



A Tropical Birding Set Departure Tour

**BORNEO:**  
***BROADBILLS & BRISTLEHEADS***



**RHINOCEROS HORNBILL:** The big winner of the **BIRD OF THE TRIP;**  
with views like this, it's easy to understand why!

**24 June – 9 July 2012**

**Tour Leader: Sam Woods**

*All but one photo (of the Black-and-yellow Broadbill) were taken by Sam Woods*

(see <http://www.pbase.com/samwoods> or his blog, **LOST in BIRDING**  
<http://www.samwoodsbirding.blogspot.com> for more of Sam's photos)

## INTRODUCTION

Whichever way you look at it, this year's tour of Borneo was a resounding success: **297 bird species were recorded, including 45 endemics**. We saw all but a few of the endemic birds we were seeking (and the ones missed are mostly rarely seen), and had good weather throughout, with little rain hampering proceedings for any significant length of time. Among the avian highlights were five pitta species seen, with the **Blue-banded, Blue-headed, and Black-and-crimson Pittas** in particular putting on fantastic shows for all birders present. The Blue-banded was so spectacular it was an obvious shoe-in for one of the top trip birds of the tour from the moment we walked away. Amazingly, despite absolutely stunning views of a male **Blue-headed Pitta** showing his shimmering cerulean blue cap and deep purple underside to spectacular effect,

he never even got a mention in the final highlights of the tour, which completely baffled me; he simply could not have been seen better, and birds simply cannot look any better! However, to mention only the endemics is to miss the mark, as some of the, other, less local birds create as much of a stir, and can bring with them as much fanfare. Take the hornbills for example, none of which are confined to Borneo. However, this island does provide rare opportunities to see **EIGHT** species of hornbill



and we took full advantage. Between Danum Valley and Sukau we got all eight, with the score (i.e. 20) of **Rhinoceros Hornbills** feeding on fruits low beside the boat at Sukau, a sight so striking and appealing it won the top trip bird title by some distance. The bird is so large and impressive with its jaffa orange horn, and the views of them were so amazing, coupled with the sheer spectacle of that many feeding there it was hard to argue with this selection, even with the star-studded cast of competitors vying for the title. The trio of **White-crowned Hornbills** at Danum was also popular for their calls, funky hair-does, and striking looks. Quality new birds kept coming right up until the end with one bird found during our final hours of birding – a neon male **Green Broadbill** – sneaking into the top five bird list at the last minute. We also enjoyed a healthy batch of mammals – **33 mammal species in total** - including a herd of super-confiding **Bornean (Pygmy) Elephants** before we had even reached the lodge at Sukau, several sightings of Borneo's flagship animal, the "old man of the

forest” or **Orang-Utan**, one of which was seen building a night nest for its young baby clasped to its chest, literally dozens of **Proboscis Monkeys** along the Kinabatangan River which provided the greatest entertainment when seen leaping into the river from a great height in a far from graceful fashion, and even a shock **Marbled Cat** seen on two consecutive night drives at Danum (**photo page before**)! On top of all of that, we were also fortunate with a good run on NIGHT birds, with SIX species of owl seen, including the striking, and often elusive, **Oriental Bay Owl** at Sukau, and although only one frogmouth it was an exceedingly rarely seen one on the island: **Large Frogmouth**, seen on the banks of the Menanggol River on our final night. On top of the mammals and birds we also enjoyed some of the finest lodges in Asia with Sukau and the stunning Borneo Rainforest Lodge at Danum in particular, which both left us sad to leave not only for their surroundings, but also the wonderful food offerings like Nasi Lemak, Rendang Daging, and Mee Goreng, seemingly constantly available. I simply cannot wait to return to this wonderful island where the people and government have taken such a shine to the nature tourism market, which has thus given rise to a wonderful place to visit for those, interested in quality natural history experiences.

## THE TOP FIVES:

### TOP BIRDS

#### **1 RHINOCEROS HORNBILL - Sukau & Danum Valley**

This species won this vote by a long margin; *never* has there been such a clear winner. When you see around twenty of them concentrated in one area, where they linger long and close this is a hard bird to beat, with its ginormous size and prominent orange horn protruding from its bill.

#### **2= BLUE-BANDED PITTA - Danum Valley**

*Sam's personal pick for bird of the trip.* The bird is simply sensational when seen well, and we saw it well; very, very, very well! It was worth the climb, and the “blood, sweat and tears” of our first few misses to get it as we did at the death.

#### **2= BORNEAN BRISTLEHEAD - Danum Valley**

Well this one just had to be in there, didn't it? A monotypic endemic family which looks good is hard to beat after all. Probably the bird people most obsess about seeing before the tour, and as it seemed to be tougher to find this year, one we felt huge relief to get after a *three-day* search at Danum. Thanks to all the Borneo Rainforest Lodge guides in their help to get us this landmark bird once again!

**2= BORNEAN GROUND CUCKOO - Sukau**

A mega bird, both in terms of rarity and its odd looks. This had been a longtime nemesis of Sam who was pleased as punch to get it. Thankfully, everyone else in the group seemed to appreciate this bird too, that leapt up on to a branch at Sukau and could be savored for long minutes in full view, even calling from its chosen, not very well hidden, post.

**2= GREEN BROADBILL - Gomantong**

A late comer to the party, only being seen during our last few hours of birding. We initially only found a female, which was frankly a letdown for the group. However, when we emerged after a successful in-forest tracking of a calling *Chestnut-necklaced Partridge*, we found that our local guide had an electric male lined up in the 'scope...thanks Hazwan!



**TOP MAMMALS**

*On a trip where mammals featured so heavily, it would be a travesty to ignore them, and so here are their very own top five picks...*

**1= PLAIN PIGMY SQUIRREL - Sukau**

This animal is so small it is hard to comprehend that it is actually a squirrel at all. It also has an undeniable "cute" factor!

**1= BORNEAN ELEPHANT - Sukau**

Although it may also be referred to as *Bornean Pygmy Elephant*, it is still an elephant after all, and therefore still rather big, which makes it *always* impressive. Never a given on this tour, we were lucky to get news on the radio that a herd had been sighted near Sukau village before we had even reached the lodge in this area, on the extension. So we raced

there, making a special stop, where for a time we had the herd to ourselves, at very close range, just off the tip of our boat. Donna's most wanted thing of the trip.

**2= Orang-Utan - Danum (& Sukau)**

Reason alone to come to Borneo is the "Old Man of the Forest" or Orang-Utan, *always* absorbing creatures, being set apart from the other Great Apes by their *solitary* habits and *arboreal* lifestyle. Our best looks came on our journey out of Danum, where our driver Rizwan stopped suddenly to point out a large deep red ape at the side of the road. Amazingly, another animal was straight across the road from it too, leading to speculation there may have been a territorial showdown occurring.

**2= Proboscis Monkey - Sukau**

Comical does not quite cut it for these unique creatures, the males of which sport the characteristic bulbous nose of their name. Our most memorable moment with them involved when a troop decided to cross the river; a frankly dangerous pursuit in *crocodile*-infested waters. So they lingered nervously at the river edge, high above the trees, and then suddenly made a high jump into the water, making a massive splash as they did so, and creating a dramatic scene to watch for all of us.

**2= Marbled Cat - Danum Valley**

Seeing any kind of cat, anywhere in the world, is always special, and always memorable. What's more, this one is a rare species normally sighted only very occasionally. Bizarrely though, on this trip, we managed to see an animal well on *two consecutive nights* of night drives out of Borneo Rainforest Lodge, which must be nearly unheard of! The second sighting was near perfect as it clung to the side of a massive *dipterocarp* tree, presumably mid shinning its way down, even allowing for some photos to be taken; a lifer mammal for guide and group alike.

**ITINERARY:**

- June 24** - Arrival. Pulau Manukan (for some)/night Kota Kinabalu.
- June 25** - Tambunan & Mount Kinabalu NP/night near Mount Kinabalu.
- June 26** - Mount Kinabalu NP (HQ area)/night near Mount Kinabalu.
- June 27** - Mount Kinabalu NP/night near Mount Kinabalu.
- June 28** - Mount Kinabalu NP (Summit trail) & Poring/night near Mt. Kinabalu.
- June 29** - Mount Kinabalu NP (Summit trail) & Poring/night near Mt. Kinabalu.
- June 30** - Poring & Mount Kinabalu NP to Kota Kinabalu/night Kota Kinabalu.
- July 1** - Kota Kinabalu to Danum Valley/night Borneo Rainforest Lodge.
- July 2 - 4** - Danum Valley/night Borneo Rainforest Lodge.
- July 5** - Danum Valley to Sepilok/night Sepilok.

EXTENSION:

- July 6** - Sepilok to Sukau (Kinabatangan River)/night Sukau.
- July 7** - Sukau (Kinabatangan River) and Gomantong Caves/night Sukau.
- July 8** - Sukau (Kinabatangan River)/night Sukau
- July 9** - Sukau & Gomantong to Sandakan/departure from Sandakan

**DAILY SUMMARY**

**June 24**                    **Arrival Day/PULAU MANUKAN**

A few of the early arrivers – *John and Faye* – simply could not resist shaking off the jetlag early, and getting straight out in to the field. Thankfully this is easy to do in Sabah’s chilled-out capital Kota Kinabalu (KK), where a small cluster of islands just offshore provide some species not usually possible on the main tour. Several of these were found, including **Mangrove Blue-Flycatcher** and **Mangrove Whistler**, before we returned to this relaxed city to meet with the rest of the group.



**June 25**                    **TAMBUNAN & KINABALU NATIONAL PARK**

Our first major stop was to be Kinabalu National Park, home of the highest mountain in Southeast Asia, and indeed the highest mountain between the Himalayas and the island of New Guinea. Some of the group was already familiar with this distinctive peak, as it looms quite visibly over the city of KK. However, before we visited the mountain itself, we had some birding business to take care of in the Crocker Range, around **Tambunan**, *en-route to*

*the park*. Tambunan has now become a well-established part of this tour for the concentration of fruiting trees, and mid-elevation forest available which makes it a great site for *barbets* in particular. It did not take long to prove this on the day either, as shortly after arrival, one of our main target birds, the endemic **Mountain Barbet**, landed in a tree beside the van, and lingered for long looks; our first of *three* endemic barbets, and arguably the trickiest one. Others may argue that in fact the diminutive Bornean Barbet, with its incessant high-pitched, call is trickier still, and it can be hard to argue against that on some days. However, on this day both proved equally easy, as soon after the Mountain Barbet



had vacated the tree, a **Bornean Barbet** landed in the very same tree, perhaps evidence of the existence of good fruiting trees in the area at the time. Ironically, it was to be the most common mountain-based barbet, the endemic Golden-naped, which was to prove the trickiest for us! We heard them at Tambunan although never felt within reach of them the entire time. Moving our attentions from barbets, but staying with striking green fruit-eating birds, we were distracted by a group of **Bornean Leafbirds** also within the vicinity of where we'd parked. Meanwhile, the local **Dusky Munias** were clearly nesting in the trees within the centre's car park and provided regular distractions as they came

and went in a bustle of nesting activity. With little evidence that either the calling *Gold-whiskered Barbets* or *Golden-naped Barbets* were going to come out of hiding, we drove a little lower down the road to a spot for one of the most sought-after Tambunan birds: the striking **Whitehead's Spiderhunter**. I checked one of their favored trees for any sign of flowering blooms but was perturbed to find their favored flowers were nowhere to be found. My nerves increased as I glanced around the canopies for flowers elsewhere and came up empty-handed – not a good sign for a canopy nectarivore! My fears though did not hold for long, as moments later the distinctive buzzy sound of the spiderhunter was heard close by, and in spite of a clear lack of obvious flowers, we soon located a pair of these unique spiderhunters foraging within a parasitic vine, as is their want. Others in the supporting cast in the area included a flyover **Blyth's Hawk-Eagle**, and our first **Black-capped White-eyes**, stunningly bright **Temminck's Sunbirds**, and **Chestnut-crested Yuhinas**, the latter three of which were to become a regular and familiar daily feature in Sabah's mountains. The strange sight of the uniquely bizarre **Whitehead's Pygmy Squirrel** scampering along a crash barrier was also a standout moment from the morning!

A remarkable bit of spotting from the group led us to a group of three **Pygmy Ibon (White-eye)** huddled together and allopreening on a branch within the foliage, which lingered helpfully for us all to soak them up in the 'scope at length. Fruit in the area was further indicated by the presence of several **Bornean Bulbuls** foraging there too. Biggest shock of the morning though was provided by another nesting bird, *which the guide had not even seen in Borneo before*. A

prominent hanging nest of moss and sticks caught our attention, although after several minutes our attentions waned as we began to believe that it was no longer occupied; until suddenly a large and colorful shape shot out of the nest and landed nearby exposing kingfisher-like white patches in the wings in flight and a long, bluish, kingfisher-colored tail



on the ground: an amazing **Long-tailed Broadbill!** Moving up a little higher for lunch we were stopped in our tracks when a **Mountain Serpent-Eagle** passed over as we arrived at our lunch spot, and then admired a few nesting pairs of **Bornean (Cave) Swiftlets** nearby.

The final hour of our first, full, days birding was spent admiring the distinctive peak of **Mount Kinabalu** from within the park and picking up our first **Bornean Whistling-Thrush** (*photo page before*), appropriately watched fanning its tail regularly, as is the fashion for whistling-thrushes, and watching our first **Sunda Bush-Warbler** by the roadside (*photo above*).

## June 26      **KINABALU NATIONAL PARK**

This was to be a big day for us we hoped, as it would be our first full day on the impressive **Mount Kinabalu**, which is home to the lion's share of Borneo's endemic birds. We began a short time after dawn around Timpohon Gate, often a site for an early morning flurry of activity. However, aside from an immaculate **Indigo Flycatcher** using the power station fence as a perch, and a striking **Bornean Treepie** posing in the same area, things were fairly quiet overall, and so before long we hit the trails. Our first trail was also quiet, until the near-inaudible, high-pitched calls of a **Bornean Stubtail** reached our ears, and before

long this stunted warbler had hopped up onto a branch for us to view, even if we could not all *hear* it! A short time later a covey of **Red-breasted Partridges**, another *endemic* target for us, was persuaded to cross the open trail in front of us. The trail then fell silent once more, with little to show for it until we were near the end, when on playing a call near a dark, dank gully, an **Everett's Thrush** responded by hopping out of the gully and onto the distinctly better lit leaf litter beside us. It circled us at close range, when we all managed to get more than decent looks at this "master skulker", and incredibly it was also tempted across an open trail above us too, when this path-crossing moment actually revealed there to be *two* birds present. There may have been some moments of quiet on the trail with frustratingly little activity (*fairly typical at Mount Kinabalu*), but this quality showing more than made up for it. We all emerged from the trail a short time after beaming and raving about this sighting. Having finished one short trail, and much of the morning still lying before us, we opted to walk a longer trail, in the hopes of boosting our day list further; there were still plenty of endemics to chase after, after all.

The next trail produced the familiar pattern of extremely quiet periods punctuated by short periods of significant activity. The first significant activity occurred when the loud calls of another Borneo endemic broke the silence: **Mountain Wren-Babbler** (*photo next page*).

It did not take much persuasion to come out of the dip it was in and come and circle us at extremely close range on the trail, getting us all an eyeful in the process. Aside from an ultra-confiding young **Snowy-browed Flycatcher** that was happy to hunt insects within inches of us, very little happened until a movement was picked up ahead of us and Sam quickly lined up a female **Whitehead's Trogon** in the 'scope! (*Photo right*) It did not linger for long sadly, but it *was* long enough for us *all* to get it in our optics. Things then went very quiet as we walked back to the road, aside from our first **Sunda Laughingthrushes**, and re-connected with



our excellent driver Stephen, and dropped into a local restaurant for lunch. Not only was the local Malay food good at the restaurant (*Beef Rendang* being a personal favorite), but a convenient flower-laden tree proved irresistible to the local **Temminck's Sunbirds**.

After lunch we walked a road and quickly located a flock passing by, which held further **Sunda Laughingthrushes** among the decidedly more common **Chestnut-hooded**

**(-crowned) Laughingthrushes.** However, there was an even greater prize among them that soon stood out from the pack: some three or more **Bare-headed (Bornean) Laughingthrushes**, yet another endemic target. Laughingthrushes simply streamed through the trees for some time, and we would have remained fixed on them alone, but in such a large flock like this it was little surprise to find another gem hidden within, which for looks alone was one of the birds of the trip for many: **Short-tailed Magpie.** The bird is



all vivid electric green broken up with jet black and bright crimson areas, and topped off with a carrot-red bill. Need I say more!? In the melee of birds coming through we also managed to get several looks at

**Checker-throated Woodpeckers.** We were just recovering from the rush provided by this mega flock coming by when a high-pitched call from the roadside stopped us dead in our tracks, and sent a shiver

down Sam's spine, it simply had to be a **Fruit-hunter**, a much-wanted bird for some (especially John), and an irruptive species which can be non-existent in some years. Luckily the bird continued to call which helped us track it down on numerous occasions as it moved from perch to perch. Indeed after several sightings we realized there were actually two separate males involved, one with a rich rufous wash to the throat, and the other with a colder, grayer head. The precise position of this species taxonomically has long been a mystery with certain camps even suggesting it should be placed within the currently exclusively Neotropical family of *cotingas*. This may seem fanciful at first, but with some Oriental species recently being placed within the vireos, which has extended the reach of that family to Asia, who knows? Furthermore, listening to that high-pitched call repeatedly, and having lived in Ecuador for a number of years, the call has an uncanny resemblance to some *fruiteater* species in South America, which are within the *cotinga* family. That was to be our last big find of the day, and so after dinner in a local Kundasang restaurant, we retired for the night, full of excitement at what tomorrow could bring.

