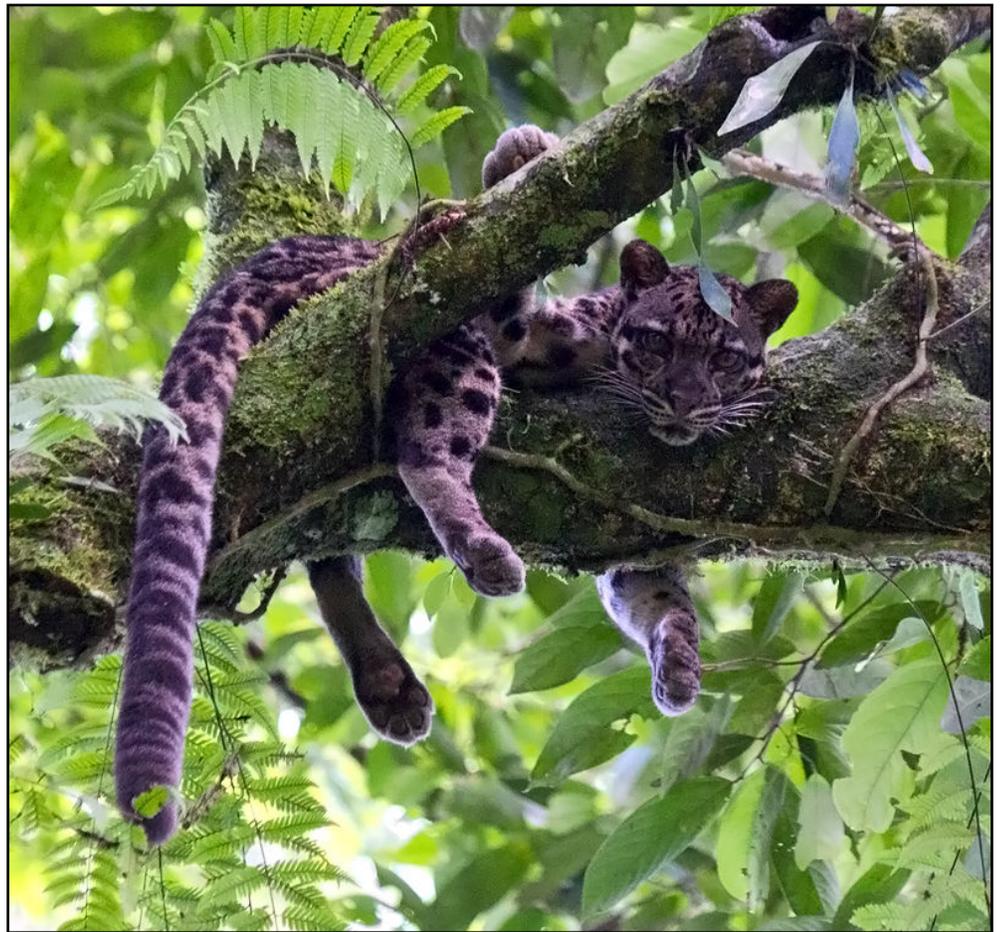
It began with a male **Large-billed Blue-Flycatcher** a short time after dawn, which like many of the morning's birds did not just show up, but performed well, giving wonderful views in the process. Next up was the oft-difficult endemic **Bornean Wren-Babbler**, which on this occasion gave extraordinary views that even allowed me to consider taking the odd photo or two (*photo below*)! After these more than satisfactory views we moved on for our next target, and a very special one indeed. Another endemic, and also one of the best looking of all Bornean birds, period: Blue-headed Pitta. We walked into its territory, but unlike the other targets thus far in the morning received no replies from our overtures. Then in the distance we heard the clear "purring" sound of a male **Blue-headed Pitta**. We quickly backtracked along the trail, took a side trail, and tried again. As with many birds it gave the initial impression of being a little far off, but I was not convinced so continued to play back and rapidly surveyed the dark forest floor for any signs of movement. Then, suddenly, there it was, a spectacular male bird with rich reddish back, deep purple underside, and a shocking sky-blue cap. I was starting to think we might even be able to walk on water at this point, with all the success we were having! Then our local guide, led us through the forest undergrowth to a narrow gully where we tried for our second endemic wren-babbler of the morning. The loud cries of a **Black-throated Wren-Babbler** were soon heard in response, and it took a little while to show serious interest but then came in marvelously, posing on open branches at eye level on a number of memorable occasions.



Things were going swimmingly and we then moved on to look for arguably the ugliest of all the hornbills that had been eluding us time and again up until this time. We soon heard it loud, trumpet-like alarm calls, and hurried towards the sound. Unfortunately, once again, this massive hornbill managed to tease us once more, as only Karen managed a glimpse of the **Helmeted Hornbill** before it left the scene. Well, something had to give this day, and it seemed to be this hornbill. As we continued to search for it within some large fig trees, Vivian retreated to take a rather special radio call. We were unaware of this at the time, although he soon returned and suggested we might want to give the Helmeted Hornbill a miss, as his friend was watching a Clouded Leopard hunting gibbons

(unsuccessfully), and had now settled down to sleep in a tree! I took this news to John and Karen, knowing that their keenness to see animals would make this offer irresistible. Sure enough seconds later we fled the scene and headed for the spot where the leopard had been seen. A quick calculation in my head of where it was estimated we were only around four hundred meters from the spot, although four hundred meters later I realized my error, and we continued for a further four hundred meters, up a frustratingly slippery final slope, and were greeted with the sight of all the lodge guests ogling a slumbering **Bornean Clouded Leopard** dozing in a tree right overhead (*photo below*)! The effort and sweat to get to this spot were all well, well worth it for this extraordinary sighting of this seldom-seen forest animal. Although the Danum Valley Conservation Area is arguably one of the best places in the world for the species, they are largely nocturnal, and even the guides that work at the lodge go years between sightings. Indeed, many of the guides at the lodge raced to the scene when the news broke, as many had not seen one for a long, long time, and were very keen to see one in broad daylight. The particularly unusual thing about this record too was that, unlike most nocturnal views of active animals passing through headlights, this leopard allowed us to watch it for as long as we liked, during which we saw it wake up blink nonchalantly at us and go back to sleep. We spent around two hours watching this exquisitely marked cat, well after all but the original ranger who'd found the animal had left, in full appreciation of the rarity of such a sighting. One of the great developments in recent years at Borneo Rainforest Lodge is the use of radios by all the guides that connect them to each other, and with several rangers who specifically roam the rainforest searching for wild animals for the guests to see. This system led us directly to see this Clouded Leopard, which formerly may have been heard about at the end of the morning when we returned to the lodge, and at which time it might have been too late to get it.

The lodge was of course buzzing at lunchtime with this news and we enjoyed another fantastic lunch, where we could not help but review this sighting time and again. Our lunch was disturbed by the best piece of bar work I have experienced thus far in my life, when the barman announced calmly "would you care for a monkey sir?" I did not understand the question at first until he gestured to a large group of **Red Leaf-Monkeys** chomping leaves in full view from the restaurant, with no sign of fear at all at the gathering crowd they had caused! On top of that the lodge garden also boasted a rather friendly **Whiskered Treeswift** over lunch too, that continually returned to its favored low branch, in full view of the lodge veranda.



The afternoon was, of course, understandably quieter, after all the afternoons generally are less

active, and we could not have crammed much more into the morning than we did! We were interrupted by bouts of rain during the afternoon period that was punctuated with sightings of **Great-billed Heron** (from the lodge), **Moustached Hawk-Cuckoo** and **Red-bearded Bee-eater**. On heading back to the lodge with nightfall descending

we located another **Brown Wood-Owl** along the road, and added **Greater Mouse-Deer** to our growing mammal list later that night on an otherwise quiet night drive from the lodge.

10 October **Danum Valley**

Buoyed by our success from the day before we changed plans and opted to go after one of Danum's rarest, and most tricky endemics, the gorgeous **Blue-banded Pitta**. This bird is not only tough to find by virtue of its low density, but also because most of the areas where it is found are not accessible to all, and require significant physical effort to get there. On top of all of that, the sound of the bird is deceptive and very hard to locate, being very soft and hard to pinpoint. In spite of all these obstacles, John and Karen were keen, especially as we had picked up many of the easiest targets around the lodge the day before. And so we set off on a steep, slippery hike to **Fairy Falls**. The start of our hike was interrupted with a beautiful male **Maroon-breasted Philentoma** at the trailhead, and a couple of **Orangutans** (a female and a juvenile) feeding in a large fig tree nearby. Despite hearing



up to three different individuals, the pitta eluded us as we simply could not locate them from their ventriloquial sound. In the meantime we enjoyed a pair of **Bornean Blue-Flycatcher**, and a party of **Orange-backed Woodpeckers**. Worse still, as we rounded a corner, along a very narrow section of the trail, a **Blue-banded Pitta** (*photo left*), hopped off a large rock by the trail, but could not be seen by any but the guides at the front! We spent hours around the falls, trying time and again to try and locate any calling pittas. A lot of effort and work was required, then finally, late in the morning Vivian and I ventured down a steep slope in pursuit of the call, and suddenly Vivian locked on to the bird sat perfectly still in the forest understorey. We quickly gestured to the others to join us. It was a bit of a scramble to get in position, but worth the trouble as we all enjoyed a good clear look at this most-wanted of all the endemics. It lingered for so long, I even managed to get off a

shot of it! We returned to the lodge for lunch with a skip in our step after this, picking up a **White-crowned Forktail** as we made our descent from the falls. The afternoon highlights included a male **Blue-banded Kingfisher** perched beside our cabins at the lodge, and pairs of both **Rhinoceros Hornbills** and **Wallace's Hawk-Eagles**. A **Malay Civet** crossing the lawn after dark was also much appreciated.

11 October **Danum Valley**

When birding these Southeast Asian rainforests birders are always on the lookout for fruiting fig trees that can be a magnet for frugivorous birds like hornbills and barbets. At **Borneo Rainforest Lodge** a number of large figs are well-known, and the signs that they are fruiting are often revealed by the constant sound of barbets calling from within their large canopies. And so this happened on this day, where the sound of multiple barbet species led us to a huge fig tree towering above a large clearing. The tree literally shook with the movement of excited birds plucking the fruits from its heavily-laden branches that included **Yellow-crowned, Red-throated, Gold-whiskered, and Blue-eared Barbets, Greater Green Leafbird, Asian Fairy-Bluebird, and both Yellow-rumped and Thick-billed Flowerpeckers**. However, the best find in the tree was a mammal, the strange, whiskered, **Binturong** or *Bear-Cat*, an odd largely-nocturnal civet with fire-orange eyes, frosted fur, and a prehensile tail for climbing large trees such as this one. Strangely though, none of the hoped-for specialist, frugivorous bulbuls like Black-and-white or Finsch's Bulbuls were found in spite of a seemingly perfect situation for them. Aside from this the forest was generally quiet, and strangely we had better luck in the afternoon during a walk on the lodge's canopy walkway. The walk to the walkway was eventful enough with "**Bornean**" **Black Magpie**, and another group of three

Bornean Bristleheads. Up on the walkway itself we enjoyed a group of thirteen **Dusky Broadbills**, **Chestnut-breasted and Red-billed Malkohas**, and a party of **Bushy-crested Hornbills**. However, the showstopper was the endemic **Pygmy White-eye** that John and Karen spotted up there.

At the end of our afternoon at these lofty heights we watched a **Red Giant Flying Squirrel** emerge and take to flight, which led a theme for the evening night drive where other Reds, as well as **Black and Thomas's Flying Squirrels** were also seen, and also all seen in flight, at their dramatic best.

12 October **Danum Valley**

This day was to be our final one around Borneo Rainforest Lodge. We had just a morning to bird in the area, before we traveled back to Sabah's capital, in readiness for our exploration of the endemic-rich highlands of Borneo. And so once again we searched for both Giant and Bornean Banded Pittas at known spots for them, but once again no sight nor sound of them was made. On the way there we bumped into the regular troop of **Crested Firebacks** around the lodge grounds again, with five different birds, including three spanking males. We also observed a butch male **Pig-tailed Macaque** menacingly prowling the grounds of the lodge. In the forest, a female Siberian Blue Robin hopping along the trail may well have been a recent arrival to this wintering ground, but better still was our final mammal addition at Danum. The wailing songs of **Bornean Gibbons** had been heard daily around Borneo Rainforest Lodge and earlier around Sukau, however, try as we did, we never seemed to get close to any. That all changed on this morning though as a close troop betrayed their presence with their loud, far carrying calls, and led us straight to them. The group seemed to comprise two adults and a youngster being carried on the breast of one of the parents. We also took a last look at the large fruiting fig that we had discovered the day before, and got prolonged views of the Binturong once more, along with the usual throng of barbets and flowerpeckers in attendance. Over the clearing we watched an adult Rufous-bellied Eagle gliding high above, and then we had to return to our rooms and pack up for our reluctant departure from this fantastic lodge.

Our birding was not finished once we left the lodge though, as the drive out, while not as action-packed as they way in, proved good once more. A final sighting of an **Orangutan** was fitting (over ten different encounters occurred on the tour, with animals seen on six different days of the trip), and another soaring raptor was a new one for us, **Black Eagle**. We also hit a feeding flock just before we left the lowland forest behind for the last time, which held **Raffle's Malkoha**, **Black-winged Flycatcher-Shrike**, **Spotted Fantail**, and **Velvet-fronted Nuthatch**. However, the star find

in this area was a fantastic **Olive-backed Woodpecker**, our final woodpecker addition of the trip, and our 21st species of the tour! We also found our first *pitcher plant* on the way out, which are more normally expected in the floristically rich highlands around Mount Kinabalu, although on this occasion involved the low altitude **Lowland Nepenthes** (photo above).



After some frustrating delays to our flight schedule we checked into a **Kota Kinabalu** hotel once more that evening, and looked ahead to some quality time in Borneo's highlands, which offered us the greatest number of endemic bird species of the tour...

13 October **Tambunan and Mount Kinabalu**

We left our hotel at an ungodly, early hour, so that we may reach Tambunan, a key highland site for endemic birds. Unlike Mount Kinabalu, Tambunan offers lower altitude forest and therefore species which are not always possible, or not present on the mountain itself. Unfortunately though, our best-laid plans were thwarted somewhat with truly appalling weather that dogged our time there: low cloud, rain and heavy mist restricting both visibility and our bird list that day. However, as this was our first foray into Borneo's highlands we still picked up many endemic and specialty species like flocks of **Chestnut-crested Yuhinas**, **Bornean Whistler**, **Bornean Treepie**, the recently-split **Bornean Leafbird** (from the lowland *Blue-winged*) and **Black-capped White-eye**. We also encountered an adult and juvenile **Blyth's Hawk-Eagle** and the incredibly bright scarlet **Temminck's Sunbird**.