June 27 **KINABALU NATIONAL PARK**

Another full day was spent on the mountain searching for the many montane endemics found there. This involved more trail walking, and even a visit to the local botanical garden, the latter of which paid off for us for more than just the extravagant **pitcher-plants** hiding within (*photo below*). However, before we put a foot on the trail, or indeed had stepped out of the van, a pied shape in a dark roadside gully had us craning from our positions in the van to view a dapper **Bornean Forktail** foraging at close range within a roadside rivulet. Our morning trail walk was quiet except for when flocks came through breaking the silence and causing us to quickly focus on the sudden movements around us. One such flock produced a pair of delightful **Velvet-fronted Nuthatches** clasped to a trunk beside us. Another flock held a striking Whitehead's, a **Whitehead's Spiderhunter** that showed very well and glared down at us from its typically lofty position. Just as the flock seemed to have largely left us, and the forest was becoming quieter once more, a notable call reached our ears: a **Whitehead's Trogon**. Once this bird had started calling, there was no stopping it, and we listened in frustration for what seemed an age, as the bird could not be found. It only became apparent later why, when Sam walked down a steep slope that it was because this female bird had been hidden out of sight in the understory, completely invisible from the trail. Luckily those who fancied the steep decline (and there were not too many) were rewarded with considerably better views of this bird than the day before. On the way back to meet with the road and our route to lunch again, we happened upon a fruiting area which gave us our first group looks at our final barbet of the endemic trio: **Golden-naped Barbets**.



Now we could laugh at the fact that the most common of the endemic barbet triumvirate was the one that took us the longest to find! After another hearty Malaysian dish in the park we went for a more relaxed stroll around the botanical garden at the group's request, which was absorbing for the native pitcher plants (*nepenthes*) hidden within, but was also notable for birds: the endemic **Black-sided Flowerpecker** appeared on a dead snag, and a pair of **White-browed Shortwings** hopped around the potted plants

in full, wonderful view. On the way out a **Red-bellied Sculptor Squirrel** seemed to take offence at our presence and remained calling agitatedly in a tree beside our van for some time too! Activity was very low in the late afternoon, save for a roadside **Collared Owlet** that allowed us to observe it for some time. Then, after dinner, we ventured out owling in the park, being frustrated by a calling bird which seemed to be the rare **Bornean Frogmouth**, although some of the group was rewarded with a **Mountain Scops-Owl** that came in extremely close, and silently, and was suddenly right there in the center of Sam's spotlight!

**June 28 KINABALU NATIONAL PARK & PORING**

With so few of the lower elevation birds remaining for us to see on the mountain, we decided to spend the morning chasing the higher altitude specialties, by visiting another, new, area in the park. I had warned the group this would involve a stiff climb of around a kilometer, although almost everyone seemed game all the same. First off we birded around the bottom of the summit trail we were going to take and picked up three new birds as hoped: a single **Pale-faced Bulbul**, a pair of handsome **Mountain Black-eyes**, and a pair of **Sunda Cuckooshrikes**. Aside from that we were also graced by the presence of a family



party of **Short-tailed Magpies**, the juveniles of which were curious of us and almost tame, and several very confiding **Bornean Whistling-Thrushes** too. Once the summit trail gates had swung open we began our short ascent, which in all honesty everyone agreed had been far less taxing than initially expected. Near the start of the trail we had another showing from a **Bornean Stubtail** that was tempted out

of a gully to come around us, and also had some marvelous looks at two different groups of noisy **Mountain Wren-Babblers** that approached to literally within inches of us. We then set off in earnest with only one real target in mind, a high altitude warbler that is confined

to just a few high peaks in Borneo...We reached the desired elevation and played its call but were greeted with nothing but stony silence in our first few attempts, and then, suddenly at the third attempt, there was the familiar buzzing call coming from the mossy undergrowth. We pursued the sound and realized we were soon extremely close, and shortly after that realization located a rusty brown **Friendly Bush-Warbler** perched in a great position which allowed us all to get binocular-filling views. Mission-accomplished! With all our main targets accomplished we went a little further to enjoy staggering views of Mount Kinabalu looming overhead from a scenic lookout, and then turned about face and descended in time for lunch. On our way back down we checked a hole that John had found earlier and confirmed, as suspected, it belonged to a nesting **Orange-backed Woodpecker**, (*photo page before*), a large and spectacular woodpecker, the male of which posed on a large trunk for us all to soak up.

After lunch on the mountain we opted to change tack and head to lower altitudes around **Poring**, another area within the national park. However, a large banner with a flower on it



made us stop en-route, which indicated one of the largest flowers in the world was in bloom, the *rafflesia*. Local people advertise this the moment the bloom is at its peak, for in their short 5-day blooming period the flower is only at its beautiful peak for around three days before turning black and ugly and losing all of its appeal. Thus

local people make the most of this short blooming “semester” by planting a banner on the roadside and charging a premium to see it. We were only too happy to pay though, and were suitably impressed by the large bloom of a **Rafflesia keithii**, an endemic plant to the Bornean state of Sabah (*photo above*).

The afternoon at Poring was notable for some of our first true lowland species, such as the cartoonish **Black-and-yellow Broadbill**, equally attractive **Banded Broadbill**, nesting

**Dusky Munias** around the hostel accommodations in the area, and some high-flying **Wreathed Hornbills** heading to roost; our first (of eight) hornbills for the tour.

**June 29 - 30      KINABALU NATIONAL PARK & PORING**

The next two days were rather quieter in terms of new additions to the trip, unsurprisingly, and involved splitting our time between the park HQ areas of Mount Kinabalu and Poring Hot Springs-with some people even choosing a dip in the springs over a long slog in the forest at the latter site! The park did provide a few new birds even at this late stage in our visit there, with a male



**Crimson-headed Partridge** being the pick of the bunch, along with further sightings of endemics such as **Bare-headed Laughingthrush** and **Golden-naped Barbets**, and yet another couple of squirrels in the form of the well-named **Kinabalu Squirrel**, and the equally appropriately-named **Giant Squirrel**. However, perhaps our most absorbing



sighting at Kinabalu over these days was an **Eye-browed Jungle-flycatcher** toying with a small *snake* in the middle of the road up the mountain which brought our vehicle to a sudden halt, while we enjoyed this strange show unfold (*photos left and above*). The flycatcher looked a little apprehensive of the writhing snake, and so poked at it from time to

time, and seemed a little perturbed and nervy when it would wriggle around agitatedly in response to its prodding! Eventually the bird carried the snake across the road and disappeared off into the jungle once again. Later research proved the snake to be an endemic too, like the bird that was trying to prey on it, the *harmless*, though handsome, **Lined Reed Snake** (*photo on page before*).

**Poring** continued to lead us to new lowland birds, as we had merely dipped our toe in the lowlands at this stage of the tour, with the key sites of Danum and Sukau still to come. However, Poring did produce a smashing male **Rufous-collared Kingfisher** one afternoon, apparently unperturbed by the droves of returning tourists passing by after a cooling dip in a near waterfall. This was to be our only one of the tour too. Also at Poring we managed to find (due to the diligence of John) a nest hole of a **Buff-rumped Woodpecker**, the occupant of which sat out nicely for quite some time, and enjoyed a late afternoon showing from various barbets including **Gold-whiskered and Blue-eared Barbets**, both new additions. On the last day, our final birding venture before returning to Kota Kinabalu, was to be a long, sweaty, slog up to a waterfall at



Poring in the hope of finding the much-wanted **Blue-banded Pitta**, which sadly turned into little more than a sweaty hike for most, as the pitta remained mute for our entire visit, with a stunning **Whitehead's Pygmy Squirrel** and a **White-tailed Flycatcher** bringing scant compensation for some. However, we would return to that gem more than once later on the tour...

## **July 1            KOTA KINABALU to DANUM VALLEY**

This day always has a familiar pattern to it on the tour, *year in, year out*. An awfully early rise, and limited breakfast options in KK, leaving many not too cheery at the start of the day. However, after a short flight into Lahad Datu, an absorbing morning drive into the picturesque Danum Valley, and checking into the luxurious surrounds of Borneo Rainforest Lodge spirits are lifted and the grouchiness of the early morning is quickly forgotten for the

sheer thrill of being at one of Asia's very best birding and mammal sights. If any proof were needed to justify Danum's reputation it was provided on the journey into the lodge, when we found ourselves stopping time and again for avian distractions...Our driver Rizhwan, familiar to me from previous visits to this first class lodge, as usual claimed he was no "guide", then proceeded to stop the car and point out an overflying **Storm's Stork**. His title maybe "driver", though he was doing a fine job of multi-tasking! This rare waterbird is a rainforest species in rapid decline due to deforestation in the region, and one we had expected to see at its Sabah stronghold, Sukau, although I was delighted and surprised to get it at this early stage. A familiar *chonking* sound at the roadside ensured we stopped and added **Bold-striped Tit-Babbler** to our bird list. The journey into Borneo Rainforest Lodge is often good for picking up raptors and I had been hoping for just that, chief among my targets being the tiny endemic **White-fronted Falconet**. That raptor eluded us though, but we did manage to see a perched **Besra**, **Crested Serpent-Eagle**, (*photo page before*), and **Brahminy Kite** at least. Indeed, the headlines were hogged by some other larger and more spectacular birds: *hornbills*. A taste of spectacular things to come were provided by first a female **Wrinkled Hornbill** perched by the roadside, if only briefly, and then the headlines were grabbed with both hands when a pair of dazzling and humungous **Rhinoceros Hornbills** lingered in a massive rainforest tree, and lit up the 'scope and people's moods! This is a bird that is well over a meter long, makes loud whirring noises as the air rushes through its broad wings in flight, and sports a prominent Jaffa-orange rhino horn on top of its already substantial bill. In short, it *demand*s attention, and is a bird that the word "gob-smacked" seems to have been invented for.



The group were rightly ecstatic at this first showing, though this would be nothing compared with our final outrageous views of this bird at Sukau that would see it win the title of **top trip bird** well beyond the reach of any other species seen on the tour, (in spite of a more than stellar supporting cast). A little delayed, as usual, we checked into the spectacular **Borneo Rainforest Lodge**, and quickly tucked into one of their splendid buffets overlooking the tranquil Danum River, while handsome **Blue-throated Bee-eaters** hawked insects overhead, providing the only evidence of bird activity during the stifling midday heat. After check-in formalities were over, and Mary-Anne and Margareta in particular took the chance to get in a quick shop in the souvenir store, while others took this activity as more of a practical measure to stock up on some leech socks for our time in the lowlands, we met up with our local guide Rafael...

Our afternoon activities were rapidly rearranged when Rafael's radio informed him that **Bornean Bristleheads** had been heard on a near trail. With this being Borneo's sole family endemic, and many people's most wanted bird of the trip, (indeed Paul was staking his whole trip on this one mega bird), it would have been crazy to *not* try for this often elusive endemic. Well, as it turned out, it was indeed elusive, and some very distant calls of the target, and our first **Crested Jays** were all we could muster from this first attempt.



Although our hurried journey there was interrupted by the local troop of **Crested Firebacks** looking every bit as dapper as any rainforest pheasant can be (*photo page before*). As the forest grew dark, with the afternoon waning, we concluded our birding along the jungle-lined road near the lodge which brought us another *corvid*, and an endemic one, in the form of "**Bornean**" **Black Magpie**, which differs markedly from its

mainland cousin in lacking the white wing panels of that form, but still shares its odd and appealing metallic calls, quite unlike any other "crow". A **Rufous Piculet**, a tiny, tiny woodpecker was also very popular along the road, and showed very well there.

After our first dinner, where the various options ranging from traditional and tasty Malay food such as Mee Goreng Ayam and Nasi Goreng Daging, sat alongside some enticing western dishes, we went out on one of the lodge's famous night drives. These are notable and well worth it for mammals as much as birds, and Rafael was on hand again to lead us to **Red Giant Flying Squirrels** staring down at us from the massive rainforest trees, pick out a cat-like **Malay Civet** creeping into the undergrowth, along with **Wallace's Flying-Frog**, **Greater Mouse-Deer**, and even a pair of roosting **White-crowned Shamas** (*photo page before*).

## July 2      **DANUM VALLEY**

This day of the tour is always one I wake up in particular excitement for, as it would be our first day on the hunt for pittas, in what is the "pitta capital of the World": Danum Valley. Pittas are some of the most colorful, enigmatic, and absorbing birds in all of Asia, and



Danum boasts some six species, being at the heart of pitta diversity on the planet. Even if you do not take in to account the extreme pitta diversity on offer at Danum, the forest there is simply dripping with exciting possibilities, including colorful *broadbills*, endemic *wren-babblers*, Technicolor *trogons*, dazzling *pheasants*, enormous and impressive *hornbills*, and, of course, the infamous *Bornean Bristlehead*. So the day presented much in terms of mouthwatering offerings, and then, of course, there was always the exciting possibility of walking into an *Orang-Utan*, a *troop of monkeys*, or one of the rarer mammals of the Bornean jungle! The morning started quietly enough, the familiar whistles of **Black-and-crimson Pittas** echoing from the dark, dank, forest understory (*photo left*). We were initially

happy to hear this sweet sound, although began to wish we hadn't when our first few attempts drove us crazy as this avian jewel chose its song posts well, and remained hidden from all of us. However, persistence paid off with some great work from our local guide too, ensuring we "went in" off trail, so that in the end everyone present was wowed by this deep purple bird with the comical electric blue eyebrows, and rich crimson underbelly. We emerged from the forest back onto the road, both relieved and elated all at the same time. However, I knew we still, had plenty more to look for, so we could not afford to rest on our

laurels, and went off in hot pursuit of yet more birds. The roadside was an easier setting for our first of the “blue flycatchers”, and possibly the most highly-desired, **Bornean Blue Flycatcher**, which might just be the most attractive among this handsome group, with its iridescent blue areas on its otherwise deep blue head, and intense peach underside. The male did not take long to reveal itself, which was just what was needed after our early morning struggles with the pitta. The road also provided a great platform for observing a large flock of **Wrinkled Hornbills** that passed low overhead, one by one, in what felt like a glorious procession. The radio crackled to life, and Rafael’s face became stern, which alerted us to the fact there was a significant *something* in the area, and indeed this proved true as we backtracked a short distance along the road to join another group who were watching a mobile female **Orang-Utan** who all too soon buried itself in thick tangle, leaving us yearning for more from the “Old Man of the Jungle”. Walking forest trails for the rest of the morning was opted for as we searched for some interior species, most notably, the dazzling *Blue-headed Pitta*, which had been either strangely quiet, or frustratingly distant



the whole morning. However, we did pick up a boisterous flock of **Dusky Broadbills**, our first hyper-active **Spotted Fantails**, and a male **Malaysian Blue Flycatcher** shining blue by the riverside, their preferred habitat (*photo left*). As we made our way back towards the lodge Danum’s much-justified

reputation as a quality mammal-watching spot was soon proved when we bumped into a troop of **Red Leaf-Monkeys**, which may be better named “Orange Leaf-Monkey” by virtue of their vibrant coat color, topped off with a handsome pastel blue-colored face. However, pride of place for the “morning” hike though actually came in the early afternoon, late in our walk, as we were heading in earnest back to the lodge for lunch. I was a little downtrodden at the lack of **Blue-headed Pitta** opportunities when one piped up and called *hair-tingling-ly* close. We quickly regrouped, settled into position with faces fixed on the conveniently open trail before us, and popped the I-Pod, which brought immediate

response from the bird which was clearly coming in closer to check for its unseen intruder. Then, suddenly, Rafael had a pristine male in his sights, and despite a near scrummage caused trying to reposition ourselves in view of the bird, this dazzlingly handsome bird remained calm and as beautiful as ever, allowing everyone to lock onto it, before it then hopped around us exposing all of its best features: the rusty red back, the shimmering cerulean cap, and the deep, deep purple underside...a magical bird. After our two-pitta morning it really was time to brush off any unwanted leeches, take some lunch, and to reboot after what had been a lengthy walk in the hot and humid Bornean jungle.

After another hearty buffet, packed with many Malaysian delights for lunch, and after taking in a **Black Eagle** gliding past the lodge, we set out on an afternoon walk. This one was to be a little less strenuous; focusing our efforts along the road and the canopy walkway mostly as we stepped up our efforts to find the elusive *Bornean Bristlehead*. However, before we did that we checked the start of another jungle trail for nay sign of the *Bornean Banded Pitta*, but got no response from it whatsoever. Our time on this trail was salvaged though by a popular male **Large-billed (Large-billed) Blue Flycatcher**, which brought our tally of blue flycatchers for the day to an impressive three species. We then “retired” to the canopy walkway from some relaxing late afternoon birding, surrounded by glorious massive *dipterocarp* trees in this primary forest, taking in a celestial male **Black-naped Monarch** at eye level, and watching as an impressive **Wallace’s Hawk-Eagle** flew low over us and landed overhead. Another mammal was found too, with the odd **Binturong** or Bearcat rousing from its slumber in its treetop roost before changing position and vanishing within a thick tangle, where it was completely hidden from view thereafter. As we strolled back to the lodge along the road with light fading very fast we tempted a local **Brown Wood-Owl** into a tree overhead, where it remained glaring angrily at us for a while. After our exertions in the field for the day we opted to have a rest from night-driving, owling, and birding, and chill out at the lodge for the night.