In the afternoon we traveled onto **Mount Kinabalu**, making a brief late afternoon visit to the mountain, where we picked up our only **Bornean Forktail** of the trip (a highland form that is a widely proposed split from the lowland White-crowned), and for a couple of us at least a brief sighting of the endemic **Crimson-headed Partridge** along a dark forest trail.

14 October **Mount Kinabalu - HQ area**

After spending much of the day frustrated around Tambunan by the uncharacteristically poor weather, we opted to spend a full day concentrating on the higher elevation trails up on the mountain itself. We needed a good day to catch up after our frustrations from the day before, and this is just what we got. Indeed, this turned out to be the best days birding I had ever had on **Mount Kinabalu**, with a great combination of extreme luck, high activity, and good weather all day long.

We began, as usual, with a drive up to the top end of the road just as the first light of the day hit the road, which can be a great time to pick up some difficult species feeding along the road verge. We found our first **Bornean Whistling-Thrush** emerging into the middle of the road to feed before full light, along with the endemic **Eye-browed Jungle-Flycatcher** that also emerged at this time to feed in the open, something both species do not usually do at other times of the day. Our progress up the road though was halted when we hit a large flock of birds moving across the road in the trees overhead. So we jumped out of the van and started working our way through this massive flock. This flock involved mainly larger species, mainly laughingthrushes, which included the two most regular species, **Chestnut-hooded** (an endemic race and widely-proposed split from Chestnut-capped), and **Sunda Laughingthrushes**, as well as the scarcest laughter species on the mountain, the **Bare-headed Laughingthrush**, half a dozen of which were present in this large flock. Another large bird, the striking bright green **Short-tailed Magpie** was also found in this impressive flock.

A short time later, we reached the top end of the road, and the famous Timpohon Gate, the gateway to the steep summit trail up to the distinctively-shaped peak of this popular mountain amongst hikers. This can be a hive of activity in the wee hours of the morning as species come out from the dark shelter of the forest to feed at this time. A **Sunda Bush-Warbler** was one such hugely confiding bird seen at this time. Wandering this area we soon heard the rollicking call of the endemic **Red-breasted Partridge** nearby, and wandered closer to the call. This can be an easy bird to hear, but not always easy to get a look at. Not so this morning though as we found an opening which afforded us good looks downslope where we soon picked up this boldly-marked partridge lurking in the leaf litter. We then went deeper into the forest by walking several of the forest trails that crisscross the mountain. One of the strange features of Mount Kinabalu is that although it is very popular amongst hikers keen to reach Low's Peak on the summit, you rarely see these substantial numbers of people on the forest trails, which are largely ignored by the hikers looking for a more significant challenge than offered along these.

And so we walked several forest paths with just a couple of other birders seen during many hours walking them, most of the time we felt we had the dense montane forest all to ourselves. A short time down the trail we heard the incredibly high-pitched call of the petite **Bornean Stubtail**, a strange, near tailless endemic warbler (*photo below*). The call is extremely high-pitched making it not only difficult to hear for many that struggle with these high frequencies, but difficult to locate too. However, after a time we managed to get some great looks at this bird as it patrolled the forest floor and perched on low branches to give its distinctive call. Then we ran into another couple of birders and enjoyed with them some extraordinary looks at a striking male **Crimson-headed Partridge** that strolled, ever so slowly, across the open trail in front of us all. Our second endemic partridge in our first few hours on the mountain. Finishing this short trail with little further action we drove down to another trailhead, stopping at a viewpoint and enjoying rare low views of the rare **Waterfall (Giant) Swiftlet**, on our way down. Along the next trail we experienced the usual boom and bust birding pattern that so often characterizes forest birding, with little action, then sudden and pronounced activity in one magic area. Our first sign of activity was the loud, and constant calls of a party of **Mountain Wren-Babblers** in the understory which took some work but showed themselves admirably in the end. While we were getting our first looks, at our final of three endemic wren-babblers for the tour, up popped a bright scarlet bird that was immediately recognized as one of the most-wanted birds on the mountain: a male **Whitehead's Trogon** (which also had a female for company). It is not unusual to spend days looking for this significant quarry, and so we were very relieved to add this so early in our stay here. It was truly a rare morning indeed.



Little was added in the afternoon, although we did enjoy some extreme close-ups with a pair of **Yellow-breasted Warblers** that hurried back and forth to their nest which they were busy constructing at the time, and encountered either the same or another pair of **Whitehead's Trogons**, this time with at least three dowdy juveniles in tow.

15 October **Tambunan and Mount Kinabalu**

Having enjoyed a fruitful day on the mountain the day before, and been frustrated by low mist at Tambunan the day before that, we decided to take another stab at **Tambunan** and try and find some of the species that had eluded us there before. Thankfully, the weather was kinder to us than during our previous visit, although the birds still required some effort. We did manage to find one of Tambunan's more difficult endemic treasures remarkably easily, with three separate looks at one friendly **Bornean Barbet** that posed and sang repeatedly from a convenient open perch. However, the other endemic barbet we were hoping for at Tambunan (for which it is the best site), proved more challenging, although eventually we did get some 'scope looks (even if a little distant) of the **Mountain Barbet** too. Long periods of inactivity were again punctuated with bursts of birds. Late in the morning we connected with some perched **Ruddy Cuckoo-Doves**, the recently recognized **Bornean Bulbul** (now split from the mainland Black-crested), and by careful watch of some red canopy blossoms Karen picked up a superb **Whitehead's Spiderhunter**, another major target for this site (which is, again, the best site for it), that then afforded us repeated, good, long looks in the telescope. We were also gifted another look at a **Large Hawk-Cuckoo**, the form of which has sometimes been referred to as **Bock's Hawk-Cuckoo**, another oft-proposed split. We all enjoyed repeated views of several **Blyth's Hawk-Eagles** as we scanned the skies for another, much rarer raptor,

the endemic Mountain Serpent-Eagle, which was unfortunately absent from the skies that day. A lunchtime stop also yielded a colony of **Bornean Swiftlets**, displaying a clear green gloss to their upperparts (*photo below*), unlike the much more common, blue-sheened, **Glossy Swiftlets** that are sympatric with them in this area. Only Sam got a look at a brief, but fast-moving flock of **Pygmy White-eyes** in the area, which luckily at least had been seen by the others earlier in our tour at Danum.

After a full day in the area we decided to spend a nightbirding session up on Mount Kinabalu, what with clear, star-filled skies greeting us after darkness. So, after a good dinner of local Malay cuisine at a mountain restaurant we went in search of owls. We were mainly interested in Mountain Scops-Owl as this was the main species that the montane forests offered, although we were quickly distracted by a presumed calling **Bornean Frogmouth**, an extremely rarely-sighted species indeed. I was truly shocked to even hear one, my first ever experience with the species at all. We rushed to the sound, made some recordings, and tried desperately to tempt it in. Despite the bird calling back regularly it remained in dense cover, and at distance, and we had to resign ourselves to defeat. So we moved on up the road and returned our focus to the scops-owl once more. However, as we got out of the car at this new, higher, spot, we were stunned to hear *another* Bornean Frogmouth calling, and this time tantalizingly close to the road. I quickly made better recordings and readied the flashlight. On playing back its call it flew across the road, all the time caught in the spotlight, revealing its short tail (its other name is Short-tailed Frogmouth).



Unfortunately, despite further responses we never caught sight of the bird perched, in spite of much effort both on this night and the following one. It was an exciting though frustrating end to the day. I would dearly have loved to document this record properly with a photo. A **Small-toothed Palm-Civet** was also seen foraging on fruits in the area, although was a little overshadowed by the frogmouth!

16 October **Mount Kinabalu - Summit Trail**

With our trip list increasing nicely, and now holding many of the species possible around the HQ, and also padded with some significant endemics from the lower elevations of Tambunan, we opted to hike higher up the mountain and try for some higher elevation species. Around **Timpohon Gate**, our entrance to the winding and steep summit trail, we picked up some new species, notably a rather belated **Indigo Flycatcher**, a Sundaic endemic that had proved uncharacteristically difficult during this visit. There was also another, vivid green and red **Short-tailed Magpie** in the area, and a **Bornean Whistling-Thrush** flared its tail in the distinctive fashion that they do, before we departed for the most strenuous hike of the trip. We spent the whole morning working the lower portion of the summit trail, from the gate up to around two and half kilometers up the trail. The reason for taking this difficult walk up? A certain warbler, the endemic **Friendly Bush-Warbler**, an endemic species known from just two or three peaks in Sabah. A walk of a kilometer and a half is necessary to reach the lowest territory of the warbler

during which we got repeated looks at the strange endemic **Mountain Black-eye**, an unusual member of the white-eye family. A number of fruiting trees also attracted some very confiding **Pale-faced Bulbuls** (a widely proposed split from *Flavescent*), **photo left**, as well our first **Golden-naped Barbet**, the most common of the endemic barbet triumvirate, which had been frustratingly elusive up until this excellent view. Regular **Mountain Leaf-Warblers** were also in attendance, the subdued endemic race looking markedly different from the bright yellow-toned bird we had seen at Fraser's Hill on the Peninsula.



After a full morning on site, and having heard three different **Friendly Bush-Warblers** we seemed no nearer actually seeing one countably. However, on the way down, and near their lowest elevational range on the mountain we heard one again, and this time it crawled in through the mossy ground cover, and gave us repeated, and good lucks at it. Ironically enough, the other bush-warbler on the mountain, the

Sunda Bush-Warbler, was markedly more common, and notably more friendly, with regular looks at them both on the way up and down. I cannot help but feel they named them the wrong way round! On the descent we watched the comical sight of a huge juvenile **Sunda Cuckoo** being fed by a tiny **Mountain Leaf-Warbler**. We also got cracking looks at the striking local race (soon to be species?) of **White-browed Shortwing**, and found another party of **Mountain Wren-Babblers**, (**photo next page**), one of which gave extreme close-ups. Near the base of the summit trail an opening in the trees provided just the space we needed to get a view of a **Mountain Serpent-Eagle**, as it glided through this gap. It was not visible for long, but somehow we all managed to get on to this rare raptor just in time. Other highlights of our time on the Summit Trail included several views of *Nepenthes* or **Pitcher Plants**, along with **Mountain Treeshrews** and **Plantain Squirrels** which allowed close approach as they fed on scraps left by the many hikers walking the route to summit, and tipped us over fifty mammal species for the trip.

Another night foray for the frogmouth was undertaken in the evening, left us hearing it but with no sightings to show for it. However, our time was not wasted as we did find a **Mountain Scops-Owl** calling from the forest understorey.



17 October **Mount Kinabalu to Kota Kinabalu/Departure**

We spent a final morning around the HQ at Mount Kinabalu, before we needed to depart for Kota Kinabalu and afternoon departures out. Walking a forest trail we found our final mammal for the trip, the striking black-and-orange **Kinabalu Squirrel**. Our final **Short-tailed Magpie** also showed up in the same area, along with our last **Bornean Whistler** of the tour. On our journey back to Kota Kinabalu we hit a heavy tropical storm, which made our final stop of the tour, on the outskirts of the city itself, a little troublesome, with rain crashing down all around us as we made this final and important stop. However, luckily for us we could view the open mudflats and sand spits there from the vehicle, and managed to pick up both the hoped-for **Malaysian Plover**, a final lifer for the group, as well as an unexpected vagrant **Ringed Plover** to finish what had been an extraordinary tour for both birds, and mammals, with some dazzling highlights like **Malaysian Rail-Babbler**, **7 species of trogon**, **7 species of pitta**, **3 endemic barbet species**, **3 endemic wren-babbler species**, a

bunch of cool nightbirds including the rare **Large Frogmouth**, and **Clouded Leopard**, **Western Tarsier**, multiple **Orangutans** (including one memorable, *and angry*, big-cheeked male), several sightings of herds of **Bornean Pygmy-Elephants**, and **Bornean Gibbon**.

BIRD LIST

The taxonomy of the list follows: Clements, James F., White, Anthony W., and Fitzpatrick, John W. *The Clements Checklist of Birds of the World*. Cornell, 2007.

This list is up to date with all the major changes published by Cornell up until August 2011.

ENDEMICs are marked in **RED**.

40 Borneo endemics were seen on the tour

PHEASANTS, GROUSE AND ALLIES: Phasianidae

H Gray-breasted (Malayan) Partridge *Arborophila orientalis campbelli*

Heard distantly downslope from the Bishop's Trail at Fraser's Hill (PM).

Red-breasted (Hill) Partridge *Arborophila hyperythra* **BORNEO ENDEMIC**

This endemic partridge was seen very well on our first morning on Mount Kinabalu (B).

H Chestnut-necklaced (Hill) Partridge *Arborophila charltonii*

Heard daily in Danum Valley, and also heard along the Kinabatangan River (B).

Crimson-headed Partridge *Haematortyx sanguiniceps* **BORNEO ENDEMIC**

Two sightings of this striking gamebird were made on the trails at Mount Kinabalu, with great views of a male along the Bukit Ular Trail (B).

Crested (Wood) Partridge (Roulroul) *Rollulus rouloul*

This odd partridge was seen at Taman Negara with three birds seen along a swampy trail one morning there (PM).

H Red Junglefowl *Gallus gallus*

Heard around Taman Negara (PM).

Crested Fireback *Lophura ignita rufa*

The very different races of the mainland and Borneo were both seen very well: the white-tailed race was seen on the Peninsula at Taman Negara several times. Most memorably when a troop of them wandered underneath the stilted blind we were standing in!

Bornean Fireback *Lophura ignita nobilis* **BORNEO ENDEMIC**

The race in Borneo has a yellow, not white tail. A regular troop was seen in the garden at the Borneo Rainforest Lodge. Please note that this is proposed by some as a split, and would then be considered an endemic species.

GO Malayan Peacock-pheasant *Polyplectron malacense*

Despite a lot of effort trying to find them at Taman Negara, only Sam got several brief views of this magnificent pheasant (PM).

Great Argus *Argusianus argus*

A male of this spectacular pheasant surprised us late one morning in Taman Negara (PM), by appearing suddenly, and memorably very close-by.

STORKS: Ciconiidae

Storm's Stork *Ciconia stormi*

The Sukau area along the Kinabatangan River in eastern Sabah (B) is a stronghold for this scarce species. We saw them on three days in this area, with some seen riding a thermal on one day, and a memorable single bird perched the following day which allowed us to drift right up to it.

Lesser Adjutant *Leptoptilos javanicus*

Two of these ugly storks were seen circling on a thermal late one morning above the Kinabatangan River (B).

ANHINGAS: Anhingidae

Oriental Darter *Anhinga melanogaster*

Scattered sightings were made around both Sukau and Danum on Borneo.

HERONS, EGRETS AND BITTERNS: Ardeidae

Gray Heron *Ardea cinerea*

More than 20 birds were seen at Kuala Selangor on the Peninsula.

Great-billed Heron *Ardea sumatrana*

A single bird was seen on two different days from the balcony at Borneo Rainforest Lodge (B).

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

Seen regularly (daily) around Sukau in Borneo, with other sightings on the Peninsula at Kuala Selangor.

Great Egret *Ardea alba modesta*

Recorded around Kuala Selangor (PM), and also on Borneo around Sukau and Danum Valley.

Intermediate Egret *Mesophoyx intermedia*

Regularly recorded around Sukau (B), with others also seen at Kuala Selangor on the mainland.

Chinese Egret *Egretta eulophotes*

This globally threatened species was seen on the outskirts of Kota Kinabalu, a noted wintering ground for the species (B).

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Seen at Kuala Selangor (PM), and on a number of occasions along the Kinabatangan River (B), as well as on the outskirts of Kota Kinabalu (B).

Pacific Reef-Heron *Egretta sacra*

A couple of these birds were seen at Likas, in Kota Kinabalu (B).

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis coromandus*

Just a few sightings were had in Borneo.

Striated Heron *Butorides striata*

Only seen in Borneo, with two singles at Sukau, and another at Likas.

Black-crowned Night-Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

4-5 birds were seen at Kuala Selangor (PM), and another couple were seen in Kota Kinabalu (B).

HAWKS, EAGLES AND KITES: Accipitridae

Jerdon's Baza *Aviceda jerdoni*

Three sighting were obtained around Sukau (B), all of single birds.

Bat Hawk *Macheiramphus alcinus*

Two birds were seen at dusk, hunting bats around the cave entrance at Gomantong (B).

Black-shouldered (-winged) Kite ***Elanus caeruleus***

One was seen en route to Taman Negara on our first day of birding (PM), and another was seen by the airport at Lahad Datu on our way out of Borneo Rainforest Lodge (B).

Brahminy Kite ***Haliastur indus***

Recorded on seven days of the tour, around Kuala Selangor on the mainland, and also regularly around the Kinabatangan River in Borneo.

White-bellied Sea-Eagle ***Haliaeetus leucogaster***

Also recorded on seven days of the tour, around Kuala Selangor on the Peninsula, and Sukau in Borneo.

Lesser Fish-Eagle ***Ichthyophaga humilis***

Seen on two days from our boat rides in the Sukau area, with a maximum of four in one day (B).

Gray-headed Fish-Eagle ***Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus***

A scattering of sightings also in the Sukau area of Borneo.

Mountain (Kinabalu) Serpent-Eagle ***Spilornis kinabaluensis*** **BORNEO ENDEMIC**

Despite two visits to Tambunan, (usually the best place for this scarce species), we could not track one down there. However, we were lucky to find one as we descended the summit trail on Mount Kinabalu (B).

Crested Serpent-Eagle ***Spilornis cheela***

Recorded on ten days of the tour, both in Peninsula Malaysia and Borneo, with the highest numbers of sightings around Sukau, and Danum Valley in Borneo.

Crested Goshawk ***Accipiter trivirgatus***

Recorded in Borneo only, around Sukau, Danum Valley, and also Sepilok.

Black Eagle ***Ictinaetus malayensis***

one was seen as we left Danum Valley, along the entrance road to the conservation area (B).

Rufous-bellied Eagle ***Lophotriorchis kienerii***

Two birds were seen in Borneo, firstly around Sukau, and later flying over the staff quarters at the Borneo Rainforest Lodge.

Changeable Hawk-Eagle ***Nisaetus cirrhatus***

Three sightings were made: a dark morph bird en route to Taman Negara on the mainland, and another dark phase bird in Sepilok (B), and, finally, a pale morph on the way into the Borneo Rainforest Lodge.

Blyth's Hawk-Eagle ***Nisaetus alboniger***

Recorded on three days of the tour: a single gliding over the New Road at Fraser's Hill (PM), and several individuals were seen on both of our visits to Tambunan on Borneo.

Wallace's Hawk-Eagle ***Nisaetus nanus***

A very good tour for this species, with sightings on five different days. Our first came on the mainland from the Tahan Hide in Taman Negara, with another single there on another day. On Borneo we saw them twice around the Borneo Rainforest Lodge in Danum, and another was seen perched at the cave entrance at Gomantong.

FALCONS AND CARACARAS: Falconidae

Black-thighed Falconet ***Microhierax fringillarius***

This diminutive raptor was seen five times at Taman Negara (PM), with a maximum of four on one particular day.

White-fronted (Bornean) Falconet ***Microhierax latifrons* BORNEO ENDEMIC**

A pair were found along the entrance road into the Danum Valley Conservation Area (B).

Peregrine Falcon ***Falco peregrinus***

Two different birds were seen in Borneo: one hunting bats at Gomantong Caves at dusk, and another flying high over Timpohon Gate on Mount Kinabalu.

RAILS, GALLINULES AND COOTS: Rallidae

White-breasted Waterhen ***Amaurornis phoenicurus***

Two different sightings were made on Borneo: near Sandakan, and also en route to Tambunan.

Purple Swamphen ***Porphyrio porphyrio viridis***

A couple was seen on the outskirts of Kota Kinabalu (B).

PLOVERS AND LAPWINGS: Charadriidae

Pacific Golden-Plover ***Pluvialis fulva***

Ten birds were seen on some mudflats on the outskirts of Kota Kinabalu in Borneo.

Lesser Sand-Plover ***Charadrius mongolus***

Five birds were seen around Kota Kinabalu in Sabah.

Greater Sand-Plover ***Charadrius leschenaultii***

A small group were seen during our final birding, close to Sabah's capital, Kota Kinabalu.

Malaysian Plover ***Charadrius peronii***

A single female was seen at a stakeout near Kota Kinabalu (thanks to Chris for the tip-off!), watched from the car during a heavy rainstorm, this was our last birding and our last trip addition of the tour.

Common Ringed Plover ***Charadrius hiaticula***

This vagrant species was seen and photographed on our final afternoon, close to Kota Kinabalu in Sabah.

STILTS AND AVOCETS: Recurvirostridae

Black-winged Stilt ***Himantopus himantopus***

One was seen feeding on some mudflats on the edge of Kota Kinabalu (Sabah).

SANDPIPERS AND ALLIES: Scolopacidae

Common Sandpiper ***Actitis hypoleucos***

One was seen on the Peninsula at Kuala Selangor, while others were seen around Kota Kinabalu in Sabah, with a maximum of ten there one afternoon.

Gray-tailed Tattler ***Tringa brevipes***

A handful of birds was seen on the outskirts of Kota Kinabalu in Borneo.

Wood Sandpiper ***Tringa glareola***

One was seen on a lagoon in Kota Kinabalu (Sabah).

Marsh Sandpiper ***Tringa stagnatilis***

One was seen around Kota Kinabalu in Sabah.

Whimbrel

Numenius phaeopus

Flocks of ten birds were seen on the way in and out of Sukau, and another flock was seen on the outskirts of Kota Kinabalu.

Ruddy Turnstone

Arenaria interpres

One was seen on some mudflats close to the airport at Kota Kinabalu on Borneo on our final birding session of the tour.

GULLS, TERNS AND SKIMMERS: Laridae

Whiskered Tern

Chlidonias hybrida

A handful were seen on the way in, and out, of Sukau (B).

Great Crested Tern

Thalasseus bergii

Around ten birds were seen around the coast of eastern Sabah at Sandakan.

PIGEONS AND DOVES: Columbidae

Rock Pigeon

Columba livia

Scattered sightings in urban areas throughout.

Spotted (-necked) Dove

Streptopelia chinensis

Recorded on seven days of the tour, at scattered sites on the Peninsula and in Sabah.

Ruddy Cuckoo-Dove

Macropygia emiliana

Seen on one of our visits to Tambunan (B), when up to four were seen in a day, including some perched birds.

Little Cuckoo-Dove

Macropygia ruficeps

Recorded regularly around Fraser's Hill on the Peninsula.

Emerald Dove

Chalcophaps indica

Just the one was seen, near Sukau (B).

Zebra Dove

Geopelia striata

Recorded around Kuala Selangor on the Peninsula, and also around Kota Kinabalu in Borneo.

Little Green-Pigeon

Treron olax

Only recorded on mainland Malaysia. A couple of small groups were seen visiting fruiting trees in and around the resort at Taman Negara (PM).

Pink-necked (Green) Pigeon

Treron vernans

Commonly encountered at Kuala Selangor with around 30 birds in one day there. On Borneo two birds were also seen near Sukau.

Thick-billed (Green) Pigeon

Treron curvirostra

Several groups were seen in and around the resort at Taman Negara on the Peninsula, and later again at Danum Valley in Sabah. A small party was also seen visiting a fruiting tree at The Gap on the mainland.

Large Green-Pigeon

Treron capellei

This globally threatened species was seen on our first afternoon at Taman Negara (PM), when a single bird was seen visiting a fruiting fig that also attracted Thick-billed and Little Green Pigeons, Asian Fairy-Bluebirds, Bar-bellied Cuckoo-shrike, and several species of bulbul.

GO Wedge-tailed Pigeon *Treron sphenurus*

One was seen along the Old Gap Road by Sam at Fraser's Hill (PM).

Jambu Fruit-Dove *Ptilinopus jambu*

A young male was seen feeding in a tree within our resort at Taman Negara late in the afternoon of our first full day there (PM).

Green Imperial-Pigeon *Ducula aenea*

Numerous sightings were had at Sukau on Borneo, with other sightings coming at Danum and Sepilok in Borneo, and also at Kuala Selangor in West Malaysia.

Mountain Imperial-Pigeon *Ducula badia*

Recorded three times at Fraser's Hill, included several birds which were seen perched. A scattering of other sightings also came in the highlands of Borneo on Kinabalu and at Tambunan.

PARROTS: Psittacidae

Blue-rumped Parrot *Psittinus cyanurus*

Two birds were seen at Taman Negara (PM).

Blue-crowned Hanging-Parrot *Loriculus galgulus*

A regular sound around Taman Negara were the high-pitched calls of the tiny parrots flashing overhead at high speed. Several good views were had there too, including seeing some of them hanging upside down while feeding. A few other sightings also came around Borneo Rainforest Lodge in Sabah.

CUCKOOS: Cuculidae

Chestnut-winged Cuckoo *Clamator coromandus*

A shock find at Sukau (Borneo), this scarce migrant was seen perched in an area of oil palms one afternoon.

Large Hawk-Cuckoo *Hierococcyx sparverioides*

*One was seen at Fraser's Hill on the mainland, and another was seen perched at Tambunan in Sabah. Both these birds are of the race **bocki** which some propose as a split, Bock's Hawk-Cuckoo.*

Moustached Hawk-Cuckoo *Hierococcyx vagans*

A bird was seen along the entrance road into Borneo Rainforest Lodge (B).

Sunda Cuckoo *Cuculus lepidus*

A juvenile bird was seen being fed by a Mountain Leaf-Warbler up on the Summit Trail of Mount Kinabalu (B).

H Banded Bay Cuckoo *Cacomantis sonneratii*

Heard at a number of lowland sites in Borneo, and once in Peninsula Malaysia. However, in general, many cuckoos were not calling during our visit, especially on the Peninsula.

GO Plaintive Cuckoo *Cacomantis merulinus*

Just two birds were recorded throughout, when many cuckoos were simply not vocal the time, one was heard at Sukau and another en route from there was seen briefly by Sam only.

H Brush (Rusty-breasted) Cuckoo *Cacomantis variolosus*

Just heard around Gomantong Caves in Borneo.

H Little (Malay) Bronze-Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx minutillus*

Only heard on our first morning as we left our Kuala Lumpur hotel (PM).

GO Violet Cuckoo

Chrysococcyx xanthorhynchus

Frustratingly, heard on a number of occasions in Borneo, at Sepilok, Sukau, and Danum Valley, although only Sam managed a brief view.

H Asian (Square-tailed) Drongo-cuckoo

Surniculus lugubris

Just a single bird was heard in the Sukau area. In common with many other cuckoo species on this tour, not very vocal during our visit.

Asian Koel

Eudynamys scolopaceus

One was seen at Taman Negara (PM), and another at Kuala Selangor (PM).

Black-bellied Malkoha

Phaenicophaeus diardi

Two singles were seen at Taman Negara (PM).

Green-billed Malkoha

Phaenicophaeus tristis

Two singles were seen on separate days at The Gap (PM).

Raffles's Malkoha

Phaenicophaeus chlorophaeus

This bright ginger cuckoo was seen on several occasions at Taman Negara (PM), and just the once near Danum Valley in Borneo.

Red-billed Malkoha

Phaenicophaeus javanicus

One was seen from the canopy walkway at Borneo Rainforest Lodge in Sabah.

Chestnut-breasted Malkoha

Phaenicophaeus curvirostris

Recorded five times on the tour, both on the Peninsula and Borneo: at Taman Negara, at The Gap, Sepilok, and en route to Danum Valley.

H Short-toed Coucal

Centropus rectunguis

One was heard calling at Taman Negara a short time before dusk, as we waited to try for the regular Large Frogmouth there.

Greater Coucal

Centropus sinensis

Two were seen on the Peninsula at Kuala Selangor.

H Lesser Coucal

Centropus bengalensis

Heard once along a tributary off the mighty Kinabatangan River in eastern Sabah (B).

BARN OWLS: Tytonidae

Oriental Bay-Owl

Phodilus badius

For me at least, one of the best sightings of the tour. We ventured out after a rainstorm into the forest behind our lodge at Sepilok, and soon got a response from this bird, which was tracked down to a low branch, where it remained for stunning views and remarkable photo opportunities (B).