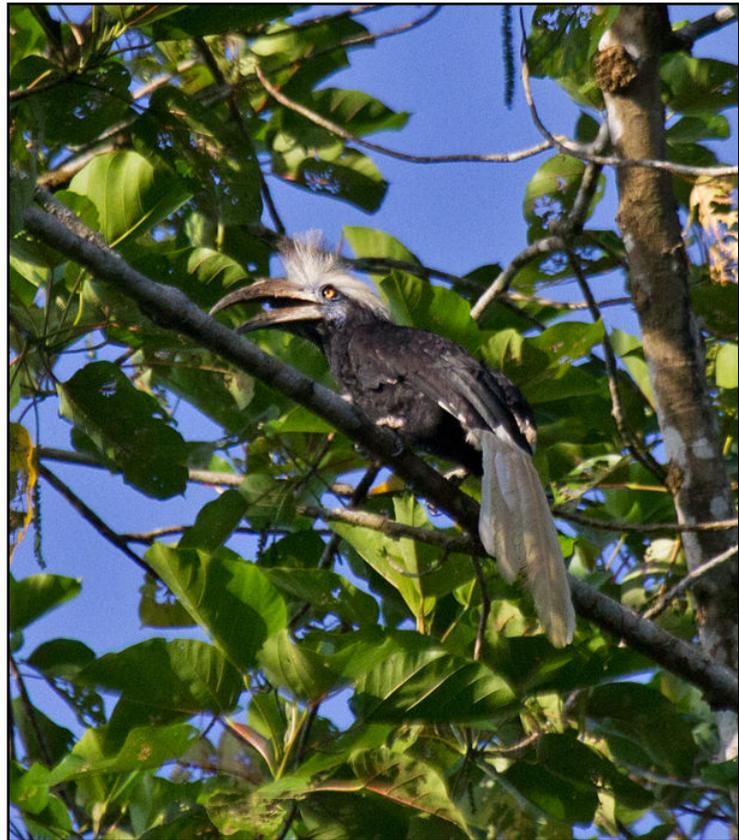
### July 3            **DANUM VALLEY**

We changed our plans a little this day. The early start was the same although this time we set out by vehicle a little further afield, to check some new trails for other *pittas*, and investigate another section of the road for the increasingly frustrating *bristlehead*. First we hit a trail, (after some short stops along the road on the way for **Greater Racket-tailed Drongo** and others), where we hoped we might find a *Bornean Banded Pitta* or a stunning *Blue-banded Pitta*. Despite not hearing the banded beauty things were looking up when we heard a **Blue-banded Pitta** close. We edged our way closer, not daring to make too much noise, as this notorious ventriloquist, with the ever so soft voice, can be easy to underestimate, so before you know it, a step too far can scare the bird away. Everything was looking good, the bird steadily coming closer, and we steadily moved towards it, only for a **Black-and-crimson Pitta** to turn up just at the wrong moment, which spooked the

Blue-banded, which then never called again. Frustrating for all, though Mary Anne, who had been absent the day previous when we ogled the *Black-and-crimson Pitta* then, now got her chance to catch up with this jungle gem. After a time, with only stony silence meeting our overtures, we had to accept our chance for the Blue-banded had slipped away and so we returned to the road and focused our efforts there, with our chief target now switching to the *Bristlehead*. That bird continued its absence from the bird list, although the morning did provide plenty of new birds besides...

Walking the road gave us an opportunity to survey the skies as well as the more open forest along this area of the road, which was dominated by widely spaced, though huge, rainforest trees, which produced some great birding, and provided a welcome release from trail birding for a time. Virtually the first sighting on leaving the forest was arguably one of the best of the entire morning. The low pigeon-like calls of the rarest of the hornbills,

**White-crowned Hornbill**, (*photo right*), emanated from the forest close by. We tried the recording and before we knew it, two of these massive hornbills came dramatically in to the trees beside the road, which included at least one “punk-haired” male. This also gave us a chance to catch up with some more raptors, which can be painfully tough to find when trail birding. These included several ginger **Jerdon’s Bazas**, a couple of perched **Crested Goshawks**, and a soaring **Rufous-bellied Eagle**. We also got our first taste of the *malkohas*, several species of these odd and colorful cuckoos were found, with first a rusty **Raffle’s Malkoha**, and then the much more scarce **Black-bellied Malkoha**



following close on its heels. Further frustration was provided by the deep, low sounds of an unavailable **Bornean Ground-Cuckoo** reaching our ears, which continued for a painstakingly long time, but always very distant, and always beyond a sea of thick, impenetrable, foliage. A passing flock yielded a **Scarlet-rumped Trogon** in its midst, as well as **Green Ioras** and others.

In the late morning, with the intense heat along the road understandably making some of the party wilt, some headed back to the shade and cool of the lodge, while the rest of us hit another trail to escape the sun, and in the hope that activity at that time would be higher there. We were not wrong. Although the morning had not been bad until then, a flurry of specialties occurred during this short, pre-lunch spell, which first yielded a pair of **Black-throated Wren-Babblers**, an elusive endemic that took some work for us all to finally get good views of, as they skulked in the leaf litter. While we were desperately trying to get every last person on that bird, a local **Bornean Wren-Babbler**, another endemic wren-



babbler, and the final of the trio of endemics in this group we desired, began calling close by. We continued to chase the Black-throated, finally to success, and hoped the Bornean would cling on in the area until we were ready to shift our focus. With everyone having bagged the Black-throated we turned around and headed to the area where the Bornean had called. Although it had stopped calling by that time, we tried a recording anyway, and quite literally within minutes this striking ground-dweller came creeping in towards us, affording wonderful looks at this much under-appreciated bird. Two endemic wren-babblers in a single hour, we certainly could not complain at that! This was capped off with some other handsome birds, like a pair of **Diard's Trogons**, and a **Chestnut-backed Scimitar-Babbler** foraging along a

large limb, and a pied male **Black-and-white Bulbul** hanging around a recently discovered fruiting tree, before lunch beckoned and time had to be called on our morning birding.

As the day before, the quiet and hot lunch period means it is a good time for people to take a rest from the intense heat in this part of the world, although those who ventured to bird more in the immediate surrounds of the lodge were once again rewarded. This time we decided to check along the river edge for **Straw-headed Bulbul**, and were pleased to find two of them, along with the regular local party of **Dusky Munias** feeding behind the cabins. In the afternoon we visited the lodge's canopy walkway again, in the hope of finding some canopy birds, such as that infernal *bristlehead* which we desired so much. Once again the

bristlehead was non-existent, neither sight nor sound of it anywhere, though the walkway was a little more active than the day before with a fig tree attracting some *barbets* and the fruit-loving **Asian Fairy-Bluebird**. Some inventive maneuvering was needed to line up a **Yellow-crowned Barbet** in the 'scope, not an easy task from a swaying walkway! There was also a female **Orang-Utan** in attendance, presumably also quite interested in those juicy figs, who was even seen nest building in the late afternoon. These odd, arboreal red apes build nests daily to sleep through the night in, and even rest for periods during the daytime. **Black-and-yellow Broadbills** were also in the area again too (*photo page before*). The day period ended in torment though, when a calling **Giant Pitta** lured us into the forest, only for it to be too dark at this late hour to see anything, in spite of it seeming to be very, very close indeed. We vowed to return at dawn.

For those who had any energy left, or simply were not lured away by the selection of Australian wines and booze at the lodge, partook in another night drive. There was not many with the energy to do this, but the ones who did, did not regret it. We started with a massive bat fluttering about the treetops: a **Large Flying-fox**, and ended with a strikingly-marked cat peering out of a hollow, high in the trees: the very rare **Marbled Cat**, and crammed in **Thomas's Flying-Squirrel** in between. We retired late, but elated; it is not everyday you drive up to a new cat.

#### July 4            **DANUM VALLEY**

America's Independence day started inauspiciously and with little fanfare, as a few of us opted for a very early breakfast and left the lodge in their truck pre-dawn, in the hope of finding the Giant Pitta that had taunted us the evening before. We got there, and were startled by a male **Crested Fireback** standing brazenly in the middle of the trail. The **Giant Pitta** though was near mute during a tantalizing time there, when it would call only very infrequently, *and only very distantly*. Luckily though we did not waste our time there, and still picked up a **Red-headed Trogon**, another new trogon for the trip, which was to prove our *fourth* and final species from this handsome group on the tour. And so we returned to the lodge and connected with the late risers, although got delayed from our intended trail hike when a young **Wallace's Hawk-Eagle** was spotted munching on one of the local *Blue-throated Bee-eaters* right beside one of the lodge cabins, affording very good views in the process. Then it was time to hit the trails again, so we started up a trail to a very scenic, *in-forest*, waterfall. Some chose, with the heat rising and humidity intensifying already, to be tempted into a cool natural pool in the forest for the morning, rather than birding, and enjoyed the strange experience of fish coming in to nip gently and harmlessly at their legs while they did so. The rest of us had sterner targets in mind: yet more *pittas*, and especially the *Blue-banded* that had eluded us so narrowly the day before...

We hit the trail in earnest (still smarting from our brush from the day before with both this species, and the giant), and arrived in good time at the first spot for the *Blue-banded Pitta*. However, along the way we did manage to add another couple of cool birds to the list with first a co-operative **Rufous-winged Philentoma**, and then, better still, a handsome pair of **Striped Wren-Babblers** (arguably one of the best-looking wren-babblers in the region-*photo below*). This latter pair even allowing me to line them up in the telescope for some time, so we could all get them “bursting to the rim” in the scope. A sighting, which was understandably popular indeed. It took a while once we reached the tricky stakeout for it, though before long, the low monotone whistle reached our ears of a near **Blue-banded Pitta**. Unfortunately though, on this day the bird had chosen a particularly inconvenient spot: on a steep slippery slope, where we all struggled for footing, let alone a view. Still we persevered, and John and Sam at least managed a short, though sweet, look at this Borneo endemic, before it frustratingly fell quiet and seemed to lose interest. Some recompense



was provided though by a chattering pair of delightful **Fluffy-backed Tit-Babblers** that came in to check us out, while we stood guard for the pitta. There was nothing for it, but to push on higher up the trail than I had hoped we would need to go, and try for the Blue-banded all over again. Funnily enough, with such a close brush with it *again*, *everyone* was well and truly committed to this

more strenuous hike higher up the trail! With such clear targets in mind, little else was seen as we climbed, as we spent more time watching our feet than watching birds! It actually did not take long (around thirty minutes) to arrive at our final spot for the pitta, beside a spectacular waterfall tumbling down to a cooling pool within the forest, which, after our arduous climb looked more than a little inviting. *But*, we had business to do. We had heard one pitta as we arrived, although pinpointing its location with its notoriously soft call above the sound of falling water, was proving impossible. So we moved on away from the water noise, and tried one of the known territories for the pitta. This involved crossing some rocks over the river, and we hoped we would not have to backtrack across them again. And so we reached the spot and tried once more. A strange turn of events then unfolded, when a movement was picked up along the floor, and we prayed it would end up being the pitta,

only for a **RAIL-BABBLER** to creep by, which many of us saw well—a much rarer species in Borneo, (being near-mythical in Sabah and at Borneo Rainforest Lodge, where there had only been one or two records previously!). This was a shock sighting for sure, (THE shock sighting of the tour, *beside the Marbled Cat*), and a new Borneo bird for Sam. However, in spite of this landmark sighting it was easy to tell that the pitta was still highly desired among the group, which they had certainly put in the effort and time to deserve a view of by this point! And so I decided to double-check the area *back across the river*, where we had just come from. I thought it best not to drag everyone across (with the precarious rock crossing which this would entail) unless I was sure there was one calling there first, and so backtracked alone. Then remarkably, as I was taking a quick pit-stop alone, one of these gorgeous pittas crossed the trail beside me, just when it obviously thought I was not looking! *I was rapidly beginning to lose my patience with this mischievous bird.* It then found a hidden spot and began continually calling back from it. At this point I opted to get everyone else back with me, while it was calling continually, rather than risk trying to find it and potentially flushing it in the process. We spent a little bit of time narrowing down the source of the **Blue-banded Pitta** call, but then realized it had but one hiding place in the area, and unfortunately this was up a steep, slippery hill! There was nothing for it, but to make the short ascent so we could get a view of this constantly calling bird. We quickly reached a point where this splendid scarlet, rust and electric blue bird could be seen well, although in the slipping, sliding and mayhem of trying to get all into a position where they could see it too, we managed to disturb the bird which quickly changed its position, causing us all to scramble, rather ungracefully it has to be said, into a whole new position. In between these moments of *frustration*, came moments of *elation*, as first John, then Paul, got choice looks, and then, *finally*, we all had it; and what looks we had. This time the bird remained rooted to a branch, and with our feet now locked into a position of not exactly comfort, but stability, on the slope we were able to soak up every exquisite detail as it called back from an exposed perch, facing us and revealing its seductive glistening celestial blue band as it did so. This bird had caused more than a little stress, with the first two birds chased being oh-so-close, but getting away from most of us all the same, and this latter bird causing more than a little heightened blood pressure as we needed to clamber up a less than convenient gradient to see it, but I think there was no doubt from the faces and comments that ensued once we were back on firm ground at the foot of the hill, that this had all been very worth it! I, for one, elevated this bird, after this, my best view ever, immediately right to the top of my *Top World Birds I Have Seen* list. Nothing could dampen our spirits after this; sightings of this bird could simply not have been bettered, and birds simply cannot look any more spectacular than this rainforest jewel. Add to that the fact the bird is not only endemic to Borneo, but rare and local, and the appeal of this bird is undeniable; it looks good, is rare, and is only found in Borneo. Birds do not sit much better! My only regret from this magic moment of pitta-heaven was that with the steepness of the trail involved I had (perhaps sensibly) left my camera at the foot of the hill and out of sight

of the bird the whole time. Oh how I wished I could have captured this rare avian moment on film.

After this, we virtually ran back to the lodge, enjoying a wonderful aerial view looking *down* on the lodge along the way, remarking how small it looked from our lofty position, but still made it back, and beaming, in time for another substantial, near-banquet back at the fabulous Borneo Rainforest Lodge. After we had got a gutful again of tasty Malaysian food we were treated to a **Lesser Fish-Eagle** floating in the air, low past the lodge, our first of the trip, and the second time we had added a new raptor to the bird list from the restaurant table! This was a day that was shaping up for scores to be settled then, for after our successes with the Blue-banded Pitta above the lodge, in the afternoon, and just before meeting time at 3pm, our local guide got the call on the radio we had been longing for...**BORNEAN BRISTLEHEAD** had been *heard* just moments before. Could we dare to have a scintilla of hope left for this bird, due to our earlier close brushes, punctuated by long periods with no sights nor sounds for anyone at the lodge during our stay? We simply had to go for it, and so quickly assembled and scurried on towards a now familiar trail, where we had by now spent quite a bit of time, searching for both this enigmatic species and family bird, and many other quality Bornean birds besides. We reached there in record time, and listened carefully for any signs of this treetop dweller. Amazingly, soon after our arrival, we began to hear their odd cries coming from the tops of trees, although I knew very well, that at this stage, we might still be far from seeing it; we were standing on a trail in very tall, closed primary forest after all, with only limited views of the canopy available. It soon became apparent there were a number of birds calling – they are a gregarious species, rarely found alone – although the flock was dispersed over a scattered area, with some of the bird calls coming from across the river, and inaccessible to us, while others were on our side, and we needed to triangulate to find their source. We moved this way and that, scurrying up and down the muddy trail to try and get closer to their calls. A long period of tension followed, as we heard them call intermittently, and even close, but glimpsed nothing at all, as we strained our necks, and peered desperately up into the canopy. Then, suddenly, there they were, in a massive rainforest tree overhead, which caused a rapid scramble for the ‘scope for Sam, who even lost his footing and went down in the hurry to get these birds in the optics before they moved on to their out-of-reach relatives across on the far side of the river. This even led to a graze across the cheek, and blood drawn, although no one, Sam included, noticed this during the madness when the birds showed up. Our fears were not realized though, these super birds-(a pair)-paused in the area (and my scope), for a while, allowing us *all* to see their odd, near crow-like structure, but appreciate too their very non-crow-like bald red and yellow head and massive hooked beaks. Not a single person was disappointed; with all agreeing this was indeed one of the World’s wacky birds, an oddity with immense appeal that did not let us down when it finally showed up. Paul quickly elevated this to BIRD OF THE TRIP, and he

never looked back. After all, this was his whole *raison d'être* for being in Borneo in the first place, so who could blame him!?! (Although, I would always argue in favor of the Blue-banded Pitta personally!) Another score settled, to huge relief all round, and nerves calmed. The remainder of the afternoon, spent, once again, in the vicinity of the now-familiar canopy walkway, was something of an anticlimax with little new except for a female **Fiery Minivet** that lingered for some time. Another long, though thrilling day, ended with another night drive, for the few hardy folks in the group, who were rewarded (again) with a **Marbled Cat** which we stopped suddenly for as we noticed this cloud-marked beast shinning down a tree close to the road, which somewhat overshadowed the **Malayan Colugos**, which were also seen on our night drive and were also spectacularly seen gliding gracefully through the air above our vehicle. But, you just cannot top a CAT sighting, wherever you are in the World it seems! Another BIG day ended, with a fitting climax to our time within one of the finest birding sites in all of Asia.

## July 5      **DANUM VALLEY to SEPILOK**

Sadly, this was to be our last day within the Danum Valley Conservation Area, an area famed for its extraordinary diversity of birdlife and other animals. I think it is fair to say that we all sampled more than our fair share of this whilst there, and no one left in any doubt that we had been staying in one of the most amazing jungles on Earth. On top of that we had been doing this in absolute luxury, courtesy of the magnificent Borneo Rainforest Lodge, a favorite hang out for bird guides, and all kinds of nature lovers. It is fair to say that everyone who visits Danum Valley leaves with sadness and wishes some day they might just be there again. You know you are staying in a luxurious and well-operated lodge when the biggest complaint you receive as a guide during your stay is that the jar full of sickeningly good homemade cookies was not filled on one day! Need I say more? The good news was though, although we were leaving an undeniably great place behind, we were also headed in the direction of Sukau, and the Kinabatangan River in eastern Sabah. This mighty river system is famed for its rich birdlife and, like Danum, is also home to some of the most highly desired mammals on the island. Donna for one still had a rather large target animal in mind for our final leg of the trip, and I was keeping my fingers crossed too for her. However, I have jumped the gun a little, before we would arrive at Sukau, our final destination of the tour, we had one final morning around the Borneo Rainforest Lodge, and a rather enticing journey to Sepilok, a stop-off on our journey en-route to Sukau which would be our final birding stop of the tour. Our day begun with a revisit to a distant trail (accessed by a bumpy truck ride shortly after dawn-one which produced a dark phase **Changeable Hawk-Eagle** en-route), and was finished with a long, but productive, drive from Danum to Sepilok. Both portions of the day were quite different, but both brought us yet more birds, and birds of equal, and high, quality in good measure.