OWLS: Strigidae

H Reddish Scops-Owl

Otus rufescens

We heard them distantly at Taman Negara (PM), and closer at Gomantong Caves (B) but they could unfortunately never be tracked down.

Mountain Scops-Owl

Otus spilocephalus

A bird was seen well, though briefly, in the forest understorey on Mount Kinabalu (B).

Sunda Scops-Owl

Otus lempiji

After unsuccessfully chasing a bird calling high in the resort trees in Taman Negara (PM), we found another one a few days later, more conveniently calling from the understorey. On this occasion we managed to make our way into the understorey and come face to face with this little owl staring back at us from close range.

Barred Eagle-Owl

Bubo sumatranus

A bold day roosting bird was found in the woodland at Kuala Selangor (PM), sitting in the open. A very impressive bird that made me regret having left my camera back in the hotel room!

Buffy Fish-Owl

Ketupa ketupu

After a poor view of a bird disturbed from day roost in Taman Negara (PM), birds were seen much better in Sukau (B), where up to four different birds were seen in a single night. Another young bird was seen and heard begging in the garden at Borneo Rainforest Lodge.

Brown Wood-Owl

Strix leptogrammica

Recorded on the Peninsula and Borneo. A smashing bird was regular right around our hotel in town at Fraser's Hill during our stay, and another couple of sightings were made around there during several night drives in this area. Finally, a bird was seen in Borneo, along the entrance road into Borneo Rainforest Lodge.

Collared Owlet

Glaucidium brodiei

This tiny owl was seen during the day along the Bishop's Trail at Fraser's Hill (PM).

Brown (Boobook) Hawk-Owl

Ninox scutulata

One was seen beside our cabins in Sepilok, on the same night we also managed to find an Oriental Bay Owl.

FROGMOUTHS: Podargidae

Large Frogmouth

Batrachostomus auritus

This, the rarest of the frogmouths in Peninsula Malaysia, was seen well one night at Taman Negara, at a regular stakeout for the species.

Gould's Frogmouth

Batrachostomus stellatus

This is the most regular of the frogmouth species in Taman Negara, although still quite difficult to see. Not so for us though, as we found one at our first attempt there.

Short-tailed Frogmouth

Batrachostomus poliolophus mixtus **BORNEO ENDEMIC**

This endemic form is often split as Bornean Frogmouth. Amazingly two different frogmouths were heard calling one evening at Mount Kinabalu. The second individual was seen very well in the spotlight as it crossed from one dense canopy to another in response to playback of its call. Unfortunately in spite of a lot of effort, and clear responses from the bird itself, we could never get it to land in a canopy where it could be seen perched, and the record therefore properly documented as I would have liked.

H Javan (Blyth's) Frogmouth

Batrachostomus javensis affinis

One was heard calling distantly one night while searching for a Large Frogmouth at Taman Negara (PM).

Sunda Frogmouth

Batrachostomus cornutus

We lingered after dark around Gomantong Caves to try and see this tricky frogmouth. We heard one individual calling repeatedly from the canopy, which responded by flying in a number of times, although just one flight view could be obtained despite much effort.

NIGHTJARS AND ALLIES: Caprimulgidae

Malaysian (Eared) Nightjar

Eurostopodus temminckii

Several birds were calling and seen hawking insects over the treetops at Taman Negara (PM) one night.

TROGONS: Trogonidae

Red-naped Trogon

Harpactes kasumba

A single male was seen at Taman Negara (PM), and we also found two other birds near the Borneo Rainforest Lodge in Danum Valley (B).

Diard's Trogon

Harpactes diardii

Just the one was seen, a stunning male, on our first morning at Taman Negara (PM).

Whitehead's Trogon

***Harpactes whiteheadi* BORNEO ENDEMIC**

Two sightings were enjoyed in one day on Mount Kinabalu: the first involved a pair, and then later the same day, further down the same trail, possibly the same pair were found, though this time with at least three juveniles were with them, which lingered for some time.

Cinnamon-rumped Trogon

Harpactes orrhophaeus

A male was seen briefly at Taman Negara (PM).

Scarlet-rumped Trogon

Harpactes duvaucelii

The most abundant of the lowland trogons, with four sightings on the tour: two on the Peninsula at Taman Negara, and another two at Danum in Borneo.

Red-headed Trogon

Harpactes erythrocephalus

Recorded on four different occasions at Fraser's Hill (PM).

Orange-breasted Trogon

Harpactes oreskios

Seen on two occasions near The Gap (PM), with a single one day, and then a pair the following day.

KINGFISHERS: Alcedinidae

Common Kingfisher

Alcedo atthis

One was seen at Kuala Selangor in West Malaysia.

Blue-eared Kingfisher

Alcedo meninting

Recorded on three days of the tour, once at Taman Negara (PM), and multiple times during boar trips around Sukau, where on occasion, they allowed extremely close approach.

Blue-banded Kingfisher

Alcedo euryzona

A male of this striking species was seen fishing from rocks just behind John and Karen's cabin at Borneo Rainforest Lodge.

Rufous-backed Kingfisher

Ceyx rufidorsa

Just recorded several times at Danum Valley and Sepilok on Borneo. Our best views came of a perched bird near the Borneo Rainforest Lodge.

Banded Kingfisher

Lacedo pulchella

Although heard at a number of spots on the tour, just one male was seen on the Peninsula at Taman Negara.

Stork-billed Kingfisher

Pelargopsis capensis

Recorded a couple of times on the mainland (around Taman Negara and Kuala Selangor), although seen with most regularity around Sukau in Sabah, where up to five birds were seen in a single day.

White-throated Kingfisher

Halcyon smyrnensis

A few singles were seen at Taman Negara in Peninsula Malaysia.

Collared Kingfisher *Todiramphus chloris*

Recorded four times on the tour: twice at Kuala Selangor on the Peninsula, and en route to Sukau and at Kota Kinabalu in Sabah.

Rufous (Chestnut) -collared Kingfisher *Actenoides concretus*

This stunningly beautiful kingfisher was seen first at Taman Negara (PM), and then later a bird was photographed in Borneo, at the wonderful Rainforest Discovery Centre at Sepilok.

BEE-EATERS: Meropidae

Red-bearded Bee-eater *Nyctyornis amictus*

This staggeringly beautiful, and large, bee-eater was seen twice at The Gap (PM), and then later at Danum Valley (B).

Blue-throated Bee-eater *Merops viridis*

Strangely, only recorded on Borneo, at Sukau, Sepilok, and in Danum Valley.

ROLLERS: Coraciidae

Dollarbird *Eurystomus orientalis*

Seen on three occasions around Taman Negara on the Peninsula, although were most numerous around Sukau in Sabah, where they were recorded regularly daily (more than ten birds in a single day).

HORNBILLS: Bucerotidae

Oriental Pied-Hornbill *Anthracoceros albirostris*

A single bird was first seen near our resort at Taman Negara on the mainland. Others were seen at Sepilok and Sukau, with the latter site producing regular sightings with more than ten birds in a single day.

(Asian) Black Hornbill *Anthracoceros malayanus*

Only encountered on this tour in Borneo, where they were seen at Sepilok, Sukau, and also in Danum Valley. A maximum of ten birds were seen in one group near our resort at Sepilok.

Rhinoceros Hornbill *Buceros rhinoceros*

One of Southeast Asia's most dramatic species, being both massive in size, and decorated with a large bright orange horn-like casque. They were seen on both the Peninsula and Borneo, where pairs were seen at The Gap, Taman Negara (sharing a tree with 11 Wrinkled Hornbills!), Sukau, and Danum Valley.

Helmeted Hornbill *Buceros vigil*

This and the White-crowned Hornbills are the two scarcest species, often best looked-for around fruiting trees. However, despite several fruiting trees being found at Danum (that hosted Orangutans, Binturong, and a host of birds), we could not nail this species down. Just a couple of brief flight views were obtained at Danum Valley on Borneo, with only distantly calling birds heard during our time at Taman Negara on the mainland.

Bushy-crested Hornbill *Anorrhinus galeritus*

A party of three perched by the Kinabatangan River opened our morning's birding one day at Sukau (B). Another couple of sightings came at Danum too (B).

White-crowned Hornbill *Aceros comatus*

A party of three confiding birds were seen along the entrance road to Gomantong Caves (B), which included one adult male among them.

Wrinkled Hornbill *Aceros corrugatus*

This striking and colorful hornbill was seen twice at Taman Negara (PM), with our first memorable sighting involving a group of at least 11 birds perched in a bare tree with a pair of Rhinoceros Hornbills. Quite the sight!

ASIAN BARBETS: Megalaimidae

Brown Barbet *Calorhamphus fuliginosus*

A minimum of five birds were seen together in a large fruiting fig at The Gap (PM). Another of the endemic Bornean race was seen at Sepilok.

Fire-tufted Barbet *Psilopogon pyrolophus*

This striking barbet was seen several times during our stay at Fraser's Hill, with a final sighting involving a bird that visited a bird table at our town hotel!

H Lineated Barbet *Megalaima lineata*

A handful of birds were heard calling on Bukit Malawati near Kuala Selangor (PM).

Gold-whiskered Barbet *Megalaima chrysopogon*

Three of these chunky barbets were seen sharing a fruiting tree with Asian Fairy-Bluebirds and Straw-headed Bulbuls in our resort at Taman Negara on our final morning. Three to four birds were then seen in a large fruiting fig tree at The Gap (PM), and several further sightings came near the Borneo Rainforest Lodge.

H Red-crowned Barbet *Megalaima rafflesii*

This scarce barbet was heard calling in the distance near The Gap (PM).

Red-throated Barbet *Megalaima mystacophanos*

One was picked out by Karen in Taman Negara (PM), and another single bird was seen sharing a large fruiting fig with Gold-whiskered, Yellow-crowned, and Blue-eared Barbets, several flowerpeckers, and a Binturong, at Danum (B).

Black-browed Barbet *Megalaima oorti*

The common barbet in Peninsula Malaysia's highlands, where two singles were seen in Fraser's Hill (PM). The higher roads, like the Telekom Loop, provide good views of the canopy that usually make this straightforward to see there.

Mountain Barbet *Megalaima monticola* **BORNEO ENDEMIC**

One distant bird was seen feeding in a fruiting tree at Tambunan, the best site for this species in Sabah.

Yellow-crowned Barbet *Megalaima henricii*

A single bird was seen visiting a fruiting tree at The Gap on the mainland, and another was also seen in a fruiting tree at Danum (B).

Golden-naped Barbet *Megalaima pulcherrima* **BORNEO ENDEMIC**

Although by far the most common and abundant of the three endemic barbets in Borneo, it was by no means easy on this tour, with just one seen (albeit very well), visiting a fruiting tree on the summit trail on Mount Kinabalu.

Blue-eared Barbet *Megalaima australis*

Recorded four times on the tour: at The Gap, Sukau, and in Danum Valley, where a maximum of six were seen visiting a fruiting tree near the Borneo Rainforest Lodge.

Bornean Barbet *Megalaima eximia* **BORNEO ENDEMIC**

Usually the scarcest and most difficult of the three endemic barbets, although not for us this year as it proved easy to find during our second visit to Tambunan where a single bird was seen well on three occasions as it called within our telescope.

Coppersmith Barbet *Megalaima haemacephala*

Just recorded at the one site on the tour, Kuala Selangor (PM), where at least five birds were seen on the edge of the mangroves.

WOODPECKERS: Picidae

Rufous Piculet *Sasia abnormis*

On the Peninsula, three different sightings were made in the area around The Gap. On Borneo a couple of single birds were seen along the Menanggal River, near Sukau.

Brown-capped (Sunda) Woodpecker *Dendrocopos moluccensis*

One bird was seen at Kuala Selangor, on mainland Malaysia.

H Rufous Woodpecker *Celeus brachyurus*

Frustratingly heard a few times in Taman Negara, but never close enough to see them.

White-bellied Woodpecker *Dryocopus javensis*

Recorded a couple of times in Borneo: at Sepilok and near Sukau.

Banded Woodpecker *Picus miniaceus*

Just a couple of sightings were made: one at Taman Negara (PM), and another en route to the Borneo Rainforest Lodge (B).

Lesser Yellownape *Picus chlorolophus*

One was seen on our first afternoon at Fraser's Hill, on an afternoon that also saw us run into its cousin, the Greater Yellownape too.

Crimson-winged Woodpecker *Picus puniceus*

Three birds were seen at Taman Negara (PM) on one day.

Greater Yellownape *Picus flavinucha*

One was seen on the Telekom Loop, along with Lesser Yellownape in the same area, on our first afternoon at Fraser's Hill.

Checker-throated Woodpecker *Picus mentalis*

Seen on two of our days around Taman Negara (PM) with a maximum of three different birds seen in one day.

H Laced Woodpecker *Picus vittatus*

One was heard calling from the coastal woodland at Kuala Selangor (PM).

Olive-backed Woodpecker *Dinopium rafflesii*

One of these large and flashy woodpeckers (there seems to be an abundance of these on this tour), was seen on our journey out of the Borneo Rainforest Lodge.

Common Flameback (Goldenback) *Dinopium javanense*

Two were seen along the mangrove boardwalk at Kuala Selangor (PM).

Greater Flameback (Goldenback) *Chrysocolaptes lucidus*

One was seen briefly at Kuala Selangor (PM).

Bamboo Woodpecker *Gecinulus viridis*

A red-capped male was seen in a productive bamboo patch near the foot of the Old Gap Road at Fraser's Hill, which over several days yielded Orange-breasted Trogon, Black Laughingthrush, as well as a Chestnut-backed Scimitar-Babbler! I will be checking it again on my next visit.

Maroon Woodpecker *Blythipicus rubiginosus*

Two were seen at in the lowlands of Taman Negara in Peninsula Malaysia, and another single was seen in highlands of Sabah.

Bay Woodpecker *Blythipicus pyrrhotis*

John saw one during our first afternoon on the Telekom Loop at Fraser's Hill, although we all got much better looks the following morning along the Bishop's Trail at the same site.

Orange-backed Woodpecker *Reinwardtipicus validus*

Only recorded on Borneo, when seen once near Sukau, and three times in Danum Valley.

Buff-rumped Woodpecker *Meiglyptes tristis*

We enjoyed an excellent view of a pair foraging within the same bamboo patch as a male Bamboo Woodpecker, along the Old Gap Road (PM).