So to the start of the day, where we hoped we might get lucky with another of our missing pitta species, at this, the single best pitta site on Earth. We indeed heard one of our targets early on-*Giant Pitta*-which again showed no interest in approaching any closer, and eluded us again, more than justifying its tag as one of the toughest pitta species in the world. We also heard our other main quarry-**Bornean Banded Pitta**-as it “*pow*ed” impressively, and loudly, close by. We did manage to get it

to come in close enough, although sadly all except Faye, Sam and John (briefly), got a look at this prominently banded male bird, which thereafter showed no further signs of coming near us. Faye and Sam got cracker looks, but unfortunately the low light levels, and the fact the bird used the familiar tactic of standing stock still made it very hard to locate for most of us, who commonly use movement in order to locate birds. However, our time along the trail was worthwhile for all present, as some other dandy species were seen, which were not seen elsewhere on the tour. First a dash of white movement drew us to a splendid male **Asian Paradise-Flycatcher**, (*photo right*), sporting ivory-white tail streamers, and a deep iridescent blue head and a sky-blue eye ring. This is a good choice of logo bird for the Borneo Rainforest Lodge, and it



was satisfying to get this seeing as it had become so familiar to us from their shirts, and other souvenir paraphernalia present around the lodge while we stayed there. A short time later the sound of another forest kingfisher reached our ears, this time the brilliant **Banded Kingfisher**. Pretty soon we realized it was highly responsive and shot in at lightning speed when Sam played the call, if only for the shortest burst. Only problem was, we simply could not find it, as it was hidden by a dense layer of foliage overhead, which acted like a curtain hiding this super bird from our sights. And so Sam changed his position, pressed play on his I-Pod and watched as this male bird shot in and landed right over him, though this time on a bare branch. He quickly shouted and soon after we were ALL seeing what he was: an absolutely gorgeous sky-blue forest kingfisher with a large orange bill, and intense peach-colored breast. Not even the word “handsome” quite cuts it when it comes to this beautiful bird!

Aside from those “marquee species” we also picked up another couple of babblers, **Short-tailed and Black-capped Babblers**, which added to the Herculean haul of more than twenty species of “babblers” recorded on the tour, and added another “woodie” with a pair of **Buff-necked Woodpeckers** on the way out of the trail. While hunting for the babblers we also managed to spot the surprisingly inconspicuous and enormous **Bearded Pig** as it foraged quietly on the forest floor. A tame individual was formerly available regularly right around the lodge at Danum, although has sadly moved on/died, and thus this oddly attractive animal has become distinctly more difficult than it used to be in recent times. On the way back to the lodge to pack up before a final lunch some of us lingered a little longer, where a popular group of **Chestnut-rumped Babblers** joined the bird list rather noisily, and we also had duel with a local **Red-bearded Bee-eater**, which atypically for this normally bold forest bird only allowed John to have a look at.



And so all too soon, the road beckoned and we loaded ourselves into three high-end and comfortable lodge pick up trucks for our convoy between Borneo Rainforest Lodge and our next stop, Sepilok. Knowing the majority of good forest habitat was at the start of the journey I alerted everyone to the fact we would cram in as much birding on the road out, before we left the forest, and before we would be welcomed by the sight of far-stretching palm plantations and urbanization. As we knew from the way in, and from Sam’s countless trips into this area before, there is plenty of quality avian fare on offer along the road in and out of Danum and so we braced ourselves. However, it turned out even better than expected, especially considering the hot time of day we were traveling this area, with so

many distractions-avian and mammalian, that we ended up arriving a little later than planned at Sepilok, but with a much weightier bird list for it! Our main hope along this forested road was that one of the many, many dead snags would hold a tiny endemic raptor, the *White-fronted Falconet*, which we had looked extensively for on the way in to no avail. This part of the tour arguably offers the best chance of finding the species. And so we set off, and soon dropped into a familiar pattern of stopping at every likely looking emergent dead tree en-route. As with the journey *into the lodge*, the journey *out of the lodge* was also productive for raptors with **Crested Serpent-Eagle** seen well perched alongside the road, another **Rufous-bellied Eagle** seen circling overhead, and an **Oriental Honey-Buzzard** seen gliding in the skies above. As we moved along the road we disturbed large flocks of finches from the seeding grasses at the side of the road that contained a healthy contingent of both **Chestnut and Dusky Munias** among them. Noticing an elegant perched bird by the road Sam stopped for a nice view of a **Gray-rumped Treeswift** along the road, then while we soaked up that crested bird, Sam surveyed the surrounding area and noting a couple of dead trees scanned them thoroughly for our main quarry, which he duly found....**WHITE-FRONTED (BORNEAN) FALCONET** which was perched prominently and taking flights to hunt for small prey. A pair was later noted by a rather intriguing hole in a larger dead tree which may have been their nest hole. This also proved a fortuitous stop for a



parrot too, for *finally*, we managed to get more than dashing flight views of the stunning **Blue-crowned Hanging-Parrot**, as one alighted close to us. Up until then many, many high-speed flight views did nothing to satisfy our interest in this bird. **Whiskered Treeswifts** also gave their most incredible views yet too (*photo above*). Moving further along the road our amiable and keen-eyed driver at the front of our “fleet”, Rizwhan, spotted a large furry red movement in the trees and pulled over so we could enjoy another two **Orang-Utans** that were feeding in the area, (a strange thing indeed, to see *two* of these normally solitary apes in such close proximity to each other). ...And then another stop was “mandatory” when the loud and far-carrying “cackling” of a Helmeted Hornbill was heard.

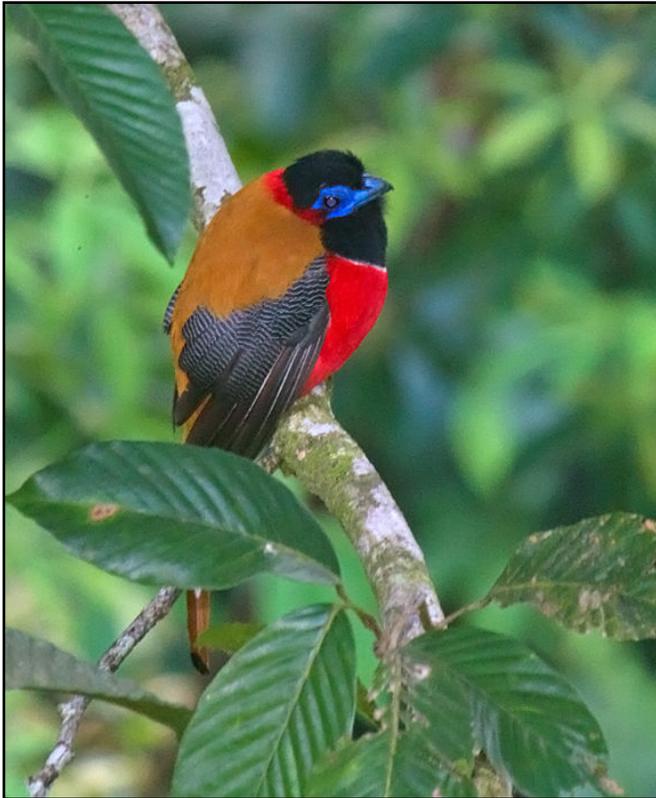
We raced towards the sound, a little further up the road, scrambled out of the van and waited. We searched in the trees immediately around us but no massive hornbills were to be found. Then, suddenly, there it was, beating through the air above us: a male **Helmeted Hornbill**, complete with disfigured, “elephant-man” facial skin and long tail streamers, making this species completely unmistakable, even in flight. Sam could hardly believe how long it was taking us to get no distance at all; there were simply too many birds to proceed on our journey! One final birding stop was undertaken when we pulled over to check some activity in the trees beside the road, only to find a fruiting tree with a couple of fruit-loving **Scaly-breasted Bulbuls** in attendance. If bulbuls do not sound attractive that may be understandable, but check the guides, this one’s a little different, and definitely “breaks the mold”. The same area also produced other new birds like **Everett’s White-eye**, **Large Woodshrike**, and **Rufous Woodpecker**. Although this was meant to be our “one final stop” an **Oriental Small-clawed Otter** had other ideas, when it ran out into the road and made us stop for one more, final time!

We arrived at Sepilok for a one-night stay, with enough time to wolf down dinner, and for the “hard core element”, to make a quick trip behind the lodge to search for *owls*. We were hoping this might lead to an **Oriental Bay Owl**, but sadly this bird was neither heard nor seen in this short search. However, the regular **Brown Boobook (Hawk-Owl)** was around the lodge as hoped.

**July 6            SEPILOK to SUKAU (KINABATANGAN RIVER)            EXTENSION**

The day began at Sepilok, not far from our very comfortable resort, and ended on the banks of the mighty Kinabatangan River, after transferring there by way of a boat cruise down the river, from the port of Sandakan. Before we left the resort though, dawn had arrived rapidly, and with it a flurry of activity in the trees in our resort, by the restaurant where we breakfasted: figs were in fruit and the local birds clearly knew! It did not take long to find our first new hornbill, with several **Asian Black Hornbills** clearly excited by this temporal feast, along with several **Thick-billed Green Pigeons**, **Pink-necked Green Pigeons**, and hordes of local *bulbuls*. From our breakfast table we also picked up our first **Black-and-red Broadbill**, arriving so early we had to admire its coloration under the lamps of the restaurant, giving it an unusual peachy glow and coloration. We had planned a morning visit to *Sepilok* on the tour for one simple, but important, reason: *Bornean Bristlehead*. The reason for this was also simple: over recent years this had fast become famous as THE place to find it. However, with our success at Danum Valley, getting this famous Bornean bird, we had the luxury of visiting Sepilok without the pressure of “we must see the bristlehead” attached to it. At Sepilok we visited their now infamous, state-of-the-art, canopy walkway, at the equally state-of-the-art *Rainforest Discovery Centre*. Here the walkway is built of a sturdy metal design, minimizing wobble and scares for those with a fear for heights, and also is built in such a way so that no severe climb is needed to reach it,

and enjoy eye level views of the staggeringly beautiful rainforest canopy. It has also been built with multiple visitors in mind, so that it is wide enough to deal with good numbers of people, and comes equipped with several spacious viewing towers, so that even when there are several groups present, there is no reason that everyone cannot *all* enjoy the birds and the amazing experience. I guess you can tell from my waxing lyrical, this is a place to be admired and respected. And so, after connecting with our excellent Sukau Rainforest Lodge bird guide we made our way to this wonderful structure and immediately began admiring a new extension to the walkway (since Sam had last visited, last fall), allowing even greater



visibility and access to the rainforest canopy.

We moved towards the “Trogon Tower”, and appropriately picked up a super male **Red-naped Trogon**, (*photo left*), which afforded fantastic views to open the batting for the day. Everyone instantly fell in love with this place; the facilities are stunning, and the birds superb. From the tower we also found a great pair of **Gray-and-buff Woodpeckers**, which we could watch in comfort, at eye level, from the seating area within the tower. Similarly, we also managed to find the oft difficult to see, canopy-loving, **Banded Bay Cuckoo**, whose calls had tainted us so often at Danum. More **Asian Black Hornbills** were also found up there, which graced

us with longer and better views than those in a feeding frenzy at the fruiting fig trees at our lodge that morning. We also enjoyed a group of **(Bornean) Brown Barbets** up there, and noted their strange, conspicuous red feet. With the day warming fast, and activity slowing equally fast, we dropped down to ground level and walked some of their flat, open, and well signed trails; we soon found a troop of handsome **Maroon Langurs or Red Leaf-Monkeys** right beside the sign telling us to look out for them there. More **Black-and-red Broadbills** were seen at length while at ground level, revealing they are indeed the *broadest* of broadbills, as well as rusty **Raffle’s Malkohas** which gave their best viewings yet in a passing bird wave that also held a single **Scarlet-rumped Trogon** too. A beautiful **Rubycheek or Ruby-cheeked Sunbird** also made a prolonged appearance in the same area, and less spectacular was our first good showing of a **White-chested Babbler**. All too soon it was time to leave this magical reserve behind and head back to the resort for lunch,

and be on our way to what some dub “Borneo’s Amazon”...*the Kinabatangan River*. However, a half-kilometer detour allowed us to take in a male **Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker** near the resort before we lunched, and on the way to the dock for our cruise to the lodge, we stopped off at a **Baya Weaver** colony, a bird that has only recently colonized Borneo.

We had drilled into our excellent local guide that **Bornean Pygmy-Elephant** was a priority (*photo below*), with Donna especially enamored with these beasts courtesy of a short film on the Internet, outlining the lives of these odd elephants. And so when we got a radio-call en-route to the lodge revealing that a herd of these beasts had been sighted between us and our lodge, we were ecstatic and keen to up the speed of the boat in hot pursuit. However, with strict local laws involving nature tourism, and a safety-conscious captain, thankfully he kept our fervor in check!



We plowed along at the same speed and crossed our fingers...it was hard to fathom that we could actually pick up this much wanted animal BEFORE we had even reached the lodge. However, that is just how it turned out. We came close to the village of Sukau and, surprisingly (given the number of lodges in the area), found that we were the only ones gathered for the show. So we docked our boat on the bank and watched these brutes, as they browsed destructively on the near bank, as only an elephant can do. After the compulsory photos of the elephants, and *us with the elephants* calmly grazing behind, another boat of excited tourists turned up, and we left them to enjoy this spectacle alone, as we had before them.

After arriving at yet another set of luxurious surrounds in which to stay in (and checking off our *seventh* and penultimate *hornbill* species of the trip a little ways from there- **Oriental Pied Hornbill**), we checked into the rooms, and got ready to transfer to a smaller motored canoe, for a leisurely afternoon drift down a near, rainforest-lined, creek. A tree was bearing fruit right in front of our lodge, and was attracting an amazing male **Van Hasselt's Sunbird** to it, which lingered for an age in one position, allowing us to see its deep purple feathered coat, and equally deep, deep red belly, as well as its gorgeous iridescent purplish-red gorget. A male **Red-throated Sunbird** in the same area was a little less co-operative, allowing only some looks before we had to leave on our afternoon cruise.

We were soon to see for ourselves the awesome diversity of primates living alongside the Kinabatangan River, and understand better the "Amazon" tag for the area. While we sat in complete comfort and relaxation we watched on as primates foraged excitedly along the river in the late afternoon, which included the odd Bornean endemic, and showpiece animal of Sukau: **Proboscis Monkey**. We observed several large troops of these frankly comical monkeys, and picked out the larger males hiding badly within his harem, standing out by virtue of his hulking frame and bulbous nose that has brought such fame with it. Groups of these monkeys fed with seemingly gay abandon in the trees on the banks of the river, just above our boat drifting lazily below, perhaps in the knowledge that there is no safer place to eat that alongside a group of excited humans!?



Other primate troops included **Long-tailed (Crab-eating) Macaques** (one of the most widespread and common monkeys in Asia-*photo above*), and the much larger and more threatening looking **Pig-tailed Macaque** too. Birds were a little overshadowed by the monkey show to be honest, although we did pick up a **Red-billed Malkoha**, arguably the scarcest of the Bornean malkoha species, and a **Common Iora** along the creek, sandwiched in between the antics of the local primates.

After a buffet on a wooden veranda overlooking the banks of the Kinabatangan River, (where everyone, I am sure, got a kick out of Sam wearing the lodge sarong-thanks Donna for “backing me up” on this one!), we opted to *not* take our night cruise on this night, but instead let those who preferred to drink, *drink*, and those who preferred to bird, *bird*. That entailed searching for an owl behind the lodge, and one that had eluded us only the night before, and so was fresh in our minds, and one which Sam especially can never resist looking for; he loves owls, his all-time favorite family, and this is his all-time favorite owl...Hazwan joined us for our owl foray, and quickly took us to where he had recently heard the **Oriental Bay Owl**. We played the call and were immediately answered by not one but two different birds; our first thoughts were “this is going to be remarkably easy”. An hour or so later we were still *owless* and still listening to one or two of the birds calling regularly. We had glimpsed the bird several times, although it appeared wary of the spotlight, not lingering for long enough for anyone else to latch on to it. And so we changed tact and used a lower level beam, which, soon after, had the owl lined up within the beam; a glorious owl if ever there was one. Were it not for *pittas*, *ground-cuckoos*, *broadbills*, *hornbills*, and other stunning animals, this would surely have been a highlight on many highlight reels at the trip end.

**July 7            SUKAU (KINABATANGAN RIVER) & GOMANTONG CAVES            EXTENSION**

Another big day loomed for us on this day, with a full day in the Sukau area; the morning was spent in the surrounds of the Kinabatangan River, cruising the river, and trying to find some of the very special specialties in the area from the comfort of our canoe, while the afternoon was a very different affair: a visit to Gomantong Caves. These caves were made famous by, among other people, the legendary Sir David Attenborough (he of husky-toned voice, famed from the many BBC mega-series which he has memorably presented). But first things first; the morning...

Our main target of the morning was crystal clear...and the very reason that Sukau has gained such legendary birding fame in recent times: the existence of a small, though significant, population of the *formerly* exceedingly rarely-seen *Bornean Ground-Cuckoo*. Since its discovery along the banks of the creeks and tributaries of the Kinabatangan in the 90s birders have been visiting and getting this former mega-rarity with amazing regularity. However, in spite of this, the bird is by no means easy, and is frequently missed, in spite of this change in fortune and growing knowledge of the bird's whereabouts and habits. Our local guide seemed strangely uninhibited and unperturbed by this focus and it was clear that the bird had been “gettable” of late, something it is not always. We took an early breakfast, which by now of course was very familiar to us, boarded our canoe and set out before other boats would reach the quiet tributary where we were hoping to find this enigmatic endemic. Thankfully, when we reached the creek we found ourselves alone. We headed to the area famed for the cuckoo, and were extremely excited to hear two birds

already calling when we arrived. Not only were they were calling; they were calling *close*, *very close*. It is not an exaggeration to say that everyone tightened with the nervous tension of the moment, and started to believe we might actually have a realistic shot at this bird. With the benefit of local knowledge and tip offs, we focused on a particular individual, and after just the shortest burst of playback, the bird jumped boisterously up onto an open branch, with the play button on the I-Pod barely touched. I quickly switched it into pause, and soon after all of us were ogling the dramatic, long-tailed, **Bornean Ground-Cuckoo** as it glared right back at us; absolutely drop *dead gorgeous!* We even got to see it drop from the branch, *post* bin-filling scenes all round, and watch it hopping boldly along the forest



floor on the river bank, for a different perspective entirely. With our main target bird nailed, within an hour of dawn this day felt somewhat pressure-free thereafter, and had a feeling of, well, nothing really could top that for the day, no matter what happened. That is not to say we gave up though, far from it. We spent long hours in the field, with a leisurely morning cruise, and afternoon stroll around the pungent caves, added more birds, and loved every single relaxing minute of it...