Buff-necked Woodpecker *Meiglyptes tukki*

Seen first on the Peninsula at Taman Negara, followed with further sightings in Borneo at both Sepilok, and finally at Sukau, where they were seen right behind the lodge.

Gray-and-buff Woodpecker *Hemicircus concretus*

A poor return for this species was a single sighting en route to Taman Negara (PM), and a single bird later seen at Danum (B).

Great Slaty Woodpecker *Mulleripicus pulverulentus*

A group of up to half a dozen birds were seen from the modern canopy walkway at Sepilok (B).

AFRICAN AND GREEN BROADBILLS: Calyptomenidae

Green Broadbill *Calyptomena viridis*

Only seen on the Peninsula (where it much more common than in Borneo), where we enjoyed multiple views at Taman Negara, one of the best sites for the species.

ASIAN AND GRAUER'S BROADBILLS: Eurylaimidae

Black-and-red Broadbill *Cymbirhynchus macrorhynchos*

Recorded on at least four separate occasions at Taman Negara, with a maximum of five in a single day. Another single was seen in Borneo along the Menanggul tributary.

H Long-tailed Broadbill *Psarisomus dalhousiae*

One was heard along the Old Gap Road, although was not pursued as on this private tour it was not one of our target species.

Banded Broadbill *Eurylaimus javanicus*

With the help of Karen's keen eyesight we found a calling bird at Taman Negara (PM), and got some great looks, and photos, of a pair of juveniles feeding low down in the understorey at Sepilok (B).

Black-and-yellow Broadbill *Eurylaimus ochromalus*

Very commonly heard in the lowlands, where it is the most common broadbill species. Our first sighting came beside the road on our journey into Taman Negara (where others were also seen). Other individuals were also seen in Borneo, at both Sukau (in the lodge garden), and from the canopy walkway at Danum.

Dusky Broadbill *Corydon sumatranus*

Only recorded on Borneo, with two sightings around the Borneo Rainforest Lodge, which included a single flock of 13 birds watched from the canopy walkway.

PITTAS: Pittidae

Rusty-naped Pitta *Pitta oatesi*

This is arguably the toughest of the regular pittas to see on the Peninsula, and is not seen often at all from the trails at Fraser's Hill. Therefore, we counted ourselves very fortunate to see it along the Bishop's Trail at Fraser's Hill.

Banded Pitta

Pitta guajana irena

A truly stunning bird, a male of which was seen during our first phenomenal morning at Taman Negara (PM), which also boasted Malaysian Rail-Babbler, Garnet Pitta, Diard's Trogon, and Crested Jay, among a host of other cool Southeast Asian species logged. Unfortunately, in spite of a lot of effort, its endemic counterpart on Borneo could not be found, a much-touted split.

Blue-headed Pitta

***Pitta baudi* BORNEO ENDEMIC**

One of the highlights of the trip. Two stunning males were seen in a single morning at Danum (that also produced both endemic wren-babblers, and a Clouded Leopard!), one of which lingered on an open path for us to soak up every exquisite feature.

Blue-banded Pitta

***Pitta arquata* BORNEO ENDEMIC**

Another much-wanted Bornean pitta, and one of the hardest ones to find due to a combination of its low density, occurring in difficult, rugged, terrain, and it's tough to track down call. We spent hours walking up to Fair Falls, a known spot for it at Danum. The walk up was slippery and steep, and it took us hours to find one, but it was worth it in the end, when Vivian gestured to this glittering bird sitting still in the understorey, which even allowed us to get off some photos before it dropped out of sight.

Garnet Pitta

Pitta granatina

One jumped off the side of the trail on our first morning at Taman Negara, which, remarkably, we all got on to in the short time it was visible.

Black-headed (Black-&-crimson) Pitta *Pitta ussher* BORNEO ENDEMIC

One of the standout moment of our time in Borneo was getting incredible looks at this avian gem just behind the lodge at Sukau. One of the trip highlights for sure.

Hooded Pitta

Pitta sordida

Sukau is the best site on the tour for this species, as there are a number of territories along the tributaries off the main Kinabatangan River, where the birds can be viewed from the comfort of a boat. And so this happened on our first morning at Sukau, where several calling birds toyed with us for a while, before, finally, a gaudy bird showed where we could all see it well as it foraged in the leaf litter.

THORNBILLS AND ALLIES: Acanthizidae

Golden-bellied Gerygone

Gerygone sulphurea

Just recorded during our morning in the mangroves of Kuala Selangor, where around six different birds were heard, and one at least one was seen very well. Also sometimes referred to as "Flyeater".

HELMETSHRIKES AND ALLIES: Prionopidae

Large Woodshrike

Tephrodornis gularis

One was seen in Taman Negara, and a group of four was seen close to The Gap.

Rufous-winged Philentoma

Philentoma pyrhoptera

Four sightings in all, with two coming from the lowland jungles of Taman Negara, and also recorded in Borneo at Sepilok and Danum.

Maroon-breasted Philentoma

Philentoma velata

Two sightings at Danum Valley, Borneo, which included a stunning male.

WOODSWALLOWS: Artamidae

White-breasted Woodswallow

Artamus leucorhynchus

Just seen in Kota Kinabalu, (Borneo), where six birds were seen in the Likas area.

BRISTLEHEAD: Pityriaseidae

Bornean Bristlehead

***Pityriasis gymnocephala* BORNEO ENDEMIC**

An endemic species, and monotypic bird family. This was a well stated target for John and Karen, who are on the hunt for their final handful of bird families in the world. And so we planned two nights in the Sepilok area of Sabah, as this provides the best site to see them right now. However, after a full day, where rain scuppered our afternoon session, we returned empty-handed. However, the next morning we ran into two different groups at Sepilok, the first found by Karen from the aptly-named "Bristlehead Tower". One of the trip highlights.

IORAS: Aegithinidae

Common Iora

Aegithina tiphia

Two birds were seen at Kuala Selangor, during our final day on the Peninsula.

Green Iora

Aegithina viridissima

Recorded six times on the tour: at Taman Negara on the Peninsula, and Sukau, and around Danum Valley on Borneo.

CUCKOO-SHRIKES: Campephagidae

Sunda Cuckoo-shrike

Coracina larvata

Just the one was seen at Tambunan (B).

Javan Cuckoo-shrike

Coracina javensis

Three different birds were seen at Fraser's Hill (PM), which included one bird that was perched on a street light in town.

Bar-bellied Cuckoo-shrike

Coracina striata

Up to five different birds were seen visiting a large fruiting fig near the resort at Taman Negara (PM).

Lesser Cuckoo-shrike

Coracina fimbriata

A single bird was seen near the canopy walkway at Sepilok on Borneo.

Pied Triller

Lalage nigra

A minimum of three birds were seen at Kuala Selangor (PM), and another single was seen on the outskirts of Kota Kinabalu in Sabah.

Fiery Minivet

Pericrocotus igneus

Two were seen very well from the state-of-the-art canopy walkway at Sepilok (B).

Scarlet Minivet

Pericrocotus flammeus

Small parties were recorded on three different days around The Gap, on the Peninsula.

Gray-chinned Minivet

Pericrocotus solaris

Recorded on both the mainland and Borneo, at Fraser's Hill, and around Tambunan and Mount Kinabalu.

Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike

Hemipus picatus

A group of four were following a feeding flock on the Old Gap Road (PM), and another single was seen on Borneo at Tambunan.

Black-winged Flycatcher-shrike

Hemipus hirundinaceus

Three were seen by the lodge at Sukau (B), and a few singles were seen at Danum Valley (B).

WHISTLERS: Pachycephalidae

Mangrove Whistler *Pachycephala cinerea*

One of these dowdy whistlers was seen well in the mangroves at Kuala Selangor, on our final day on the Peninsula.

Bornean Whistler *Pachycephala hypoxantha* **BORNEO ENDEMIC**

Recorded daily, in small numbers, in the highlands of Borneo (Tambunan and Mount Kinabalu).

SHRIKES: Laniidae

Tiger Shrike *Lanius tigrinus*

This is a wintering species in Malaysia, where they were recorded on the Peninsula at Taman Negara and Kuala Selangor.

Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus*

Recorded on Fraser's Hill, and also one was seen along the coast at Kuala Selangor (both PM).

VIREOS: Vireonidae

White-bellied Erpornis *Erpornis zantholeuca*

Two of these strange birds were seen near the bottom end of the Old Gap Road (PM). Just recently, the species has been re-classified within the vireo family.

Blyth's Shrike-Babbler *Pteruthius aeralatus*

On the mainland, a pair was seen along the Telekom Loop on Fraser's Hill. In Borneo, further sightings came at Tambunan, and Mount Kinabalu.

Black-eared Shrike-Babbler *Pteruthius melanotis*

Recorded three times, in passing flocks, on Fraser's Hill (PM).

OLD WORLD ORIOLES: Oriolidae

Dark-throated Oriole *Oriolus xanthonotus*

Seen once at Taman Negara (PM), and several times around Danum Valley (B).

Black-naped Oriole *Oriolus chinensis*

Several birds were found around Kuala Lumpur hotel (PM), shortly before our departure for Taman Negara. Another two were seen at Kuala Selangor (PM).

Black-and-crimson Oriole *Oriolus cruentus*

One of these highland orioles was seen at Fraser's Hill on the mainland, and several sightings also came in the highlands of Borneo.

DRONGOS: Dicruridae

Ashy Drongo *Dicrurus leucophaeus*

Small numbers were recorded daily in the highlands of Borneo.

Bronzed Drongo *Dicrurus aeneus*

Recorded once in Taman Negara, and good numbers were seen around the base of Fraser's Hill at The Gap (PM),

Lesser Racket-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus remifer*

Recorded daily in the highlands of the Peninsula at Fraser's Hill.

Hair-crested Drongo *Dicrurus hottentottus*

Just the one bird was seen along one of the trails around the HQ at Mount Kinabalu (B).

Greater Racket-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus paradiseus*

A few were seen daily at Taman Negara (PM), a single was seen near The Gap (PM), and they were also seen on Borneo at Sepilok and Sukau.

FANTAILS: Rhipiduridae

White-throated Fantail *Rhipidura albicollis*

Regularly encountered in feeding flocks in the highlands, both on the mainland and Borneo.

Pied Fantail *Rhipidura javanica*

Recorded around Kuala Selangor (PM), and Sepilok, Danum, and Sukau on Borneo.

Spotted Fantail *Rhipidura perlata*

A follower of feeding flocks, which was encountered at Taman Negara (PM), and also at Danum (B).

MONARCH FLYCATCHERS: Monarchidae

Black-naped Monarch *Hypothymis azurea*

Two were seen at Taman Negara on the Peninsula, and others were seen at Sepilok and Danum Valley on Borneo.

Asian Paradise-Flycatcher *Terpsiphone paradisi*

Seen on both the mainland leg and Bornean leg of the tour, at Taman Negara, Kuala Selangor, and Danum Valley.

CROWS, JAYS AND MAGPIES: Corvidae

Crested Jay *Platylophus galericulatus*

Recorded on our first morning at Taman Negara (PM).

Black Magpie *Platysmurus leucopterus*

A group of at least three birds were located from their loud, and odd, metallic calls along a trail at Taman Negara (PM).

(Bornean) Black Magpie *Platysmurus leucopterus aterrimus* **BORNEO ENDEMIC**

Seen three times in Borneo, where the local race (species?) lacks the white wing patches that possess on the mainland. Up to three birds were seen at Sepilok, and another single was found near the lodge at Danum.

Short-tailed Magpie *Cissa thalassina*

This dazzling vivid green bird with the red flashes in its wings was seen on three days on Mount Kinabalu (B).

Bornean Treepie *Dendrocitta cinerascens* **BORNEO ENDEMIC**

Small numbers were seen on four days in Borneo's highlands.

House Crow *Corvus splendens*

Commonly recorded around Kuala Selangor and the city of Kuala Lumpur on the mainland.

Slender-billed Crow *Corvus enca*

Regularly recorded in lowland areas of Borneo.

Large-billed Crow *Corvus macrorhynchos*

Recorded around Taman Negara, The Gap, and Kuala Selenagor (all PM).

RAIL-BABBLER AND IFRITA: Eupetidae

Malaysian Rail-babbler *Eupetes macrocerus*

This was John and Karen's number one target at Taman Negara, as they needed this family for their near complete list of bird families in the world. Luckily, we heard one at close quarters on our first morning that responded perfectly by walking through an open area where we could watch it whistling back at the tape, by dipping its head low down, and inflating its throat sacs. A magical view, and one of the trip highlights.

SWALLOWS: Hirundinidae

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Recorded regularly around Fraser's Hill and The Gap on the mainland, and also noted in the highlands of Borneo too.

Pacific (House) Swallow *Hirundo tahitica*

The most abundant swallow in Malaysia, recorded on almost every day of the tour, on both the mainland and Borneo.

Rufous-bellied Swallow *Cecropis badia* **PENINSULA MALAYSIA ENDEMIC**

These birds are often found nesting around the decaying guest house at The Gap, although despite several tries there none were found. However, a group of around eight birds was found on the journey from there to Kuala Selangor, nesting under a road bridge.

FAIRY-FLYCATCHERS: Stenostiridae

Gray-headed Canary-Flycatcher *Culicicapa ceylonensis*

Seen five times on the tour, including at Taman Negara, and The Gap on the Peninsula, and near Borneo Rainforest Lodge in Sabah.

CHICKADEES AND TITS: Paridae

Great Tit *Parus major*

Four birds were seen in the mangroves at Kuala Selangor (PM). In this region they are confined to mangroves.

Sultan Tit *Melanochlora sultanea*

Seen three times on the Peninsula: at Taman Negara (where scarce), and then several times along the New Gap Road (Fraser's Hill).

NUTHATCHES: Sittidae

Velvet-fronted Nuthatch *Sitta frontalis*

Two small groups were found along the New Gap Road, at the base of Fraser's Hill (PM), and another one was found in a feeding flock as we were leaving Danum Valley (B).

Blue Nuthatch *Sitta azurea*

A single group of six birds were seen on the Telekom Loop at Fraser's Hill (PM).

BULBULS: Pycnonotidae

Puff-backed Bulbul *Pycnonotus eutilotus*

Just one was seen in Taman Negara (PM).

Black-headed Bulbul *Pycnonotus atriceps*

Seen regularly around Taman Negara (PM), and another was seen at Sepilok in Borneo.

Straw-headed Bulbul *Pycnonotus zeylanicus*

This threatened species was seen twice at Taman Negara on the mainland, when several birds visited fruiting trees filled with barbets and fairy-bluebirds.

Black-crested Bulbul *Pycnonotus zeylanicus*

Just recorded around The Gap (PM), with up to 8 birds being seen during one morning.

Bornean Bulbul *Pycnonotus montis* **BORNEO ENDEMIC**

Two were seen on our first visit to Tambunan, and another single was seen on our return visit there. This has recently been split from Black-crested Bulbul.

Scaly-breasted Bulbul *Pycnonotus squamatus*

This sneaky bulbul nipped in and out of the large fruiting tree we found at The Gap (PM), although only Sam managed to see it. Another one was seen briefly too, along the road at Danum (B).

Stripe-throated Bulbul *Pycnonotus finlaysoni*

Recorded regularly around our resort at Taman Negara (PM), with up to six seen in a single afternoon.

Flavescent (Pale-faced) Bulbul *Pycnonotus flavescens leucops* **BORNEO ENDEMIC**

This highland bulbul was seen regularly along the Summit Trail on Mount Kinabalu. They were unusually abundant this time due to the presence of a number of fruiting trees, making them both easy to see (up to 20 birds were seen), and easy to photograph. Although currently considered an endemic race of Flavescent Bulbul, it is listed as a separate, endemic, species in the recently-published field guides to Borneo.

Yellow-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus goiavier*

Recorded in the lowlands at Taman Negara (PM), Kuala Selangor (PM, where common), Sepilok (B), and around the city of Kota Kinabalu (B).

Olive-winged Bulbul *Pycnonotus plumosus*

This inconspicuous bulbul was seen on both the mainland (Taman Negara, Kuala Selangor), and Borneo (Sukau).

Cream-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus simplex*

Five birds were seen at the Rainforest Discovery Centre at Sepilok on one day (B).

Red-eyed Bulbul *Pycnonotus brunneus*

Seen in the resort at Taman Negara (PM), and at Gomantong Caves (B).

Spectacled Bulbul *Pycnonotus erythrophthalmos*

Recorded regularly in the lowlands: at Taman Negara on the mainland, and Sepilok, Sukau, and Danum on Borneo.

Hairy-backed Bulbul *Tricholestes criniger*

Surprisingly few seen, with just a single sighting at Taman Negara (PM), and another single sighting on Borneo at Sukau.

Ochraceous Bulbul *Alophoixus ochraceus*

Recorded on three days around Fraser's Hill and The Gap (PM), and six or so birds were also seen in the highlands of Borneo, at Tambunan.

Gray-cheeked Bulbul *Alophoixus bres*

Seen once at Taman Negara (PM), and again on Borneo at Danum Valley.

Yellow-bellied Bulbul *Alophoixus phaeocephalus*

Small numbers were recorded in the lowlands at Taman Negara (PM), and in Borneo, in Sukau and Danum.

Buff-vented Bulbul *Iole olivacea*

A couple of small groups were found in Taman Negara (PM), and Sukau (B).

Ashy Bulbul *Hemixos flavala cinereus*

One was seen at the lower elevations on Fraser's Hill (PM).

Mountain Bulbul *Ixos mcclellandii*

Seen on most days of our time at Fraser's Hill (PM).

Streaked Bulbul *Ixos malaccensis*

One was seen at Taman Negara (PM), Sepilok (B), and en route to the Borneo Rainforest Lodge.

CUPWINGS: Pnoepygidae

Pygmy Cupwing (Wren-Babbler) *Pnoepyga pusilla*

Two very confiding birds emerged onto a roadside verge at Fraser's Hill (PM). The small wren-babblers, like this one, have now been reclassified in a newly-created family, the Cupwings.

BUSH-WARBLERS AND ALLIES: Cettiidae

Bornean Stubtail *Urosphena whiteheadi* **BORNEO ENDEMIC**

This tiny warbler has a very high-pitched call that can make them hard to hear, and subsequently hard to locate. However, we managed to see two different birds that showed well on our first day up on Mount Kinabalu.

Yellow-bellied Warbler *Abroscopus superciliaris*

Three or four birds were seen in a single day near The Gap (PM).

Mountain Tailorbird *Phyllergates cucullatus*

Recorded at Fraser's Hill on the mainland, and also at Tambunan and Mount Kinabalu in Sabah.

Sunda Bush-Warbler *Cettia vulcania*

Recorded regularly around the top of the road and the Summit Trail on Mount Kinabalu, where they were common conspicuous, unlike the poorly-named "Friendly Bush-Warbler"!

LEAF-WARBLERS: Phylloscopidae

Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis*

A few migrant birds were found at Fraser's Hill and Kuala Selangor (PM).

Mountain (Leaf) Warbler *Phylloscopus trivirgatus*

One very aggressive bird was seen on the edge of town in Fraser's Hill, where it almost took my knee out in response to playback of its call (PM).

Mountain (Leaf) Warbler *Phylloscopus trivirgatus kinabaluensis*

The markedly different kinabaluensis race of Mountain Leaf-Warbler was seen regularly along the Summit Trail up on Mount Kinabalu. Unlike the mainland race, this endemic form lacks the strong yellow tones on the underparts, and is less bright green above.

Chestnut-crowned Warbler *Seicercus castaniceps*

Heard regularly calling regularly around Fraser's Hill, where at least one was seen on the Telekom Loop.

Yellow-breasted Warbler *Seicercus montis*

Commonly recorded in the highlands of Borneo, at both Tambunan and Mount Kinabalu, with up to ten seen on one day. A bird was also seen nest building on Mount Kinabalu.

GRASSBIRDS AND ALLIES: Megaluridae

(Kinabalu) Friendly Bush-Warbler *Bradypterus accentor* **BORNEO ENDEMIC**

This is one of the most localized of the Borneo endemics, confined to just a few peaks in Sabah. One of these is Mount Kinabalu, and so we ventured up the steep Summit Trail one morning in search of it. Finally, after hearing several individuals to no avail we got cracking looks at an individual that hopped around in the open on the mossy ground.

CISTICOLAS AND ALLIES: Cisticolidae

Common Tailorbird *Orthotomus sutorius*

Just the one was seen, in Danum Valley in Borneo.

Dark-necked Tailorbird *Orthotomus atrogularis*

Seen on our first morning in our hotel grounds in Kuala Lumpur (PM), and others were also seen around our resort in Taman Negara (PM).

Rufous-tailed Tailorbird *Orthotomus sericeus*

A few singles were seen on the Peninsula at Taman Negara, and other were seen at Sukau and Danum Valley in Sabah.

Ashy Tailorbird *Orthotomus ruficeps*

Over ten birds were seen at Kuala Selangor on the mainland, and others were seen in Borneo at Sepilok, Sukau, and Danum.

Rufescent Prinia *Prinia rufescens*

Three birds were found along the New Gap Road at Fraser's Hill (PM).

Yellow-bellied Prinia *Prinia flaviventris*

A couple were seen in some secondary habitat in one of the lower areas of Fraser's Hill (PM).

YUHNAS, WHITE-EYES & ALLIES: Zosteropidae

Chestnut-crested Yuhina *Yuhina everetti* **BORNEO ENDEMIC**

One of the easiest and most common of the highland endemics on Borneo, seen regularly at both Tambunan and Mount Kinabalu. Over 30 were recorded on some days.

Oriental White-eye *Zosterops palpebrosus*

Recorded on just one day, at Kuala Selangor on the Malaysian Peninsula.

Black-capped White-eye *Zosterops atricapilla*

Another common highland species on Borneo, recorded daily there with up to 15 seen in a day.

Everett's White-eye *Zosterops everetti*

Recorded on three occasions at Fraser's Hill in the hill forest of Peninsula Malaysia.

Pygmy White-eye (Bornean Ibon) *Oculocincta squamifrons* **BORNEO ENDEMIC**

One of the more difficult endemics to find. Although they are recorded intermittently at Danum Valley, they are sporadic there with Tambunan arguably the most reliable site for the species. We recorded them at both: one was seen by Karen and John from the canopy walkway at Borneo Rainforest Lodge, and another was seen just briefly at Tambunan by Sam.

Mountain Black-eye *Chlorocharis emiliae* **BORNEO ENDEMIC**

A striking and distinctive white-eye confined to the highlands of Borneo. On Mount Kinabalu it is fairly common just a short way up the Summit Trail, although sometimes wanders down lower below Timpohon Gate. We picked up our first pair just below the gate, and then got repeated looks during a morning along the Summit Trail.

FULVETTAS & GROUND BABBLERS: Pellorneidae

Brown Fulvetta *Alcippe brunneicauda*

Recorded at just the one site on the tour, Danum Valley, in Borneo, where we saw up to 10 daily.

Mountain Fulvetta *Alcippe peracensis*

Just recorded at the one site on the tour, Fraser's Hill (Peninsula Malaysia), where they were commonly recorded.

Large Wren-Babbler *Turdinus macrodactylus*

Cracking looks at a single calling bird were had at Taman Negara. This species does not occur on Borneo where it is replaced by the endemic Black-throated Wren-Babbler.

Black-throated Wren-Babbler *Turdinus atrigularis* **BORNEO ENDEMIC**

Excellent views were obtained one amazing morning near Borneo Rainforest Lodge, a morning that also produced good looks at Bornean Wren-Babbler, Blue-headed Pitta and Clouded Leopard!

Collared Babbler *Gampsorhynchus torquatus*

This scarce babbler was seen at The Gap, where a single group of three birds was seen in a bamboo stand.

Abbott's Babbler *Malacocincla abbotti*

Seen twice on the Peninsula, at Taman Negara and Kuala Selangor.

Horsfield's Babbler *Malacocincla sepiaria*

One was seen at Sukau on Borneo.

Short-tailed Babbler *Malacocincla malaccensis*

We enjoyed a couple of sightings each on the Peninsula and in the lowlands of Sabah.

Striped Wren-Babbler *Kenopia striata*

A superb pair were seen from the boardwalk behind our lodge at Sukau (B).

Buff-breasted Babbler *Pellorneum tickelli*

A common bird by voice at Fraser's Hill, although often devilishly difficult to see. One bird was seen early one morning, but was typically tricky to get a good clear look at.

Temminck's Babbler *Pellorneum pyrrogenys*

One was seen on Mount Kinabalu, and another was seen briefly at Tambunan. in the highlands of Borneo.

Black-capped Babbler *Pellorneum capistratum*

We were treated to three separate sightings of this sharp-dressed babbler in the Peninsula at Taman Negara (which is arguably the best site in Southeast Asia for babblers), and another was seen by Sam at Danum Valley in Sabah.

White-chested Babbler *Trichastoma rostratum*

Seen first at Taman Negara on the Peninsula, and further sightings came at Sukau in Borneo.

Ferruginous Babbler *Trichastoma bicolor*

A pair were seen at Taman Negara on the mainland, and then another was seen at Danum Valley in Borneo.

Moustached Babbler *Malacopteron magnirostre*

One was seen at the "babbler capital" of Taman Negara in Peninsula Malaysia.

Sooty-capped Babbler *Malacopteron affine*

Four different sightings on the tour: two came at Taman Negara (PM), and others were seen at Sukau and Danum in Borneo.

Scaly-crowned Babbler *Malacopteron cinereum*

Recorded daily in Taman Negara, and another single bird was seen at Danum Valley on Borneo.

Rufous-crowned Babbler *Malacopteron magnum*

Recorded regularly at Taman Negara on the Peninsula, and another sighting came at Sukau in Borneo.

Streaked Wren-Babbler *Napothera brevicaudata*

A confiding pair of these babblers were seen in the hill forest at Fraser's Hill (PM).

Mountain Wren-Babbler *Napothera crassa* **BORNEO ENDEMIC**

Two different groups were found on Mount Kinabalu, a group of seven, and then a very confiding pair on the Summit Trail.

Bornean (Ground-) Wren-Babbler *Ptilocichla leucogrammica* **BORNEO ENDEMIC**

A smashing pair of these striking ground babblers were seen early one morning near the Borneo Rainforest Lodge.

LAUGHINGTHRUSHES: Leiothrichidae

Sunda Laughingthrush *Garrulax palliatus*

Recorded on most of our days in the highlands of Borneo, with a maximum of 15 birds seen on one day at Mount Kinabalu. These birds were in a massive flock of large species that included two other laughingthrushes: Bare-headed and Chestnut-crowned/hooded Laughingthrushes.

Black Laughingthrush *Garrulax lugubris*

Seen twice along the Old Gap Road near the base of Fraser's Hill (PM). This species has now been split from their Bornean counterpart, which has been renamed Bare-headed Laughingthrush.

Bare-headed Laughingthrush *Garrulax calvus* **BORNEO ENDEMIC**

Six birds were found in a massive flock of laughingthrushes encountered a short time after dawn along the road at Mount Kinabalu. This flock also held around 15 Sunda and tens of Chestnut-crowned (Hooded) Laughingthrushes, and a Short-tailed Magpie. Also sometimes referred to as Bornean Laughingthrush.

Chestnut-capped Laughingthrush *Garrulax mitratus*

Recorded in good numbers, daily, around Fraser's Hill (PM).

Chestnut-capped (hooded) Laughingthrush *Garrulax mitratus treacheri* **BORNEO ENDEMIC**

Seen daily in the highlands of Borneo. This endemic treacheri race has recently been touted as a potential split, and the name of Chestnut-hooded Laughingthrush suggested (e.g. in the Borneo field guide by Susan Myers).

Malayan Laughingthrush *Garrulax peninsulae*

Just one bird was seen on our final morning at Fraser's Hill (PM). This species has recently been split from Chestnut-crowned Laughingthrush, and is confined to the Malay Peninsula that includes southern Thailand and Peninsula Malaysia.

Silver-eared Mesia *Leiothrix argenteauris*

This Technicolor babbler is delightfully common at Fraser's Hill (PM), where they were encountered in good numbers daily.

Long-tailed Sibia *Heterophasia picaoides*

Only recorded on the Peninsula. Another common babbler at Fraser's Hill, often seen around the town, and recorded on each of our days there.

Blue-winged Minla *Minla cyanouroptera*

Only recorded in Peninsula Malaysia, where a handful of birds were seen each day at Fraser's Hill.

BABLERS: Timaliidae

Golden Babbler *Stachyridopsis chrysaea*

Only recorded on the Peninsula. This gorgeous little babbler was seen each day up on Fraser's Hill.