After the cuckoo, our next bird on our agenda was the glistening **Hooded Pitta**, the very same tributary being a sterling place for this forest bird with the loud and far carrying voice. It did not take long to hear one, and after toying with us for a while most (if not all) of us got crisp looks, at what is one crisp bird. Switching from the main motor on board to the “quiet”, barely audible, motor meant we

could drive slowly along this creek and still appreciate the tranquility of the place all at the same time. A little later we had our eyeballs fixed to a massive **White-bellied Woodpecker** hugging a massive rainforest tree. Although the tiny **Plain Pigmy-Squirrel** observed along there too (*photo above*), was greeted with as much of rapture, so strikingly small is it. We also picked up another **Storm’s Stork** for the trip, here at their Sabah stronghold, and where we most expected to see it.

Once the intensity of the heat in the boats became way too intense late in the morning we retreated to the lodge, with bird activity slowing along the river edges, where the sun was at its most fierce by this time. Still, a good boardwalk behind the lodge allowed those who

wished to, to continue birding, and eke out yet more new birds for the trip. This was a good place to seek out some of the last few *babblers* we needed, and so that is exactly what we did, adding the drab **Horsfield's Babbler**, in addition to the far from drab, and ever so fetching, **Black-throated Babbler** (*photo below*). Both at this lodge and in Danum Valley, it is advisable to carry your bins to the lunch table as birds can be seen right from there. And so it proved once again when a couple of large shapes over lunch turned out to be a pair of **Lesser Adjutants** riding a thermal.

After a short break we were back in the small canoes traveling the short distance to another dock, where a vehicle was waiting to take us the thirty-minute ride to the fascinating Gomantong Caves. The caves are an economic gold mine, holding thousands of swiftlets within them, a valuable resource as their saliva-based nests are harvested to

produce Chinese edible-nest soup, a luxury item which has been produced for hundreds of years, making the swift nests themselves of extremely high value. There are *three* species of echo locating swiftlets in the cave-which navigate in the darkness much in the same way that the millions of **Wrinkle-lipped Bats** that cohabit with them in the caves do-**Mossy-nest, Black-nest, and Edible-nest (or White-nest) Swiftlets**. The latter produces the most highly prized, *and valuable*,



nests, which are comprised entirely of the birds saliva. The darker nests of the Black-nest Swiftlet by comparison are only comprised partly of saliva, which is intermixed with feathers and plant matter. As these birds are best identified by the nests themselves, being near identical in the field, we were finally (after having seen multiple unidentified swiftlets until then), able to ID them from their mossy nests, dark, non-mossy, nests, and clean white nests inside the cave, and with the aid of a powerful flashlight. The cave is a fascinating, if smelly, place, with a large pile of bird and bat guano sustaining a vast population of creepy crawlies such as **Long-legged (Cave) Centipedes** and a carpet of **cockroaches**, among others. Once we had toured the cave, we came out into the less claustrophobic forest, and returned to the parking lot to wait for the emergence of bats, which we'd hoped would be attended by the local Bat Hawks looking for easy prey. The short boardwalk in and out of the cave was productive too, bringing us our final babbler of the tour (of which over twenty species were seen), **Gray-headed Babbler**, along with a popular male **Maroon-breasted Philentoma**, and a comical lizard, the **Crested Green Lizard**. The latter was comical when

it finally got spooked it ran along the hand railing with its, long, long tail erected, and its legs splaying side to side, looking far from graceful in the process (*photo below*)!



This was also a good place to be based for other birds too, and while we whiled away the time waiting for dusk, we picked up a pair of expectant **Peregrine Falcons**, also waiting for some hapless bats to emerge. We also added our eighth and final hornbill of the tour, with a pair of **Bushy-crested Hornbills**, which completed a clean sweep of *all* the hornbill species in Borneo. From our viewpoint we also enjoyed watching another playful troop of **Red Leaf-Monkeys** moving around the parking lot. Sadly some hundreds of thousands of bats, if not millions, did not emerge along their usual route, instead presumably emerging out of an alternative back exit from the cave, meaning we did not get to see the spectacle of the “bat spiral” we had been hoping for. However, we were not the only ones seemingly caught out by this unusual occurrence, as a party of **Bat Hawks** swooped around the area, looking a little lost, and bad-placed with the distinct lack of any real numbers of bats in the area. This afforded us stunning looks at Bat Hawks, with one particular individual diving repeatedly low over our heads in acrobatic attempts to catch the few bats present in the air, making for dramatic aerial displays, and an awe-inspiring end to another “big” day in Borneo. We had planned to spend the first hour of darkness searching for nightbirds around the caves but an ominous and heavy downpour soon put paid to that plan and we soon retreated to the van, but not before we had picked up a striking nocturnal reptile, the handsome, and interestingly named **Yoshi’s Bent-toed Gecko**. Once the rain had stopped, thankfully, we boarded our canoes and returned to the lodge, picking up a wide-eyed **Buffy Fish-Owl** on the journey as planned.

**July 8      SUKAU (KINABATANGAN RIVER)****EXTENSION**

Our last, full, day was a perfect antidote to what had gone before: a relaxing, slow-paced day after the rigors of a long tour where we had all put long hours in for some great avian and mammalian rewards. And so we took a slightly shorter morning cruise, and enjoyed a longer break during the heat of the day, before dropping back into the canoes again for an afternoon cruise from mid-afternoon. Then in the evening, post-dinner, we took a *night cruise* along one of the same familiar creeks, under the unfamiliar guise of darkness. Simply



put, it was fantastic last day: relaxing, bird-filled, peppered with mammals, and culminating in a productive night cruise, which even produced a lifebird for our experienced and talented local bird guide who had spent the last *eight* years leading tours in this area...

The morning cruise took a different route from previously taken, taking in another, wider, tributary. One of our main targets for the morning was the **Gray-**

**headed Fish-Eagle**, which after sorting through half a dozen or so **Lesser Fish-Eagles** we finally found. However, this morning will most likely be remembered not for what was new to the trip list, but from our visits to “old favorites” and, in particular, *hornbills*. By the close of business we had seen FIVE species, and had memorable views of most. What unfolded during the morning was the highest numbers of **Storm’s Storks** that the local guides had ever seen in the area (*photo above*), some TWENTY SEVEN birds seen in a truly bumper period for the birds, including *many* perched individuals. We also managed to get some perched looks at the remarkably Maribou Stork-like **Lesser Adjutant** too in this same, *stork-rich*, area. Once we hit the tributary itself a cluster of fruiting trees provided rich pickings for hornbills with more than thirty **Oriental Pied Hornbills** in the area, which were only outclassed by the awesome gathering of some twenty or more **Rhinoceros Hornbills**, (*photo below*) there. As we journeyed back to the lodge following this extraordinary sighting there was no doubt at all in Sam’s mind that this incredible showing had sealed this bird’s fate as the BIRD OF THE TRIP for all, the bird, and the views of this

bird, were simply *too good*. The remarkable hornbill diversity in the Kinabatangan region was further reinforced with a sighting too of a pair of handsome **Wrinkled Hornbills** in the same, fruit-laden area.



The same stretch of river held a good number of raptors, in addition to the aforementioned fish-eagles, there were also several **Changeable Hawk-Eagles**, a number of **Crested Serpent-Eagles**, and a several showy **Crested Goshawks** too including one doing display flights by the riverside. By mid-morning this open riverside was intensely hot, so we retired back to the lodge, some of us seeking sanctuary under a fan and with a cold one, while others decided to bird again around the lodge. Once again, another short foray around the lodge grounds proved very worthwhile: a **Velvet-fronted Nuthatch** froze on an open branch for a long, long time in the “front yard”, a male **Red-throated Sunbird** was again found in the fruiting tree out front, while John picked out a far less conspicuous

**Thick-billed Flowerpecker** visiting the same bustling tree, while *behind* the lodge we bumped into another **Horsfield's Babbler**, a troop of friendly **Silvered Langurs** or **Silver Leaf-Monkeys**, and a stunning pair of **Striped Wren-Babblers**, which some in the group managed to get amazing digiscoped shots of.



In the afternoon we took one final, lazy, afternoon boat ride, along the same narrow creek where it all began. On this afternoon, and with the assemblage of primates hanging around the creek at this time of day, we were not surprised to find we were not alone, the gatherings of monkeys proving popular with the other tourist boats in the area. **Proboscis Monkeys, Crab-eating (Long-tailed)** and **Pig-tailed Macaques** all massed along the banks near dusk, getting in one final feed. Also at this time, a mother and child **Orang-Utan** were observed noisily and sometimes rather clumsily, assembling a nest for the night. However, undoubtedly the mammalian highlight of the afternoon was seeing numerous Proboscis Monkeys “take the plunge”. When they need to cross the rivers and waterways in the area, the monkeys have to be extremely careful, for although they are adept at swimming, lethal **Saltwater Crocodiles** roam the waters (*photo above*), and are always on the lookout for a hapless, helpless victim. And so when the monkeys do this, they spend quite some time glancing nervously down at the water, from high above, then suddenly drop from a great height-quite a sight-into the waters with a dramatic splash, before making for the bank in haste. Thankfully, on this day, all the ones we saw seemed to have made it across safely. But what an amusing sight it was to see them drop from a substantial height into the waters.

The tributary also produced some bird highlights, including a dreamy male **Scarlet-rumped Trogon**, a threesome of **White-crowned Hornbills** passing over the river, a male

**Yellow-rumped Flowerpecker** (an endemic species to Borneo), and some great looks at a mobile flock of nearly a dozen **Long-tailed Parakeets**. A fine balancing act was also undertaken when a **Red-throated Barbet** was scoped up along the river edge too (from *within* the canoe), which was also joined in the same scope view by a **Blue-eared Barbet** for a time. A single **Wallace's Hawk-Eagle** in the same area capped off a great day for raptors, with SEVEN species seen, and multiple individuals.

After a final bumper meal, full of fresh squid spiced with sambal and other tasty Malaysian dishes, we were back in the canoes for one final birding session by canoe, though this time under cover of darkness. Mammal-wise it was poor, with nothing seen, although bird-wise it was an undeniable success: two **Buffy Fish-Owls** glared at us from the banks, and both **Blue-eared and Stork-billed Kingfishers** (*photo below*) were found sleeping along the banks too, before we got into a duel between Sam's I-Pod and a rare **Large Frogmouth**. While regularly seen in on mainland Malaysia, on Borneo this is still a tough bird to crack, so rarely is it seen. As if to prove this, it transpired that while our local guide had heard it here a number of times during his eight years of service to Sukau Rainforest Lodge, he had



*never* actually seen one. After a mid-river duel with the bird for a while, it seemed there was only one option left open to us: *to go in for it*. The guides surveyed ahead along the banks on foot, to see if there was a way in, and to see if the bird could be located, or at least be got close to. After a short time walking the banks and hearing this

bird tantalizingly close, everyone was beckoned ashore. We stood in an area listening to the spine-chilling and atmospheric sounds of this awesome nightbird as it called above us, but try as we did, we simply could not find a window to the bird. Literally, just as we were thinking of calling it quits, the spotlights finally caught it, sitting right in the open, and looking every bit as large as it should do—at the size of a North American Cooper's Hawk, this abnormally large species dwarfs most other Asian frogmouths. Our local guide was

ecstatic, he had his lifer, and Mary Anne was beaming, less from the lifer, but more from the adventure of going in and scrambling through the jungle at night to find it, which was, I have to admit, a lot of fun! What a way to close a final night.

**July 9**      **SUKAU & GOMANTONG to SANDAKAN/DEPARTURE**      **EXTENSION**

For our last day of the tour we switched things around a little from what we had originally planned. What with most of our *river* targets now “in the bag” (*Bornean Ground-Cuckoo, all the hornbills,*



*Storm's Stork and Lesser Adjutant, Hooded & Black-and-crimson Pittas, both fish-eagles etc.*), we had realized a few days earlier that it might be more beneficial to have a short birding session around Gomantong again on this morning, as that now held the lion's share of missing birds for us. This proved to be a great switch of venue, bringing some superb “last minute wonders” creeping onto the list even at this late stage, one of which even crept inot the top five birds list at the very last minute...

And so a short time after a dawn breakfast we made our way down to the small canoes for the final time, and quickly transferred to our van, and made the short road journey to Gomantong. We had made this trip only days before, though in the afternoon, and so were surprised to see the palm plantations alive with birds on the way, which even brought us some new, if widespread, species to our trip list like **Striated Grassbird, Long-tailed Shrike, and Javan Myna**; a recent colonizer. We also got our first decent group looks at a **Collared Kingfisher** that was using a roadside wire to good effect for both us, and our trip list. After arriving at Gomantong we walked the road, birding an area not covered previously during our earlier visit. Soon after, we picked up another new species for our bird list, with a striking roadside **Banded Woodpecker**, which showed well. We also got regularly taunting calls from the local coveys of **Chestnut-necklaced Partridges**, which continued to elude us like they had previously both at Danum and Sukau. Finally though, we heard one near enough, and in a good locale for potentially seeing it. However, we were quickly distracted mid-partridge attempt by the calls of a **Green Broadbill**. Unfortunately only the dowdier female put in a show at this time, before we were tempted to leave that bird once more for the close calling partridges and decided to try walking into the forest a little ways. This proved a boon for us, as on

walking in, and switching the tape on again, we watched with mouths agape, as a super **Chestnut-necklaced Partridge** strolled right past us, less than a meter away at times, for good looks all round. Still reveling in this moment, we were soon aware that we were being called back out to the road again, where a MALE **Green Broadbill** was lined up in the 'scope for us on arrival; this was my kind of final day! The female was, frankly, quickly forgotten, as this gleaming emerald-green bird lit up the Kowa and our notebooks from our final time in the field. Staying on the broadbill theme, we could not resist further looks at both **Black-and-red and Banded Broadbills** too while we were there also. Other splashes of color were provided by a vermilion male **Scarlet-rumped Trogon**, and a party of **Maroon Woodpeckers**, which finally gave us all *quality* looks, (a bird we had heard often before then, but honestly, *barely seen* up until that point). A couple of final **Lesser Fish-Eagles** were seen in the air overhead, as were a very noisy rabble of TEN **Bushy-crested Hornbills** which sailed into the trees overhead. A final sighting of **Pig-tailed Macaques** (*photo page before*) was also made before we reluctantly had to bid goodbye to Borneo's rainforest and head back to the port, and airport, of Sandakan for departures out, taking in our final trip bird, **Wandering Whistling-Duck** along the journey back. A very refined final lunch at the Sabah Tea House in Sandakan was the perfect way to end the trip, wrapping up our final trip list, discussing the best birds and animals of the trip, while in the scenic surrounds of this tea house, a throw-back to the British colonial era, with croquet on the lawn, and service provided by maids in traditional dress. A fine finale indeed, washed down with a cup of Sabah's finest tea.

*It had been a truly wonderful trip, with not only great birds all round, but a fun, fun group to see these with, who reveled in both the birdwatching and extraordinary mammal opportunities available. Rarely does a trip in the Orient offer so many other natural wonders, besides birds. We had stood over a massive blooming **Rafflesia**, a plant which produces the largest blooms of any on Earth; watched comical **Proboscis Monkeys** taking a leap of faith into the waters of the Kinabatangan as they risked crossing from one side to the other in the crocodile-infested waters; watched a mother **Orang-Utan** building a night nest for herself and her progeny; observed a **Marbled Cat** grappling the side of a massive dipterocarp tree at night; found **Pitcher Plants** on the side of a mountain trail on the tallest mountain between the Himalayas and New Guinea; watched **swiftlets nesting in a pungent cave**, which was crawling with guano-seeking cockroaches and centipedes, in the depths of the rainforest; watched in amazement at night as our spotlight lit up **flying-squirrels and flying-lemurs gliding gracefully overhead**; enjoyed the sun setting around the distinctive "bad teeth" peaks of **Mount Kinabalu** in our sights; watched **bright lime green lizards scampering along hand railings in the rainforest**, and enjoyed a **bewildering assortment of squirrels** from the very largest (**Giant**), to the very smallest (the inconceivably tiny **Plain Pygmy-Squirrel**), and the just plain odd: the tufted-eared **Whitehead's Pygmy-Squirrel**. It had been an amazing trip, with plenty to write home about, even without the avian wonders that thrilled us from the very first to the very last minute of our time in the field. Sam longs to return; there is a reason why he literally begs to be handed this tour, each and every year.*

## BIRD AND MAMMAL LISTS:

### BIRDS

#### 297 species recorded; 45 endemics

The taxonomy of the bird 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 the major changes published by Cornell up until August 2011.*

*Endemics or proposed endemics to Borneo are marked **BORNEO ENDEMIC** (some while not currently split within Clements currently are likely to be split in the future and are often listed as endemics by others); heard only birds are marked **HEARD ONLY**; Birds only seen by the guide are marked **GUIDE ONLY**.*

#### DUCKS, GEESE, AND WATERFOWL: ANATIDAE

**Wandering Whistling-Duck**                      *Dendrocygna arcuata*

A dozen birds were seen near Sandakan, and were the very last trip addition on our departure day.

#### PHEASANTS, GROUSE, AND ALLIES: PHASIANIDAE

**Red-breasted Partridge**                      *Arborophila hyperythra*                      **BORNEO ENDEMIC**

A small party (3+) was seen on our first morning at Mount Kinabalu, while Sam flushed a covey of some seven birds off a trail on the same mountain on another day, which sadly did not stick for everyone else to take a look.

**Chestnut-necklaced Partridge**                      *Arborophila charltonii*

Also known as **Scaly-breasted Partridge**. Their loud and far carrying calls were heard both at Danum Valley and Sukau, although we only saw one finally at Gomantong, when a super adult bird walked right past all of us, to within a meter distance!

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

A super, scarlet-headed, male was seen at close range along a mountain trail on the endemic rich Mount Kinabalu.

**Crested Fireback**                                      *Lophura ignita nobilis*                      **BORNEO ENDEMIC**

The race on Borneo is endemic, and differs from its mainland counterpart in having a *yellow*, not white, tail. Several of these flashy pheasants were seen around the Borneo Rainforest Lodge in Danum Valley, with another two also seen along the banks of a river near Sukau on the extension.

**Great Argus**    *Argusianus argus*                                      **HEARD ONLY**

Unfortunately, no males were attending their display grounds or calling during our visit, making this a very difficult to find bird. Although we tried to track down several calling females, they only called intermittently and never close unfortunately.