Pin-striped (Striped) Tit-Babbler *Macronous gularis*

Only recorded on Peninsula Malaysia. A widespread species on the mainland, being very easy to hear, although not always easy to locate, as they habitually skulk in thick vine tangles. We saw one well at Taman Negara.

Bold-striped Tit-Babbler *Macronous bornensis*

Only recorded on Borneo, as it is replaced by Pin-striped on the Peninsula (with which it was formerly considered conspecific). Heard regularly around Sukau and Danum, with great views around the lodge at the former.

Fluffy-backed Tit-Babbler *Macronous ptilosus*

Only recorded on the Peninsula. This odd little babbler was seen one day at Taman Negara (PM), when a pair was seen.

Gray-throated Babbler *Stachyris nigriceps*

Recorded a number of times in the highlands, both on the Peninsula, and in Sabah.

Gray-headed Babbler *Stachyris poliocephala*

Just the one sighting, at the Sepilok Rainforest Discovery Centre in Borneo.

Black-throated Babbler *Stachyris nigricollis*

This spectacular babbler was seen in the lowland jungle of Taman Negara on the mainland.

Chestnut-rumped Babbler *Stachyris maculata*

One was seen at Taman Negara (PM), and also right behind our lodge at Sukau (B).

Chestnut-winged Babbler *Stachyris erythroptera*

One of the most abundant lowland babblers, recorded regularly at Taman Negara (PM), and later seen at Sukau and Danum in Borneo.

Large Scimitar-Babbler *Pomatorhinus hypoleucos*

John managed a quick look at one at Fraser's Hill (PM).

Chestnut-backed Scimitar-Babbler *Pomatorhinus montanus*

Only recorded on the Peninsula. Two of these sharp-dressed babblers were seen along the Old Gap Road one afternoon (PM).

FAIRY-BLUEBIRDS: Irenidae

Asian Fairy-bluebird *Irena puella*

This striking fruit-eating bird was recorded on at least nine days of the tour, with good numbers seen in a fruiting tree near the resort at Taman Negara (PM), and good numbers seen in a similar situation at The Gap (PM), and around Borneo Rainforest Lodge at a large fig tree there.

OLD WORLD FLYCATCHERS: Muscicapidae

Dark-sided Flycatcher *Muscicapa sibirica*

Seen at The Gap (PM), Danum (B), and Tambunan (B).

Gray-streaked Flycatcher ***Muscicapa griseisticta***

One of these scarce winter migrants was seen hawking insects by the parking lot at Gomantong Caves in Sabah.

Asian Brown Flycatcher ***Muscicapa dauurica***

Five sightings on the tour: at Taman Negara, Kuala Selangor, and The Gap on the mainland; and near the Borneo Rainforest Lodge in Sabah.

Ferruginous Flycatcher ***Muscicapa ferruginea***

A migrant bird was seen in the forest at Taman Negara one afternoon (PM).

Oriental Magpie-Robin ***Copsychus saularis***

Recorded regularly, on almost all days, while we were on the Peninsula, with just a few sightings in Sabah.

Rufous-tailed Shama ***Copsychus pyrropygus***

One was seen at the Sepilok Rainforest Discovery Centre in Borneo.

White-rumped Shama ***Copsychus malabaricus***

Their beautiful melodic songs were heard regularly around Taman Negara, where it a common species, which we saw on several occasions.

White-rumped (Crowned) Shama ***Copsychus malabaricus stricklandii* BORNEO ENDEMIC**

A common endemic species/form in the lowlands of Borneo (much unresolved debate exists as to whether this is an endemic species distinct from White-rumped), with regular sightings around our lodge at Sukau, and others at Danum.

Rufous-browed Flycatcher ***Anthipes solitaris***

Only recorded on the Peninsula. This cute rusty-colored was seen several times at Fraser's Hill, a regular site for the species.

Pale Blue Flycatcher ***Cyornis unicolor***

One was seen near the bottom end of the Old Gap Road on the Peninsula.

Hill Blue-Flycatcher ***Cyornis banyumas***

A gorgeous male was seen along the New Gap Road, on mainland Malaysia.

Long-billed (Large-) Blue-Flycatcher ***Cyornis caerulatus***

This Sundaic endemic is classified as Vulnerable. A male was found early one morning close to the Borneo Rainforest Lodge.

Malaysian Blue-Flycatcher ***Cyornis turcosus***

The most common of the blue and orange cyornis flycatchers on the Peninsula and in Sabah, with views being obtained first at Taman Negara (PM), and then later seen repeatedly at Sukau, including within the lodge garden.

Bornean Blue-Flycatcher ***Cyornis superbus* BORNEO ENDEMIC**

Three sightings came in the lowland jungle of Danum Valley, which included two pairs.

Tickell's Blue-Flycatcher ***Cyornis tickelliae***

Heard regularly around Taman Negara, with a single beautiful male seen by one of the boat docks there one morning.

Mangrove Blue-Flycatcher ***Cyornis rufigastra***

One was seen at Kuala Selangor, during our final day on the mainland.

Gray-chested Jungle-Flycatcher ***Cyornis umbratilis***

Just one bird was seen on the Peninsula, at Taman Negara.

Eyebrowed Jungle-Flycatcher ***Vauriella gularis* BORNEO ENDEMIC**

Three sightings were made on Mount Kinabalu: our first came with a bird found feeding in the middle of the road as the first sunlight hit the forest, and another hawks insects from a fence line at Timpohon Gate. These are interior forest birds that usually only emerge into such open areas in the low light of very early morning, returning to the forest gloom for much of the day afterwards.

Large Niltava ***Niltava grandis***

A pair of these large flycatchers were seen on three separate days up on Fraser's Hill (PM).

Pygmy Blue-Flycatcher ***Muscicapella hodgsoni***

These are scarce birds at Fraser's Hill, where a pair was seen along the Bishop's Trail.

Indigo Flycatcher ***Eumyias indigo***

Surprisingly tricky to find during our time on Mount Kinabalu, where just one was seen near Timpohon Gate (B).

Verditer Flycatcher ***Eumyias thalassinus***

Two were seen around The Gap on the Peninsula, and another was seen in Sabah near Gomantong Caves.

H Lesser Shortwing ***Brachypteryx leucophrys***

Heard regularly around Fraser's Hill, where no attempts were made to see them, as they were not on the target list for this private tour.

White-browed Shortwing ***Brachypteryx montana***

Heard daily around the Mount Kinabalu HQ (PM), and a male was seen well along the Summit Trail on the mountain.

Siberian Blue Robin ***Larvivora cyane***

This migrant species was seen both on the mainland (where a female was seen hopping along the boardwalk at Kuala Selangor), and in Sabah, where another female was seen near the Borneo Rainforest Lodge.

Bornean Whistling-Thrush ***Myophonus borneensis* BORNEO ENDEMIC**

Seen on two of our days up on Mount Kinabalu, with three different birds on particular day.

H Malayan Whistling-Thrush ***Myophonus robinsoni* PENINSULA MALAYSIA ENDEMIC**

In spite of repeated attempts to find one feeding along the road at dawn no birds were seen. They were heard calling from a thickly-vegetated gully on these mornings, and perhaps chose not to emerge due to a lack of rain, and therefore lack of feeding available on the road at the time?

White-crowned Forktail ***Enicurus leschenaulti***

Seen at Taman Negara on the Peninsula, and again in Sabah at Borneo Rainforest Lodge (B).

White-crowned (Bornean) Forktail ***Enicurus leschenaulti borneensis* BORNEO ENDEMIC**

One was seen on our first afternoon in the highlands, with a bird seen feeding along a narrow rivulet up on Mount Kinabalu. The endemic race, which is restricted to the highlands of Borneo, is a proposed split from the lowland birds.

Chestnut-naped Forktail ***Enicurus ruficapillus***

In Peninsula Malaysia a fantastic female was seen below The Gap, and another pair were seen near the bottom end of the Old Gap Road too; on Borneo one was seen briefly close to the Borneo Rainforest Lodge.

Slaty-backed Forktail ***Enicurus schistaceus***

Only recorded on the Peninsula. Seen on three occasions at Fraser's Hill (PM), traditionally a very good site for the species.

Rufous-chested Flycatcher *Ficedula dumetoria*

This smashing, Mugimaki-like, flycatcher was seen in the jungle at Taman Negara (PM).

Little Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula westermanni*

Three birds were seen up on Fraser's Hill (PM), and a couple of further sightings came in the highlands of Borneo too.

Mugimaki Flycatcher *Ficedula mugimaki*

A gorgeous male of this migrant species was newly arrived at the foot of Fraser's Hill one day (PM).

Snowy-browed Flycatcher *Ficedula hyperythra*

Two singles were seen up on Mount Kinabalu (B).

STARLINGS: Sturnidae

Asian Glossy Starling *Aplonis panayensis*

Recorded on six days of the tour, both on the mainland and in Sabah, with a maximum of 30 birds around Kota Kinabalu in Borneo.

Common Hill Myna *Gracula religiosa*

Sightings were regularly made at Taman Negara (PM), and further birds were seen in the lowlands of Borneo (Sukau, Sepilok, and Danum).

Crested Myna *Acridotheres cristatellus*

One was seen on the outskirts of Kota Kinabalu (B).

Jungle Myna *Acridotheres fuscus*

Seen in good numbers around Taman Negara, especially around the Tahan Hide where figs attracted a lot of activity. Also recorded in good numbers around Kuala Selangor.

Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis*

Commonly recorded around urban areas on Peninsula Malaysia.

LEAFBIRDS: Chloropseidae

Greater Green Leafbird *Chloropsis sonnerati*

Recorded on seven days of the tour, at various sites in the lowlands in both Borneo and on the mainland.

Lesser Green Leafbird *Chloropsis cyanopogon*

Three were seen at Taman Negara (PM), another single was seen at Sepilok (B), and, finally, one was seen near the lodge at Danum (B).

Blue-winged Leafbird *Chloropsis cochinchinensis*

Surprisingly few were seen, with sightings on two days of the tour only: at The Gap (PM), and up on the canopy walkway at Sepilok Rainforest Discovery Centre (B).

Bornean Leafbird *Chloropsis kinabaluensis* **BORNEO ENDEMIC**

*This highland leafbird has recently been split from **Blue-winged Leafbird**, which occurs in the lowlands of Borneo. This species was seen during both of our visits to Tambunan, with over ten birds seen during one visit.*

Orange-bellied Leafbird *Chloropsis hardwickii*

At least two birds were seen at Fraser's Hill (PM).

FLOWERPECKERS: Dicaeidae

Yellow-breasted Flowerpecker *Prionochilus maculatus*

Three sightings were made: a single was seen at Taman Negara (PM), another was observed at Gomantong Caves (B), and, finally, two were seen at Danum Valley (B).

Yellow-rumped Flowerpecker *Prionochilus xanthopygius* **BORNEO ENDEMIC**

Recorded several times at the Sepilok Rainforest Discovery Centre, and seen again on several occasions at Danum Valley.

Thick-billed Flowerpecker *Dicaeum agile*

One was seen along a trail at Taman Negara (PM), and around half a dozen birds was seen visiting a fruiting tree at Borneo Rainforest Lodge.

Brown-backed Flowerpecker *Dicaeum everetti*

This scarce species was only recorded on the Peninsula. A minimum of three birds were seen in a large fruiting tree at The Gap (PM).

Yellow-vented Flowerpecker *Dicaeum chrysorrheum*

Just a single bird was found at Taman Negara (PM).

Orange-bellied Flowerpecker *Dicaeum trigonostigma*

Recorded on both the Peninsula and Borneo, with sightings coming at The Gap, Sepilok, and Danum Valley.

Plain Flowerpecker *Dicaeum concolor*

One was seen at Danum Valley in Borneo.

Black-sided (Bornean) Flowerpecker *Dicaeum monticolum* **BORNEO ENDEMIC**

Just seen at Tambunan, where it was recorded once on each of our two visits there. A low number of records for the species.

Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker *Dicaeum cruentatum*

This staggeringly bright and beautiful species was only recorded on the mainland, where a single male was seen on the journey between Taman Negara and Fraser's Hill, and then later another male was seen at Kuala Selangor.

SUNBIRDS AND SPIDERHUNTERS: Nectariniidae

Ruby-cheeked Sunbird *Chalcoparia singalensis*

Just recorded on Borneo, where a couple of birds were seen just behind the lodge at Sukau, and another male bird was seen from the canopy walkway of the Borneo Rainforest Lodge.

Plain Sunbird *Anthreptes simplex*

Seen four times on the tour: at Taman Negara (PM), Sepilok (B), and Danum Valley (B).

Plain-throated (Brown-throated) Sunbird *Anthreptes malacensis*

One of the most common sunbirds in the lowlands, recorded on both the mainland and on Borneo at Taman Negara, Kuala Selangor, Sepilok, Sukau, and Danum.

Red-throated Sunbird *Anthreptes rhodolaemus*

Recorded twice in Borneo: A male was seen at the Sepilok Rainforest Discovery Centre, and a pair were seen behind our lodge at Sukau.

Purple-naped Sunbird *Hypogramma hypogrammicum*

Seen three times on the tour: at Taman Negara, along the Old Gap Road, and at Sepilok in Sabah.

Van Hasselt's Sunbird *Leptocoma brasiliana*

A stunning male and two females were seen in the same large tree behind our lodge at Sukau (B).

Olive-backed Sunbird *Cinnyris jugularis*

First seen in our hotel garden in Kuala Lumpur (PM), and regularly seen at Kuala Selangor (PM), while on Borneo another was seen in Sandakan.

Black-throated Sunbird *Aethopyga saturata*

This highland sunbird was seen regularly around Fraser's Hill on the Peninsula.

Eastern Crimson Sunbird *Aethopyga siparaja*

Three brief sightings came in Borneo: One was seen at Sukau by all, and others were seen by Sam only at Sepilok and Danum.

Temminck's Sunbird *Aethopyga temminckii*

This vividly-marked sunbird was seen on both our visits to Tambunan (B), where multiple sightings came on both days.

Little Spiderhunter *Arachnothera longirostra*

Seen regularly around Borneo Rainforest Lodge at Danum, with other sightings coming at The Gap (PM), and Sepilok (B).

Thick-billed Spiderhunter *Arachnothera crassirostris*

Just a single sighting at the Sepilok Rainforest Discovery Centre in Borneo.

Long-billed Spiderhunter *Arachnothera robusta*

Also just a single sighting of this species at Sepilok (B).