#### STORKS: CICONIIDAE

**Storm's Stork**    *Ciconia stormi*

We enjoyed an absurdly good run on this species for this year's tour: a single bird was spotted by our keen-eyed Borneo Rainforest Lodge driver on the way into that lodge, circling overhead, and a number of sightings were made at the more traditional site of Sukau, where a record number of 27 were seen in a single morning. This latter number was highly unusual, involving both perched and flying birds, and was a record for the local guide, who had not witnessed numbers like this in all of his eight years working there.

*The species is listed as **ENDANGERED** by Birdlife International, with a world population estimate of under 500 birds in total.*

**Lesser Adjutant** *Leptoptilos javanicus*

Recorded on two days around Sukau: two were seen circling from the lodge over lunch one day, and another four birds were seen the following day, which included several perched ones too.

**ANHINGAS: ANHIGIDAE**

**Oriental Darter** *Anhinga melanogaster*

Seen regularly around the Kinabatangan on the extension.

**HERONS, EGRETS, AND BITTERNs: ARDEIDAE**

**Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea*

On the arrival day of the tour, John and Sam had about half a dozen birds at Likas on the edge of Kota Kinabalu. Another half dozen birds were seen one morning near our lodge at Sukau.

**Great Egret** *Ardea alba modesta*

Three or four sightings on the tour; around Likas on the outskirts of Kota Kinabalu on the arrival day for John and Sam, and also around Sukau too.

**Intermediate Egret** *Mesophoyx intermedia*

A few were seen on the arrival day of the tour around Pulau Manukan for John, Faye and Sam, and at Likas later the same day.

**Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta*

One was seen at Pulau Manukan on the tour's arrival day by Faye, John and Sam, and another was seen fishing alongside the Kinabatangan River.

**Pacific Reef-heron** *Egretta sacra*

Only recorded on the arrival day of the tour, when Faye, John and Sam visited an island off Kota Kinabalu, Pulau Manukan.

**Striated Heron** *Butorides striata*

One was seen by John and Sam at Likas on the arrival day, and a couple of others were seen on the extension at Sukau too.

**Black-crowned Night-Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax*

Just the one was seen by Sam and John in a visit to Likas on the arrival day of the tour.

**HAWKS, EAGLES, AND KITES: ACCIPITRIDAE**

**Jerdon's Baza** *Aviceda jerdoni*

Three sightings were made in the Danum area, with a maximum of two birds together; and another was seen on the way in to Sukau on the extension.

**Oriental Honey-Buzzard** *Pernis ptilorhynchus*

One was seen in the Danum Valley Conservation Area.

**Bat Hawk** *Macheiramphus alcinus*

Very nearly one of the top sightings of the trip, were it not for a stellar cast of pittas, broadbills and hornbills to contend with! Three birds were seen in the evening at Gomantong Caves, when one of the birds swooped dramatically down low over our heads as it presumably looked to pick off the first emerging bats of the night. The bird did this repeatedly, and at some times was within just a few meters of our heads, making for a spectacular close to our birding session in Gomantong.

**Brahminy Kite** *Haliastur indus*

Seen four or five times in the Sukau area on the extension.

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

One was seen over Pulau Manukan by Faye, John, and Sam on the arrival day; others were seen around Sukau, with two of these being seen on the journey in to there.

**Lesser Fish-Eagle**

*Ichthyophaga humilis*

The more abundant of the two fish-eagles during our stay at Sukau, with up to half a dozen seen in a single day. Another single was seen over lunch at the Borneo Rainforest Lodge in Danum Valley, and a final pair of these raptors was seen flying over Gomantong on the final day of the tour.

**Gray-headed Fish-Eagle**

*Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus*

The scarcer of the two species around Sukau, with just two seen in one day there.

**Mountain Serpent-Eagle**

*Spilornis kinabaluensis*

**BORNEO ENDEMIC**

This rare raptor was seen near Tambunan, if only briefly. A very low density montane endemic.

**Crested Serpent-Eagle**

*Spilornis cheela*

Recorded a number of times in the lowlands around Danum Valley, Sukau, and at Gomantong, where good perched views were had at these sites.

**Crested Goshawk**

*Accipiter trivirgatus*

Four sightings in all: two at Danum Valley, and another two at Sukau, including one individual seen in display flight at the latter.

**Besra**

*Accipiter virgatus*

One bird, which appeared to be nesting, was seen along a trail at Mount Kinabalu NP, and a male was seen perched on the journey into Borneo Rainforest Lodge.

**Black Eagle**

*Ictinaetus malayensis*

One was seen gliding over Borneo Rainforest Lodge over lunch one day.

**Rufous-bellied Eagle**

*Lophotriorchis kienerii*

Two singles were seen within the Danum Valley Conservation Area.

**Changeable Hawk-Eagle**

*Nisaetus cirrhatus*

One dark morph bird was seen along the road near Borneo Rainforest Lodge in Danum Valley, and another two were seen along a tributary near our lodge at Sukau on the extension.

**Blyth's Hawk-Eagle**

*Nisaetus alboniger*

A single was seen at Tambunan.

**Wallace's Hawk-Eagle**

*Nisaetus nanus*

Seen four times on the tour at Danum Valley and Sukau, with the best sighting involving a juvenile bird at Borneo Rainforest Lodge which had recently caught one of the local Blue-throated Bee-eaters and was seen dismembering it by the lodge cabins!

**FALCONS AND CARACARAS: FALCONIDAE**

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

**BORNEO ENDEMIC**

This tiny endemic raptor is usually relatively straightforward at Danum Valley, although news that their regular dead tree had fallen down made it a little tougher than normal. No sign in our time there, or on our journey into there, made it a priority as we traveled from Borneo Rainforest Lodge to Sepilok. Thankfully, we found a pair of these diminutive falcons during the journey, to much relief all round.

**Peregrine Falcon**

*Falco peregrinus*

A pair of these birds was seen perched expectantly near the bat cave at Gomantong, where they are regularly know to hunt bats at dusk.

**RAILS, GALLINULES, AND COOTS: RALLIDAE**

**White-breasted Waterhen**

*Amaurornis phoenicurus*

A couple were seen around Sepilok.

**GULLS, TERNS, AND SKIMMERS: LARIDAE**

**Whiskered Tern**

*Chlidonias hybrida*

One was seen near Kota Kinabalu.

**PIGEONS AND DOVES: COLUMBIDAE**

**Rock Pigeon** *Columba livia*

Scattered sightings in urban areas throughout.

**Spotted Dove** *Streptopelia chinensis*

Seen in Kota Kinabalu, and in the east, near Sandakan too.

**Ruddy Cuckoo-Dove** *Macropygia emiliana*

A few were seen at Tambunan, visiting a fruiting tree.

**Little Cuckoo-Dove** *Macropygia ruficeps*

Recorded, almost invariably in flight, around Mount Kinabalu NP daily.

**Emerald Dove** *Chalcophaps indica*

Seen in dashing light twice: at Sepilok, and Sukau.

**Zebra Dove** *Geopelia striata*

John and Sam had a few around Likas on the arrival day, and others were seen from the car near Sandakan.

**Little Green-Pigeon** *Treron olax*

A few of these tiny green pigeons were seen in flight at Gomantong and also at Sukau, on the extension.

**Pink-necked (Green) Pigeon** *Treron vernans*

John and Sam enjoyed a good batch of these handsome green pigeons going to roost near Likas on the arrival day. Another was seen visiting a bustling fruiting fig in our resort in Sepilok, and a final bird was seen by all, near Sukau.

**Thick-billed (Green) Pigeon** *Treron curvirostra*

A few birds visited a fruiting fig within our resort at Sepilok, which was also attended by Asian Black Hornbills, hordes of widespread bulbuls, and Pink-necked Green-Pigeons too.

**Green Imperial-Pigeon** *Ducula aenea*

John and Sam had a few around Likas on the arrival day, another few sightings were made at Danum Valley, and then a few more were seen around the Kinabatangan.

**Mountain Imperial-Pigeon** *Ducula badia*

Seen on two of our days on Mount Kinabalu, with a maximum of three in one day.

**PARROTS: PSITTACIDAE**

**Long-tailed Parakeet** *Psittacula longicauda*

Small parties were seen daily around Sukau on the extension, with around ten birds being the maximum on one day there.

**Blue-crowned Hanging-Parrot** *Loriculus galgulus*

After the usual, multiple, and frustrating, high speed flight views of this hyperactive parrot, we finally saw one perched while watching a pair of White-fronted Falconets on the road out of Danum Valley.

**CUCKOOS: CUCULIDAE**

**Large Hawk-Cuckoo** *Hierococcyx sparverioides bocki* **HEARD ONLY**

Heard with frustrating frequency around Mount Kinabalu NP, although we simply could never draw one in, in spite of many attempts at this. While not split under the Clements list from the nominate Large Hawk-Cuckoo, the *bockii* race found in Borneo, the rest of the Greater Sundas, and the mountains of mainland Malaysia is often touted as a split from this, referred to as Dark Hawk-Cuckoo. It certainly appears different in plumage, and sounds different, and so appears a decent split.

**Moustached Hawk-Cuckoo** *Hierococcyx vagans* **HEARD ONLY**

Heard distantly around Danum Valley and Sepilok.

**Sunda Cuckoo**

*Cuculus Lepidus*

**HEARD ONLY**

Although heard with regularity on Mount Kinabalu, only seen briefly on one occasion, when a bird flew low over us in response to playback.

**Banded Bay Cuckoo**

*Cacomantis sonneratii*

Having been frustrated by several calling birds around Danum Valley, we finally managed to get great looks at one from the Trogon Tower at Sepilok.

**Plaintive Cuckoo**

*Cacomantis merulinus*

**HEARD ONLY**

Heard around Danum and Gomantong, although we never really got close to actually seeing one.

**Brush Cuckoo**

*Cacomantis variolosus sepulcralis*

**HEARD ONLY**

Heard around Danum and Sukau, but never seen. The race in Southeast Asia is lumped under Brush Cuckoo on the Clements list, although split off as *Rusty-breasted Cuckoo* by some other authors.

**Violet Cuckoo**

*Chrysococcyx xanthorhynchus*

Typically only seen whilst flying over calling noisily in flight: once at Danum, and again at Sepilok, and Sukau.

**Asian Drongo-Cuckoo**

*Surniculus lugubris lugubris*

**HEARD ONLY**

Heard several times around Borneo Rainforest Lodge.

**Black-bellied Malkoha**

*Phaenicophaeus diardi*

One was seen along the road in Danum Valley.

**Raffle's Malkoha**

*Phaenicophaeus chlorophaeus*

Seen three times in the lowlands on the tour: once each at Danum, Sepilok, and Sukau.

**Red-billed Malkoha**

*Phaenicophaeus javanicus*

One was seen along a tributary near our lodge at Sukau. This is the scarcest of the malkoha species in Borneo.

**Chestnut-breasted Malkoha**

*Phaenicophaeus curvirostris*

One showed along a trail in Danum Valley, and then another was seen in the Kinabatangan area on the extension.

**Bornean Ground-Cuckoo**

*Carpococcyx radiates*

**BORNEAN ENDEMIC**

In recent years, this bird has been seen with increasingly regularity, changing its status somewhat from what was formerly a mythical, poorly known species. Still though by no means easy, Sukau in the Kinabatangan area, offers the best chance. Having heard that it had been seen in this area recently, our interest was peaked, although we did not dare to think it was in the bag just yet! We awoke early on our first morning at Sukau, and headed out as dawn broke, in the hope that we would have the now infamous tributary all to ourselves. As we switched from the main motor to the near-silent electric motor we quickly picked up the deep sounds cooing sounds of TWO ground-cuckoos. The sound alone sent the hairs on the back of necks immediately erect with nervous excitement. We fell silent and edged the boat in towards the bank. Once stationary, we played the call, and readied ourselves for a lengthy duel. However, no duel was required, the bird quickly jumping excitedly onto a branch that could be seen by absolutely everyone in the canoe. We watched in stunned silence as the bird glared at us, facing us with its heavily barred underside, and revealing its "blue eye make-up", a patch of soft-hued blue skin around the eye. After soaking this up, the bird jumped onto the ground, when we even got to see it bounding along on the banks of the river, whilst all the while, what was presumably its mate called from across the river. ONE OF THE BEST BIRDS OF THE TRIP. It was our main target at Sukau, where it is perfectly missable, and so it was very, very satisfying, to get the bird in our first hour of the morning! Another bird was heard calling distantly, though often, at Danum Valley too, though despite a keenness to see this, as it preceded our visit to Sukau, there was simply no way of getting in to see it, a wall of impenetrable vegetation blocking any chance we had of seeing it.

**Short-toed Coucal**

*Centropus rectunguis*

**HEARD ONLY**

A distant bird was heard calling in Danum Valley.

**Greater Coucal**

***Centropus sinensis***

One was seen within Danum Valley, and another was seen in the Kinabatangan area.

**Lesser Coucal**

***Centropus bengalensis***

**HEARD ONLY**

Heard calling while drifting down a wide creek at Sukau, although the bird remained in thick cover the whole time.

**BARN OWLS: TYTONIDAE**

**Oriental Bay Owl**

***Phodilus badius***

Sam, being a big fan of owls in general, and this big-eyed owl in particular, could not resist looking for it. On his last tour he had managed to find one behind the lodge in Sepilok, and in spite of a long day, Sam, John and Margareta could not resist a look for it there. However, nothing was heard or seen at Sepilok in this regard, only a Brown Boobook providing compensation. And so on arriving at Sukau the next night, and learning they had been recorded around the lodge recently we could not resist trying all over again at the earliest opportunity. After a heart buffet there, most of the group headed out into the forest at night, where we quickly heard to birds calling, and calling regularly. Soon after the chase was on, with the bird refusing to come to us, and so we moved in towards it, only for the bird to be spooked several times by a bright spotlight, affording only Sam and Hazwan the briefest of views. For our final attempt, after a lengthy chase had ensued we used a lower power, and this time managed to line the bird up in the light for absolutely all, on this occasion the bird showing little fear, before it flapped away and we retired to bed happy.

**OWLS: STRIGIDAE**

**Reddish Scops-Owl**

***Otus rufescens***

**HEARD ONLY**

Heard around Danum Valley on several nights, although calling too distantly to do anything about from our position.

**Mountain Scops-Owl**

***Otus spilocephalus***

One was seen at night on Mount Kinabalu.

**Buffy Fish-Owl**

***Ketupa ketupu***

The easiest owl in Borneo, particularly around Sukau on the extension, where they were seen on four occasions including one that was inadvertently disturbed from a day roost.

**Brown Wood-Owl**

***Strix leptogrammica***

One was spotlighted as we walked back to Borneo Rainforest Lodge in the evening, after a late afternoon session on the canopy walkway.

**Collared Owlet**

***Glaucidium brodiei***

One was surprised at the side of the road at Mount Kinabalu, late one afternoon.

**Brown Hawk-Owl**

***Ninox scutulata***

One was seen around the cabins at our resort in Sepilok.

**FROGMOUTHS: PODARGIDAE**

**Large Frogmouth**

***Batrachostomus auritus***

One of the finds of the trip for sure. Always scarce, through its entire range, but especially so in Sabah, where it seems to be rarely seen. After hearing one along a creek at Sukau during a night cruise, we dueled with the bird for while before coming to the realization that we had only one option to see this bird: go in...And so a few of checked out the area first, but then quickly beckoned everyone else off the boat when we discovered the bird was calling extremely close, and felt that surely it was now just a matter of time before we located it. However, after an earnest search where we began to realize that the bird position was too well chosen, and too well hidden, above a dense layer of subcanopy for us to see it, we readied ourselves to admit defeat, only for one of the final sweeps of the spotlight, from a now changed position to find this mega frogmouth perched prominently overhead, where it remained for some time, before we returned to the canoe

elated...what a way to end our final night together!

**Short-tailed Frogmouth *Batrachostomus poliolophus mixtus* BORNEAN ENDEMIC HEARD ONLY**

Widely split (though not in Clements) as a Bornean endemic species, *Bornean Frogmouth*. Sadly, despite hearing one call independently, it could not be tempted in closer, and merely fell silent after that one lone, tantalizing call, on Mount Kinabalu, very close to where I had heard it last year.

**SWIFTS: APODIDAE**

**Silver-rumped Needletail *Rhaphidura leucopygialis***

Small numbers were seen during most days at Danum, with the best looks of the tour coming from the canopy walkway there. Others were also seen from the state of the art canopy walkway at Sepilok too.

**Brown-backed Needletail *Hirundapus giganteus***

One scythed past the Trogon Tower at Sepilok during our short morning there.

**Glossy Swiftlet *Collocalia esculenta***

A common and regularly seen swiftlet in both the mountains and the lowlands. Recorded on all days of the tour.

**Cave (Bornean) Swiftlet *Collocalia linchi dodgei***

A small colony of them was seen near Tambunan on our first day.

**Mossy-nest Swiftlet *Aerodramus salangana***

One of three nesting swifts seen in the cave at Gomantong, along with Black-nest, and Edible-nest Swiftlets, where their distinctive, mossy nests aided identification.

**Black-nest Swiftlet *Aerodramus maximus***

A number of birds were nesting, and therefore identifiable by their blackish nests, during our visit to Gomantong Caves on the extension.

**Edible-nest Swiftlet *Aerodramus fuciphagus***

The highly-prized, clean white nests of this echolocating swift were seen in the cave at Gomantong. Their nests are the most valuable, main ingredient of Chinese edible nests soup. The nests of these birds, which are rebuilt by the birds each breeding cycle, are harvested regularly at Gomantong, reportedly using sustainable practices to do this.

**German's Swift *Aerodramus germani***

A group of them were seen around Likas Bay by John and Sam on the arrival day.

**House Swift *Apus nipalensis***

Some were seen in Kota Kinabalu and Lahad Datu.

**TREESWIFTS: HEMIPROCNIIDAE**

**Gray-rumped Treeswift *Hemiprocne longipennis***

Recorded on all of our days around Danum Valley, with excellent perched views of a bird seen as we traveled out of there towards Sepilok. Most views though were flying birds from the walkway.

**Whiskered Treeswift *Hemiprocne comata***

A stunningly beautiful bird seen very well perched by the road during our journeys in and out of Danum, which undoubtedly provided our best views. They were also noted in flight in the area around the canopy walkway by Borneo Rainforest Lodge, and also perched on the guy wires of the walkway itself.

**TROGON: TROGONIDAE**

**Red-naped Trogon *Harpactes kasumba***

Two sightings were made in the lowlands: a pair was seen along the trails near Borneo Rainforest Lodge, and another super male was seen loafing by the boardwalk at Sepilok.

**Diard's Trogon**

*Harpactes diardii*

While a number of them were heard in the lowlands, just one sighting was made, of a pair, along a jungle trail at Borneo Rainforest Lodge.

**Whitehead's Trogon**

*Harpactes whiteheadi*

**BORNEO ENDEMIC**

Two separate females (on two different days) were seen along a forest trail on Mount Kinabalu, one of which was heard calling regularly over a period of around thirty minutes.

**Scarlet-rumped Trogon**

*Harpactes duvaucelii*

Seen on five different times on the tour: at Danum Valley, Sepilok, and Sukau, three of which were pristine, bright scarlet, males.

**KINGFISHERS: ALCEDINIDAE**

**Blue-eared Kingfisher**

*Alcedo meninting*

Recorded regularly around Sukau, where some superb views were had, including one roosting at night on our final night, which also yielded a prolonged view of a Large Frogmouth.

**Blue-banded Kingfisher**

*Alcedo euryzona*

**GUIDE ONLY**

Unfortunately, only Sam caught up with this one, close to the lodge in Danum Valley, where it was never re-found again despite a number of subsequent searches.

**Rufous-backed Kingfisher**

*Ceyx rufidorsa*

Also known as Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher. One was seen, typically, flashing past in high speed flight while calling, at Sepilok, and another shot fast across the river at Sukau, which allowed Faye, at least, to get a look at it.

**Banded Kingfisher**

*Lacedo pulchella*

A beautiful male was seen well on our final morning in Danum Valley.

**Collared Kingfisher**

*Todiramphus chloris*

John and Sam saw one at Likas on the arrival day, and another was seen well on the road to Gomantong Caves on our final morning.

**Rufous-collared Kingfisher**

*Actenoides concretus*

A stunning male was enjoyed by all at Poring.

**BEE-EATERS: MEROPIDAE**

**Red-bearded Bee-eater**

*Nyctyornis amictus*

A frustratingly difficult bird on this years tour. In spite of three different birds being seen, and glimpsed by Sam at least, only John got a look at one of these atypically elusive birds.

**Blue-throated Bee-eater**

*Merops viridis*

Delightfully common and conspicuous around the lodge at Danum, where they could often be seen right from the restaurant tables. Others were also seen around the Kinabatangan on several occasions.

**HORNBILLS: BUCEROTIDAE**

**Oriental Pied Hornbill**

*Anthracoceros albirostris*

Only recorded on the extension – *the best part of the tour for hornbills by some way* – when they were seen on all of our days around Sukau, and also seen at Gomantong Caves too. At least thirty birds were seen on one single day around Sukau.

**Black Hornbill**

*Anthracoceros malayanus*

Also referred to as *Asian Black Hornbill*. Seen on all the days of the extension, at Sepilok, Sukau, and Gomantong Caves also.

**Rhinoceros Hornbill**

***Buceros rhinoceros***

One of the undoubted wonders of the Southeast Asian jungles is coming across a group of these hornbills. They are often first detected by the loud whooshing noise created by their wings in flight, or their loud raucous calls. But nothing can beat get an eyeful of their massive beaks and the substantial orange "horn" that lends it its apt name. An incredible bird, which is always rated highly amongst visitors to Borneo. We were especially fortunate to find a group of fruiting trees by the side of a large creek near Sukau, where at least twenty birds were gathered and fed openly at the very edge of the river, while we looked up at them in amazement. Wonderful views of this staggering bird, in such good numbers congregated together made for a truly spectacular spectacle and one that was clearly going to take some beating for the top trip bird of the trip; in spite of many other quality sightings, this remarkable showing, from such a remarkable bird, led to it being voted as the TOP BIRD OF THE TRIP, by some way. I feel in light of the showing, and in spite of my strong support behind a certain scarlet, electric blue and green pitta (i.e. *Blue-banded*), I have to concede that this was a brilliant choice by all!

**Helmeted Hornbill**

***Buceros vigil***

Arguably the scarcest hornbill in Borneo (although it may sometimes be run close by White-crowned). Very few were calling during our visit at all, which was sad as Sam is a big fan of the mockingly-natured, cackling call of this hornbill, which always appears to mock from afar. On hearing just such a cackle ahead of us, while walking on the road on our journey out of Danum Valley, we raced back to the vehicles, put the foot on the gas and sped towards the sound. On reaching the area where we thought the bird might just be we alighted from the van, and walked the road, scanning the massive rainforest trees beside the road for any large shapes, and keeping one eye on the sky too. Then suddenly, there it was: a massive hornbill with an ugly wrinkled face and long, long tail streamers, the distinctive outline alone making this enormous bird unmistakable as it powered over us and flew over the trees and out of sight. We were all ready; we all saw it; and it was amazing!

**Bushy-crested Hornbill**

***Anorrhinus galeritus***

The last of the eight possible hornbills we connected with, when we had two birds at Gomantong Caves near Sukau, on the extension; another group of TEN birds was seen there again on our final morning.

**White-crowned Hornbill**

***Aceros comatus***

Always an absolute pleasure to pick up this one, with its punk hair do, and scarce status, making it both good looking and missable. This species proved relatively easy this year, with first a pair seen at Danum Valley, and then another three birds seen at the best site for it, Sukau. A popular hornbill, and ONE OF THE BIRDS OF THE TRIP.

**Wrinkled Hornbill**

***Aceros corrugatus***

Three sightings was a good showing for the species on the tour: a female was seen first at Danum Valley where on another day a flock of some five birds crossed the road there too, and finally a pair of them were seen perched at Sukau, where they could be viewed from the comfort and luxury of the canoe!

**Wreathed Hornbill**

***Aceros undulatus***

Four birds were seen flying high above Poring one afternoon, presumably on their way to roost.

**ASIAN BARBETS: MEGALAIMIDAE**

**(Bornean) Brown Barbet**

***Calorhamphus fuliginosus fuliginosus***

**BORNEO ENDEMIC**

After some poor views for some in a fruiting tree in Danum, a group of these atypical barbets was seen from the modern canopy walkway at Sepilok on the extension.

**Gold-whiskered Barbet**

***Megalaima chrysopogon***

Great views were had of this monster barbet one afternoon at Poring; others were heard at Tambunan and Danum.

**Red-throated Barbet**

*Megalaima mystacophanos*

After Sam glimpsed one at Poring, and many were heard in the lowland forests of Borneo, we finally caught up with one along a creek near Sukau. A little gymnastics were required to get everyone see it through the scope in a gently rocking canoe, but in the end we just about managed it! At one time, it was also joined in the same telescope view by a *Blue-eared Barbet* too.

**Mountain Barbet**

*Megalaima monticola*

**BORNEO ENDEMIC**

The first of the endemic barbet trio to “fall” at Tambunan, on our first mornings birding, when two were seen there, shortly before we grabbed a *Bornean Barbet* perched in the same area too.

**Yellow-crowned Barbet**

*Megalaima henricii*

A little inventiveness was required to line up a calling bird in the scope along a canopy walkway in Danum, where it could only be viewed from mid, and swinging, bridge!

**Golden-naped Barbet**

*Megalaima pulcherrima*

**BORNEO ENDEMIC**

Undoubtedly, by voice, the most common of the three endemic barbet species in Borneo, although oddly, this was the last of them to join our trip list. In the end, seen on several occasions on the mountain trails at Kinabalu, where up to three birds were seen in one day.

**Blue-eared Barbet**

*Megalaima australis*

One was seen at Poring, and another showed up right beside a Red-throated Barbet we were scoping (from a boat), at Sukau on the extension.

**Bornean Barbet**

*Megalaima eximia*

**BORNEO ENDEMIC**

Two singles were seen, with remarkable ease, at Tambunan, the stronghold for them on this tour.

**WOODPECKERS: PICIDAE**

**Rufous Piculet**

*Sasia abnormis*

This may have been the smallest of the woodpeckers on the tour at only four inches (ten centimeters), but it still had a big impact, as it is one very cool bird, which was seen four times in Danum.

**Rufous Woodpecker**

*Celeus brachyurus*

A popular pair of these woodpeckers was seen along the road out from Danum Valley one day. An odd woodpecker, which represents the only kind of its genus in Asia, the rest being all being New World species.

**White-bellied Woodpecker**

*Dryocopus javensis*

This big and striking ‘pecker was seen from the boat at Sukau on the extension.

**Banded Woodpecker**

*Picus miniaceus*

One of our final additions of the tour included this handsome woodpecker on our final morning, at Gomantong Caves.

**Checker-throated Woodpecker**

*Picus mentalis*

Recorded three times at Mount Kinabalu NP, with up to three seen in one day. Another two were seen in Danum Valley.

**Maroon Woodpecker**

*Blythipicus rubiginosus*

Although seen three times on the tour (at Mount Kinabalu, Sukau, and Gomantong), only seen well at the final morning when three birds were seen along the road into Gomantong.

**Orange-backed Woodpecker**

*Reinwardtipicus validus*

This large and flashy woodpecker was seen twice on the tour: a nesting male was seen excavating its hole along the summit trail on Mount Kinabalu, and another distant bird was seen from the canopy walkway at Borneo Rainforest Lodge.

**Buff-rumped Woodpecker**

*Meiglyptes tristis*

A single nesting bird was seen well at Poring.

**Buff-necked Woodpecker**

*Meiglyptes tukki*

Two were seen along a trail in Danum Valley.

**Gray-and-buff Woodpecker**                      *Hemicircus concretus*

A pair of these smashing woodpeckers was seen from the Trogon Tower at Sepilok.

**Great Slaty Woodpecker**                      *Mulleripicus pulverulentus*                      **HEARD ONLY**

Heard calling fairly close at Sukau, but sadly the bird never responded to playback and so could never be seen.

**AFRICAN AND GREEN BROADBILLS: CALYPTOMENIDAE**

**Green Broadbill**                                      *Calyptomena viridis*

Snatched from the jaws of defeat, a pair were seen, finally, on our final morning, on the entrance road into Gomantong Caves. The male was simply glowing in the dark and dingy rainforest, lighting up the forest understory, which made it into the top five birds of the trip. **ONE OF THE BEST BIRDS OF THE TRIP.**

**ASIAN AND GRAUER'S BROADBILLS: EURYLAIMIDAE**

**Black-and-red Broadbill**                      *Cymbirhynchus macrorhynchus*

The broadest of broadbills was seen from our breakfast table at Sepilok, and then again around the Rainforest Discovery Centre there too. Others were also seen at Sukau and near Gomantong Caves.

**Long-tailed Broadbill**                      *Psarisomus dalhousiae*

One of the shock finds of the tour was picking up a nesting bird, nesting right beside the road at Tambunan.

**Banded Broadbill**                                      *Eurylaimus javanicus*

This beautiful broadbill was seen at Poring and Gomantong.

**Black-and-yellow Broadbill**                      *Eurylaimus ochromalus*

This noisy broadbill, with the shrill voice, was seen in Poring, Danum Valley, and Sukau.

**Dusky Broadbill**                                      *Corydon sumatranus*

Recorded three times on the tour: twice at Danum Valley and once along the river at Sukau.

**PITTAS: PITTIDAE**

**Giant Pitta**    *Pitta caerulea*    **HEARD ONLY**

Frustratingly, at two different birds were heard, and one of them on two occasions, but the bird never showed any interest in coming in to our tape, except the one bird it was nearly dark. We felt so close, so indeed this was one of the big frustrations of the tour.

**(Bornean) Banded Pitta**                      *Pitta guajana schwaneri*                                      **BORNEO ENDEMIC**

A male showed up after a long "duel", although appeared suddenly and used a typical "defense" of standing stock still, making it hard to pick up in the shadows of the dark rainforest. Faye was quick to latch on to it, and so got a decent look, but many people were blocked before it slipped away again. John snatched a glimpse later but aside from that the bird did not show again unfortunately.

**Blue-headed Pitta**                                      *Pitta baudi*    **BORNEO ENDEMIC**

This spectacular forest bird was seen on our first full day in Danum Valley. After some false starts, where birds were only heard distantly, we started to think this was just not be our day with this bird. Then, suddenly, while we were headed back to the lodge for lunch, one called *very* close. Shivers ran down spines, before dramatically, there it was standing boldly in full sight, after which it circled us as if to make sure that we had all seen it, and seen it well, which, by then, we all had. Remarkably, given the sighting, and the gorgeous appearance of this male bird, *it did not make the top five birds of the trip!*

**Blue-banded Pitta**

*Pitta arquata*

**BORNEO ENDEMIC**

This bird, as expected, made us work for it, being one of the toughest of the Bornean pittas to see (bar Giant). However, it was well, well, worth it, as on our third attempt, we were rewarded with unbeatable views of this gaudy scarlet, and electric-blue banded bird. Shockingly bright is an understatement! The bird was seen at Danum, where two birds were seen - a brief bird that Sam and John at least got on to, before the main event occurred a little over an hour later with another individual. ONE OF THE BIRDS OF THE TRIP, and *Sam's personal pick for bird of the trip*.

**Black-headed Pitta**

*Pitta ussheri*

**BORNEO ENDEMIC**

Also known as *Black-crowned or Black-and-crimson Pitta*. Usually the easiest of the Bornean pittas to see, but no worse for it, being a glittering jewel that is beautiful beyond belief and completely worth seeing each and every time. We saw two different birds in the steamy jungle at Danum Valley.

**Hooded Pitta**

*Pitta sordida*

A brief bird which flashed across the road at Danum Valley, revealing its kingfisher-like wing pattern, was sandwiched between a Black-and-crimson Pitta and a Blue-headed Pitta in the same birding session, completing an astonishingly productive day for pittas, and others. However, the real views came later on the extension, where two birds were seen from our boat cruising along a river near Sukau, a great way to see this rainforest gem.

**HELMETSHRIKES AND ALLIES: PRIONOPIDAE**

**Large Woodshrike**

*Tephrodornis gularis*

A single bird was seen on our action-packed journey out of Danum Valley.

**Rufous-winged Philentoma**

*Philentoma pyrhoneptera*

A couple of birds were seen on the lowland rainforest of Danum Valley.

**Maroon-breasted Philentoma**

*Philentoma velata*

Two of these subtly beautiful lowland birds were seen near Gomantong Caves on the extension.

**WOODSWALLOWS: ARTAMIDAE**

**White-breasted Woodswallow**

*Artamus leucorhynchus*

One was seen by John and Sam around Likas on the arrival day, and others were seen around Lahad Datu, Sukau and Sandakan.

**BRISTLEHEAD: PITYRIASEIDAE**

**Bornean Bristlehead**

*Pityriasis gymnocephala*

**BORNEO ENDEMIC**

The true star of Borneo, by virtue of its undoubted and unique oddity, and the fact it comprises Borneo's sole endemic family. The bird has become a little trickier in recent times, and so keeps the guides nerves on edge the whole time! Despite hearing one distantly early on during our stay at Borneo Rainforest Lodge we had to wait three further, nail-biting days before we finally caught up with two of a calling group. The scramble to get them in the scope as they called their distinct calls above us, caused Sam to fall and cut himself, but that did not matter once we were all soaking it up in the scope and in complete agreement that the bird is not overrated, and really is just that good!

**IORAS: AEGITHINIDAE**

**Common Iora**

*Aegithina tiphia*

After John and Sam enjoyed a pair of these in Kota Kinabalu on the first day, the rest of the group had to wait until the extension, when another pair were seen down a creek near the Kinabatangan River.

**Green Iora**

*Aegithina viridissima*

Several sightings were made at Danum Valley, including from the Borneo Rainforest Lodge canopy walkway.

**CUCKOO-SHRIKES: CAMPEPHAGIDAE**

**Sunda Cuckoo-shrike** *Coracina larvata*

Three were seen at the base of the summit trail on Mount Kinabalu early one morning.

**Pied Triller** *Lalage nigra* **GUIDE ONLY**

Only Sam saw a male during a visit to Likas with John on the arrival day.

**Fiery Minivet** *Pericrocotus igneus*

Two single females were seen on separate occasions at Danum Valley.

**Scarlet Minivet** *Pericrocotus flammeus*

One was seen from the canopy walkway at Danum.

**Gray-chinned Minivet** *Pericrocotus solaris*

Recorded regularly within Mount Kinabalu National park.

**Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike** *Hemipus picatus*

First seen at Tambunan on our first official days birding, and then seen again inside the park at Mount Kinabalu.

**Black-winged Flycatcher-shrike** *Hemipus hirundinaceus*

A small party of these birds was seen on our way out of Danum, while admiring a miniature pair of *White-fronted Falconets* in the same area.

**WHISTLERS: PACHYCEPHALDAE**

**Mangrove Whistler** *Pachycephala cinerea*

Faye, John, and Sam visited the island of Pulau Manukan, just off Kota Kinabalu, and got some great looks at this drab whistler on the arrival day of the tour.

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

Recorded daily in small numbers at Mount Kinabalu. A regular flock follower in Borneo's mountains.

**SHRIKES: LANIIDAE**

**Long-tailed Shrike** *Lanius schach*

Half a dozen or so birds were seen decorating the wires en-route to Gomantong Caves one morning.

**VIREOS: VIREONIDAE**

**White-bellied Erpornis** *Erpornis zantholeuca* **GUIDE ONLY**

Two were seen by Sam in Danum Valley.

**Blyth's Shrike-Babbler** *Pteruthius aeralatus*

A recent split from *White-browed Shrike-Babbler*. Two birds were seen: a male at Tambunan, and a female at Mount Kinabalu NP.

**OLD WORLD ORIOLES: ORIOLIDAE**

**Dark-throated Oriole** *Oriolus xanthonotus*

Seen three times on the tour, once in Poring, and twice in Danum Valley.

**Black-and-crimson Oriole** *Oriolus cruentus*

Just one bird was seen at Tambunan on our first day.

**DRONGOS: DICRURIDAE**

**Ashy Drongo** *Dicrurus leucophaeus*

Recorded at Tambunan, and also a couple of times within Mount Kinabalu NP.