Spectacled Spiderhunter *Arachnothera flavigaster*

One was seen near The Gap on the Peninsula.

Yellow-eared Spiderhunter *Arachnothera chrysogenys*

One was seen in the garden of the Borneo Rainforest Lodge in Danum.

Gray-breasted Spiderhunter *Arachnothera modesta*

Two or three birds were seen in the resort at Taman Negara.

Streaky-breasted (Bornean) Spiderhunter *Arachnothera affinis everetti* **BORNEO ENDEMIC**

One was seen right around the Borneo Rainforest Lodge, and another was seen in the hills at Tambun This is sometimes considered a separate, endemic, species, Bornean Spiderhunter, although was .

Streaked Spiderhunter *Arachnothera magna*

A very handsome bird seen three or four times around Fraser's Hill (PM).

Whitehead's Spiderhunter *Arachnothera juliae* **BORNEO ENDEMIC**

This striking endemic species is a canopy-dwelling spiderhunter, which can most easily be found at Tambunan. However, as it proved for us it required a bit of effort to see. We did not find on until late in the morning on our second visit, while we were staking out some rich red blooms, and which attracted this spectacular spiderhunter that gave us prolonged 'scope looks as it foraged among them.

WAGTAILS AND PIPITS: Motacillidae

Gray Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

This wintering species was seen in good numbers on the Peninsula, especially around Fraser's Hill. A few others were also seen in the highlands of Borneo.

Oriental (Paddyfield) Pipit *Anthus rufulus*

Two birds were found feeding along the runway at Lahad Datu on Borneo.

OLD WORLD SPARROWS: Passeridae

Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*

Regularly recorded throughout, with a notable high of 90 birds counted while we had our flight delayed at Lahad Datu on Borneo!

WAXBILLS AND ALLIES: Estrildidae

White-rumped Munia *Lonchura striata*

A single bird was seen by Sam briefly along the New Gap Road (PM).

Dusky Munia *Lonchura fuscans* **BORNEO ENDEMIC**

A couple were seen around Sepilok, Gomantong Caves, and also Tambunan. However, the best views were had at Danum Valley, where regular sightings were made, around the Borneo Rainforest Lodge, where up to 20 birds were seen. Strictly speaking not technically an endemic as it also occurs on some very remote small islands in the Philippines.

Nutmeg Mannikin *Lonchura punctulata*

A party of three birds were seen in our hotel grounds in Kuala Lumpur (PM) on our first morning. Also referred to as Scaly-breasted Munia.

Chestnut (Black-headed) Munia *Lonchura atricapilla*

Recorded around Sepilok and Kota Kinabalu on Borneo.

MAMMAL LIST

ELEPHANTS: Elephantidae

Asian Elephant *Elephas maximus*

The race in Borneo is often touted as a split, and referred to as Bornean Pygmy Elephant. Three sightings was a good return for this easily missed, and scarce mammal: a herd of at least twenty animals was seen on our first afternoon at Sukau. Then the next day we ran into what was presumably the same herd again. Finally, on the way in to Borneo Rainforest Lodge we were forced to stop by a large male that crossed the road just in front of our vehicle. A great opener to a marvelous few days at Danum for mammals, which also included multiple Orangutans, a Western Tarsier, several sightings of Maroon Langurs, a family party of Bornean Gibbons, a daytime Binturong, and a daytime Clouded Leopard!

TREESHREWS: Tupaiidae

Common Treeshrew *Tupaia glis*

We saw a few of these animals at Taman Negara on the Peninsula.

Mountain Treeshrew *Tupaia montana*

A few were seen around Mount Kinabalu on Borneo.

Lesser Treeshrew *Tupaia minor*

An animal, which was thought to be this species, was feeding in association with a Yellow-bellied Bulbul at Danum Valley (B).

Smooth-tailed Treeshrew *Dendrogale melanura*

A few were seen up on Mount Kinabalu in Sabah.

LORISES: Lorisidae

Sunda Loris

Nycticebus coucang

A superb, and confiding, animal was found foraging one night, by the edge of our resort at Taman Negara. This was formerly named **Slow Loris**, although the splitting off of the Javan and Bornean races as endemic species, has led this form to be renamed as Sunda Loris. It occurs in Thailand, Peninsula Malaysia, and Sumatra.

TARSIERS: Tarsiidae

Horsfield's Tarsier

Tarsius bancanus

A great start to our night sessions at Danum, when on our first night one of the Borneo Rainforest Lodge rangers located one of these bug-eyed primates, which allowed everyone to see it by walking just a short distance from the lodge. Also known as **Western Tarsier**.

MONKEYS: Cercopithecidae

Maroon Langur

Presbytis rubicunda

This Bornean endemic was seen three times, twice in Danum Valley, and another troop were seen near the Gomantong Caves. The best sighting was arguably the one at the Borneo Rainforest Lodge at the Danum, when their presence during our lunch at the lodge was brought to our attention by the barman who simply asked "would you care for a monkey sir?!" This involved a troop of very friendly animals that munched leaves, with absolutely no signs of fear right in front of the lodge, fully visible from the lodge restaurant. Among the troop were several cream-colored juvenile animals, looking very different from the ginger adults. Also known as **Red Leaf-Monkey**.

Silvered Langur

Presbytis cristata

On the Peninsula these animals are incredibly habituated at Kuala Selangor, where tourists flock to come and feed them on Bukit Melawati, making for wonderful photo opportunities there. We saw dozens of these leaf-monkeys there that included some bright orange juvenile animals among them. We also had daily sightings of small troops around Sukau on Borneo.

Banded Langur

Presbytis melalophos

These bespectacled monkeys were seen at Taman Negara, and later in the hill forests of Fraser's Hill on the Peninsula.

Proboscis Monkey

Nasalis larvatus

Sukau remains THE place to get this strange endemic primate, and so it was shown on our first afternoon there when we saw dozens of them along the banks of the Kinabatangan River. The most hilarious sighting though was a troop that crossed the river on a "monkey rope" which led them straight over our canoe. In their ranks was a conspicuous male with its particularly absurd proboscis!

Long-tailed Macaque

Macaca fascicularis

One of the most conspicuous mammals in Malaysia, we recorded them regularly throughout the tour, both on the Peninsula and in Borneo. Also known as Crab-eating Macaque.

Pig-tailed Macaque

Macaca nemestrina

A couple of roadside animals were seen near The Gap on the Peninsula, while on Borneo a troop of five animals was seen at Sepilok, and a large brutish male was found patrolling the lodge garden at Borneo Rainforest Lodge.

GIBBONS: Hylobatidae

White-handed Gibbon

Hylobates lar

A blackish individual was seen at The Gap (PM), hanging from the branch of a large tree that also hosted a pair of spectacular Rhinoceros Hornbills at the time too.

H Siamang

Symphalangus syndactylus

We were frustrated by these large gibbons at Fraser's Hill, where they were heard regularly, although never close.

Bornean Gibbon

Hylobates muelleri

After being frustrated by them at both Sukau and Danum, where they were heard giving their far-carrying calls often, we finally found a small family party on our final morning at Danum, where a pair and a young juvenile were found close to the lodge.

GREAT APES: Pongidae

(Bornean) Orangutan

Pongo pygmaeus

Borneo's most famous animal performed exceptionally well on the tour, with animals being seen on at least five separate days, around Danum, Sukau, and Gomantong Caves, and double figures in terms of individuals seen. This exceptionally high total must have been related to fruiting trees within the forest at the time. The best sightings came at Gomantong, where a large and grumpy male was seen near the swiftlet cave, and vented his anger at our presence by snapping branches, and throwing feces down from the treetops! Also a delightful juvenile was seen hanging motionless on our way into the Borneo Rainforest Lodge at Danum, and opened the way for an exceptional run of mammals for the trip in this area.

SQUIRRELS: Sciuridae

Giant Squirrel

Ratufa affinis

This enormous squirrel was seen a couple of times at Sepilok in Borneo, and also in the Sabah highlands at Mount Kinabalu.

Prevost's Squirrel

Callosciurus prevostii

This handsome squirrel was seen regularly in the lowlands of Borneo, with sightings coming from Sepilok, Sukau, and Danum Valley.

Kinabalu Squirrel

Callosciurus baluensis

Our final mammal addition of the trip, on the final morning at Mount Kinabalu.

Gray-bellied Squirrel

Callosciurus caniceps

Recorded a couple of times at Taman Negara in West Malaysia.

Himalayan Striped Squirrel

Tamiops maccllellandii

Recorded regularly in the hill forests of Fraser's Hill (Peninsula Malaysia).

Plantain Squirrel

Callosciurus notatus

This widespread squirrel was recorded on at least six days of the tour, being seen in Taman Negara and Kuala Selangor on the Peninsula, and Sepilok, Sukau, and on Mount Kinabalu on Borneo. Our best sighting came of a habituated animal that came in to be fed by hand by the upper gate on Kinabalu.

Sunda Black-banded Squirrel

Callosciurus nigrovittatus

A single was seen at Taman Negara in West Malaysia.

Low's Squirrel

Sundasciurus lowii

At least one was seen at Taman Negara in West Malaysia.

Slender Squirrel

Sundasciurus tenuis

A few were seen in the lowland jungles of the Peninsula, at Taman Negara.

Jentink's Squirrel

Sundasciurus jentinki

Recorded regularly in the highlands of Borneo.

Brooke's Squirrel

Sundasciurus brookei

At least one sighting was made at Taman Negara on the Peninsula.

Bornean Mountain Ground Squirrel *Dremomys everetti*

Seen on a number of occasions on Mount Kinabalu, including on the Summit Trail, where a confiding animal would come in to one of the shelters to feed on food scraps left behind by the hikers climbing the mountain.

Whitehead's Pigmy Squirrel *Exiliscriurus whiteheadi*

This fantastic little squirrel (with the tufty ears), was seen once up on Mount Kinabalu.

Plain Pigmy Squirrel *Exiliscriurus exilis*

Another amazing, and tiny, squirrel, which was seen regularly around Sukau and Danum in Borneo.

FLYING SQUIRRELS: Petauristinae

Red Giant Flying Squirrel *Petaurista petaurista*

The most regularly seen flying squirrel in Sabah, which we found at both Sepilok and Danum Valley. Some great views of gliding individuals were had at Danum, both on one of the night drives and also from the canopy walkway.

Black Flying Squirrel *Aeromys tephromelas*

One was seen on what turned out to be a fantastic night drive at Danum for flying squirrels, with three species seen, and all seen in spectacular gliding motion.

Thomas's Flying Squirrel *Aeromys thomasi*

One was seen on a night drive at Danum, which also yielded two other species of flying-squirrel (Black and Red Giant).

MICE, RATS AND ALLIES: Muridae

Common Pencil-tailed Tree Mouse *Chiropodomys gliroides*

One was seen foraging in some vines at night at Taman Negara.

Müller's Giant Sunda Rat *Sundamys muelleri*

John saw something that appeared to be this species at Sukau.

MEGABATS: Pteropodidae

Dusky Fruit-Bat *Penthetor lucasi*

A number of these fruit-bats were seen flying around the entrance to the Telinga Cave in Taman Negara.

FREE-TAILED BATS: Molossidae

Wrinkle-lipped Free-tailed Bat *Chaerephon plicata*

Thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, were seen leaving the cave at Gomantong at dusk (B), creating a constant "plume" of bats as they did so. As this impressive stream of bats emerged several Bat Hawks came in to prey on them. A dramatic scene!

HORSESHOE BATS: Rhinolophidae

Trefoil Horseshoe Bat *Rhinolophus trifolius*

A delightful bat, found hanging by the trail at night as we returned from a successful quest for a Large Frogmouth at Taman Negara on the Peninsula.

CATS: Felidae

Clouded Leopard

Neofelis nebulosa

Hands down the best sighting of the tour. To say that seeing one of these animals in broad daylight and being able to watch it for two hours is an understatement of note! One of the great developments in recent years at the Borneo Rainforest Lodge is the use of radios by their guides and the employment of rangers to actively search for wildlife. We saw what can happen as a direct result of this: a ranger found a Clouded Leopard one morning, and everyone at the lodge got to see it by virtue of the this system. This came on one of my best mornings birding at Danum that also yielded both endemic wren-babblers, and several spanking male Blue-headed Pittas. The diardi race found in Borneo and Sumatra is sometimes split as Sunda Clouded Leopard.

CIVETS AND MONGOOSE: Viverridae

Binturong

Arctictis binturong

This grizzled civet with the fiery orange eyes was seen actively feeding in a large fruiting fig tree during the day at Borneo Rainforest Lodge.

Malay Civet or Tangalung

Viverra zangalunga

One was seen from the hide by the resort at Taman Negara (PM), and another was seen crossing the lawn at the Borneo Rainforest Lodge.

Common Palm Civet

Paradoxurus hermaphroditus

One was seen at Taman Negara in West Malaysia.

Small-toothed Palm Civet

Arctogalidia trivirgata

Seen once on the Peninsula at Taman Negara, with another sighting, of a pair foraging at night, on Mount Kinabalu in Sabah.

Masked Palm Civet

Paguma larvata

Three were seen along the road near the Borneo Rainforest Lodge at dusk one evening.

MUSTELIDS: Mustelidae

Oriental Small-clawed Otter

Aonyx cinerea

One was seen swimming in a lagoon at Kuala Selangor on the Peninsula.

TAPIRS: Tapiridae

Malayan Tapir

Tapirus indicus

A smashing pair of tapirs were seen on the edge of the rainforest at Taman Negara, and later seen from the Tahan Hide, during one of our many nightbirding/mammaling sessions there.

PIGS: Suidae

Wild Boar

Sus scrofa

We had two sightings while at Taman Negara, including one group of eight animals from Tahan Hide.

Bearded Pig

Sus barbatus

Sadly, the regular animal that used to be relied on to hang around the lodge garden at the Borneo Rainforest Lodge seems to have moved on now. However, we did see this odd and huge pig at Sukau on a couple of occasions.

MOUSE-DEER: Tragulidae

Lesser Mouse-Deer

Tragulus javanicus

One of these tiny, tiny deer was seen near the resort at Taman Negara, thanks to some good spotting from Karen.

Greater Mouse-Deer

Tragulus napu

One was seen on a night drive at Borneo Rainforest Lodge.

DEER: Cervidae

Sambar Deer

Cervus unicolor

Recorded a few times near the resort at Taman Negara, and also around Borneo Rainforest Lodge.