**Bronzed Drongo** *Dicrurus aeneus*

Seen twice in Danum Valley.

**Hair-crested Drongo** *Dicrurus hottentottus*

Recorded three times around Mount Kinabalu NP.

**Greater Racket-tailed Drongo**      *Dicrurus paradiseus*

A single bird was seen along the road near Borneo Rainforest Lodge, and then half a dozen birds were seen during our morning at Sepilok on the extension.

**FANTAILS: RHIPIDURIDAE**

**White-throated Fantail**      *Rhipidura albicollis*

Recorded daily in the mountains of Borneo, on Kinabalu, and at Poring.

**Pied Fantail**      *Rhipidura javanica*

Recorded daily around Sukau on the extension, and a few were also seen at Danum too.

**Spotted Fantail**      *Rhipidura perinata*

Only recorded in Danum Valley, where a few were seen on each of our days there.

**MONARCH FLYCATCHERS: MONARCHIDAE**

**Black-naped Monarch**      *Hypothymis azurea*

Recorded on at least seven days of the tour in the lowlands (Danum and Sukau), and also at Poring.

**Asian Paradise-Flycatcher**      *Terpsiphone paradise*

Borneo Rainforest Lodge's logo bird was seen on trails near the lodge, when an ivory-white male was seen with long, elegant tail streamers.

**CROWS, JAYS, AND MAGPIES: CORVIDAE**

**Crested Jay**      *Platylophus galericulatus*

This odd jay was seen during our first afternoon at Danum Valley; our only sighting of the tour.

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

The Bornean form lacks the white in the wings of the mainland Southeast Asian form, and is oft-touted as a full species, which would then make it an endemic. Two groups were seen at Danum Valley.

**Short-tailed (Bornean) Magpie**      *Cissa thalassina jeffreyi*      **BORNEO ENDEMIC**

This stunning magpie was seen three times within Mount Kinabalu NP. The endemic *jeffreyi* race in Borneo is a possible future split from the Javan form.

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

This striking endemic was seen three times in the mountains, at Tambunan and Mount Kinabalu.

**House Crow**      *Corvus splendens*

A few were seen on the edge of Kota Kinabalu.

**Slender-billed Crow**      *Corvus enca*

Regularly recorded around Danum Valley and Sukau.

**EUPETIDAE: RAIL-BABBLER AND IFRITA**

**Malaysian Rail-Babbler**      *Eupetes macrocerus*

The rarest find of the tour, for this skulking rainforest bird is not only hard to see throughout its range, but also very rare in Borneo. We saw one that seemingly came in to the call of Blue-banded Pitta (which is very similar) at Danum Valley, where there had only been very few records before (possibly just one or two). To top off the morning perfectly we then went on to see the Blue-banded Pitta splendidly shortly after.

**SWALLOWS: HIRUNDINIDAE**

**Barn Swallow**      *Hirundo rustica*

A couple of early individuals (the bird winters in Borneo) were seen at Tambunan, and near Sandakan.

**Pacific (House) Swallow**                      *Hirundo tahitica*

A common Bornean bird recorded on each day of the tour, making it one of the most regularly seen birds on the tour.

**FAIRY-FLYCATCHERS: STENOSTIRIDAE**

**Gray-headed Canary-Flycatcher**      *Culicicapa ceylonensis*

Two were seen at Tambunan on our first morning.

**NUTHATCHES: SITTIDAE**

**Velvet-fronted Nuthatch**                      *Sitta frontalis*

A delightful and confiding pair were seen in Mount Kinabalu NP, and then another bird was seen in the garden of our lodge at Sukau on the extension.

**BULBULS: PYCNONOTIDAE**

**Black-and-white Bulbul**                      *Pycnonotus melanoleucus*

This handsome bulbul was seen twice in Danum Valley, where both birds were males.

**Puff-backed Bulbul**                              *Pycnonotus eutilotus*

One was seen along the road within Danum Valley, as we left there for Sepilok.

**Black-headed Bulbul**                              *Pycnonotus atriceps*

Just seen twice within Danum Valley.

**Straw-headed Bulbul**                              *Pycnonotus zeylanicus*

This threatened species, classified as vulnerable by Birdlife, was seen close to the lodge in Danum Valley, where a pair were seen one lunchtime.

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

A recent split from *Black-crested Bulbul*. At least four birds were seen at Tambunan.

**Scaly-breasted Bulbul**                              *Pycnonotus squamatus*

This pretty bulbul was seen as we were leaving Danum Valley, when a pair were seen visiting a fruiting tree.

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

One bird was seen near the start of the summit trail on Mount Kinabalu. This is sometimes split off as *Pale-faced Bulbul*, which then makes this an endemic species.

**Yellow-vented Bulbul**                              *Pycnonotus goiavier*

Recorded at Tambunan, Poring, Danum, and Sukau.

**Olive-winged Bulbul**                              *Pycnonotus plumosus*

Seen at Danum Valley, Sepilok, and around Likas, on the arrival day.

**Cream-vented Bulbul**                              *Pycnonotus simplex*

Recorded several times both at Danum Valley and Sukau.

**Red-eyed Bulbul**                                      *Pycnonotus brunneus*

Recorded at three sites: Poring, Danum, and Gomantong.

**Spectacled Bulbul**                                      *Pycnonotus erythroptalmos*

Just a few were seen, at Danum Valley, Sepilok, and Sukau.

**Hairy-backed Bulbul**                                      *Tricholestes criniger*

Seen twice in Danum, and several times again on the extension.

**Ochraceous Bulbul**                                      *Alophoixus ochraceus*

Two were seen at Tambunan.

**Gray-cheeked Bulbul**                                      *Alophoixus bres*

One was seen at Sepilok, and another at Gomantong Caves.

**Yellow-bellied Bulbul**                                      *Alophoixus phaeocephalus*

Two singles were seen in Danum.

**Buff-vented Bulbul**

*Lole olivacea*

Recorded at Poring, Danum Valley, and on the extension at Gomantong.

**BUSH-WARBLERS AND ALLIES: CETTIDAE**

**Bornean Stubtail**

*Uropsphena whiteheadi*

**BORNEAN ENDEMIC**

This bird, with one of the highest-pitched calls on the planet, was seen twice in Mount Kinabalu National Park.

**Yellow-bellied Warbler**

*Abroscopus superciliaris*

Three birds were seen at Poring.

**Mountain Tailorbird**

*Phyllergates cucullatus*

Several birds were seen on Mount Kinabalu.

**Sunda Bush-Warbler**

*Cettia vulcania*

This remarkably tame warbler was seen twice on Mount Kinabalu.

**LEAF-WARBLERS: PHYLLOSCOPIDAE**

**Mountain (Leaf) Warbler**

*Phylloscopus trivirgatus kinbaluensis*

Seen a number of times on Mount Kinabalu, where this endemic race is quite recognizable from its mainland counterpart, being markedly duller in coloration, lacking the bright yellow and green tones of the mainland form.

**Yellow-breasted Warbler**

*Seicercus montis*

This handsome warbler is delightfully common on Mount Kinabalu, where it was encountered often.

**REED-WARBLERS AND ALLIES: ACROCEPHALIDAE**

**Oriental Reed-Warbler?**

*Acrocephalus orientalis*

A non-vocal reed-warbler was seen at Sepilok, which presumably (on range alone), would be this species, which is ordinarily not present at this time of year there?

**GRASSBIRDS AND ALLIES: MEGALURIDAE**

**(Kinabalu) Friendly Bush-Warbler**

*Bradypterus accentor*

**BORNEAN ENDEMIC**

One confiding bird was seen by all present on the Kinabalu Summit Trail.

**Striated Grassbird**

*Megalurus palustris*

Two birds were seen along the road to Gomantong on the extension.

**CISTICOLAS AND ALLIES: CISTICOLIDAE**

**Dark-necked Tailorbird**

*Orthotomus atrogularis*

One was seen at Poring by Sam only, although everyone caught up with this bird at Gomantong on our final day.

**Rufous-tailed Tailorbird**

*Orthotomus sericeus*

Recorded at Poring, Danum Valley, Sepilok, and around the lodge at Sukau. It was also seen on Pulau Manukan during a visit on our arrival day by Faye, John and Sam.

**Ashy Tailorbird**

*Orthotomus ruficeps*

This handsome tailorbird was seen at Danum, Likas (near Kota Kinabalu), Poring, and Sukau.

**Yellow-bellied Prinia**

*Prinia flaviventris*

John and Sam picked one up on the arrival day, during a short visit to Likas; another was spot lit on a night drive at Danum Valley.

**YUHINAS, WHITE-EYES & ALLIES: ZOSTEROPIDAE**

**Chestnut-crested Yuhina**

*Yuhina everetti*

**BORNEAN ENDEMIC**

A common endemic in Borneo's mountains, where good numbers were recorded daily.

**Black-capped White-eye**                      *Zosterops atricapilla*

Small parties were recorded regularly in Borneo's mountains.

**Everett's White-eye**                      *Zosterops everetti*

Two birds were seen on our journey out of Danum Valley.

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

Three birds were 'scoped huddled on a branch at Tambunan during our first flurry of endemics on our very first day.

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

This handsome, high-altitude, endemic was seen twice within Mount Kinabalu NP.

**FULVETTAS & GROUND-BABLERS: PELLORNEIDAE**

**Brown Fulvetta**                      *Alcippe brunneicauda*

Seen on two days within Danum Valley.

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

This often tricky endemic was typically tricky at first, being both loud and responsive, but staying well-hidden for much of the time. However, with a little perseverance we finally all managed to get good looks as it hid within the leaf litter at Danum.

**Horsfield's Babbler**                      *Malacocincla sepiaria*

A single bird was seen on two days behind our lodge at Sukau.

**Short-tailed Babbler**                      *Malacocincla malaccensis*

Sighted twice around Danum Valley, and then again behind our lodge at Sukau.

**Striped Wren-Babbler**                      *Kenopia striata*

This extremely handsome babbler was seen at Danum Valley, where a pair were scoped for some time, and then another equally co-operative bird was seen behind our lodge at Sukau.

**Temminck's Babbler**                      *Pellorneum pyrrogenys*

One bird was seen in a mixed babbler flock, albeit briefly, on Mount Kinabalu.

**Black-capped Babbler**                      *Pellorneum capistratum*

Just the one of these striking babblers were seen at Danum Valley.

**White-chested Babbler**                      *Trichastoma rostratum*

Our first sighting came at Sepilok, and this species was also seen daily on the extension around Sukau.

**Ferruginous Babbler**                      *Trichastoma bicolor*

Seen a couple of times at Danum Valley, and another was seen near Gomantong Caves.

**Moustached Babbler**                      *Melacopteron magnirostre*

Five birds were seen near Borneo Rainforest Lodge in Danum Valley.

**Sooty-capped Babbler**                      *Malacopteron affine*

Seen in the lowlands, at Danum and Gomantong.

**Scaly-crowned Babbler**                      *Malacopteron cinereum*

Several individuals were seen at Danum.

**Rufous-crowned Babbler**                      *Malacopteron magnum*

Seen on two days at Danum.

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

We enjoyed a good run with this endemic on the tour, with groups seen on three days of the tour on Mount Kinabalu.

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

Within minutes of adding *Black-throated Wren-Babbler* to our bird list, we enjoyed extreme close-ups of this terrestrial babbler creeping through the leaf litter at close range, in Danum Valley.

**LAUGHINGTHRUSHES: LEIOTHRICHIDAE**

**Sunda Laughingthrush** *Garrulax palliates*

Several large groups were seen on two days on Mount Kinabalu, one of which included 20-30 birds.

**Bare-headed (Bornean) Laughingthrush** *Garrulax calvus* **BORNEO ENDEMIC**

Three birds were seen near the HQ on Mount Kinabalu on one day, and another three were found in a mixed laughingthrush flock on the trails there a few days later.

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

The most common laughingthrush species on Mount Kinabalu, easily seen every day there. The endemic form on Borneo is widely proposed as split from the mainland and Sumatran Chestnut-capped form.

**BABLERS: TIMALIIDAE**

**Bold-striped Tit-Babbler** *Macronous bornensis*

A pair of these vocal babblers were seen along the road into Danum Valley.

**Fluffy-backed Tit-Babbler** *Macronous ptilosus*

A pair was seen during an interlude while we were tracking down a *Blue-banded Pitta* at Danum.

**Gray-throated Babbler** *Stachyris nigriceps*

Commonly seen, often with bird parties, on Mount Kinabalu.

**Gray-headed Babbler** *Stachyris poliocephala*

One of the final babblers of the tour; a party of three birds was seen close to Gomantong Caves (on the extension).

**Black-throated Babbler** *Stachyris nigricollis*

One of these dapper babblers was seen behind our lodge at Sukau on the extension.

**Chestnut-rumped Babbler** *Stachyris maculate*

A popular group of these rowdy babblers was seen along a trail close to Borneo Rainforest Lodge.

**Chestnut-winged Babbler** *Stachyris erythroptera*

Recorded at all lowland sites on the tour – Danum, Sepilok, Sukau, and Gomantong.

**Chestnut-backed Scimitar-Babbler** *Pomatorhinus montanus*

A Pair of these sharp-looking babblers was seen on a trail near Borneo Rainforest Lodge.

**FAIRY-BLUEBIRDS: IRENIDAE**

**Asian Fairy-Bluebird** *Irena puella*

Seen three times around Danum, including up to three birds seen visiting a fruiting fig tree (which was shared with an Orang-Utan) at the canopy walkway there.

**OLD WORLD FLYCATCHERS: MUSCICAPIDAE**

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

Several were seen around Poring, with further sightings around the lodge at Danum too.

**Rufous-tailed Shama** *Copsychus pyrropygus* **GUIDE ONLY**

One was seen by Sam and Raphael only at Danum Valley.

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

Two were seen roosting on one of Borneo Rainforest Lodge's awesome night drives, and another was seen at Gomantong Caves. A commonly heard, and beautiful song on the tour though.

**White-tailed Flycatcher** *Cyornis concretus*

Also known as *Dark Blue Flycatcher*. Faye found one of these handsome flycatchers at Poring.

**Pale Blue Flycatcher** *Cyornis unicolor*

One was seen at Tambunan.

**Long-billed Blue-Flycatcher** *Cyornis caerulatus*

Also known as *Large-billed Blue-Flycatcher*. Marvelous views of a male were had along a trail close to Borneo Rainforest Lodge.

**Malaysian Blue-Flycatcher**

*Cyornis turcosus*

A bright shining male was seen at Danum Valley, with another couple of sightings coming from the boat on the extension around the Kinabatangan.

**Bornean Blue-Flycatcher**

*Cyornis superbus*

**BORNEO ENDEMIC**

One was seen by a few people along the steep trail at Poring, and another smashing male was seen along the road at Danum.

**Mangrove Blue-Flycatcher**

*Cyornis rufigastra*

Three males were seen on Pulau Manukan by John, Faye and Sam on the arrival day of the tour.

**Eye-browed Jungle-Flycatcher**

*Vauriella gularis*

**BORNEO ENDEMIC**

Seen on two days within Mount Kinabalu NP, with three sightings in total. The most fascinating of these involved a bird tussling with a Lined Reed Snake *Calamaria griswoldi* in the middle of the road one afternoon. The snake, as well as the bird, is an endemic species.

**Indigo Flycatcher**

*Eumyias indigo*

One or two were seen on most days in the highlands of Borneo.

**Verditer Flycatcher**

*Eumyias thalassinus*

Just the two birds were seen: one in Tambunan, and another from the Trogon Tower at Sepilok.

**White-browed Shortwing**

*Brachypteryx Montana*

A pair was seen exceptionally well on Mount Kinabalu one afternoon.

**Bornean Whistling-Thrush**

*Myophonus borneensis*

**BORNEO ENDEMIC**

This species was previously considered a *thrush*, although has recently been moved into the *flycatchers*. Recorded on four days in Sabah's highlands, with up to four seen in one day.

**White-crowed (Bornean) Forktail**

*Enicurus leschenaultia borneensis*

**BORNEO ENDEMIC**

Although recorded on four days in the mountains of Sabah, only seen well on one of these occasions when a bird foraged in a roadside rivulet early one morning in Mount Kinabalu NP.

**Chestnut-naped Forktail**

*Enicurus ruficapillus*

**GUIDE ONLY**

Just Sam saw one, along a steep trail in Poring.

**Little Pied Flycatcher**

*Ficedula westermanni*

Three singles were seen on Mount Kinabalu.

**Snowy-browed Flycatcher**

*Ficedula hyperrythra*

Seen on three occasions on Mount Kinabalu, where several of these birds were remarkably approachable, landing within a few feet of us on occasion.

**THRUSHES AND ALLIES: TURDIDAE**

**Everett's Thrush**

*Zoothera everetti*

**BORNEO ENDEMIC**

Excellent views were had of two birds, presumably a pair, on Mount Kinabalu. This shy endemic can be tough to see let alone get quality looks at, so we were mighty pleased with this!

**Fruit-hunter**

*Chlamydochaera jefferyi*

**BORNEO ENDEMIC**

Their high-pitched calls led us to find two separate males frequenting an area one afternoon, which afforded decent looks, up on Mount Kinabalu.

**STARLINGS: STURNIDAE**

**Asian Glossy Starling**

*Aplonis panayensis*

Recorded on five days of the tour, including in good numbers as we were leaving Danum Valley Conservation Area.

**Common Hill Myna**

*Gracula religiosa*

The original "talking myna" that many people traditionally kept as cage birds for their extraordinary vocal capacity. Seen on five days of the tour; in both Danum Valley and Sukau.

**Javan Myna**

*Acridotheres javanicus*

This introduced species is expanding fast in Borneo, and was seen in good numbers along the roadside near to Gomantong Caves on the extension.

**LEAFBIRDS: CHLOROPSEIDAE**

**Greater Green Leafbird**

*Chloropsis sonnerati*

Just the one bird was seen from the canopy walkway at Borneo Rainforest Lodge.

**Lesser Green Leafbird**

*Chloropsis cyanopogon*

Seen on four occasions in the lowland rainforests of Danum.

**Bornean Leafbird**

*Chloropsis kinabaluensis*

**BORNEO ENDEMIC**

At least three of these handsome birds were seen at Tambunan on our first morning.

**FLOWERPECKERS: DICAIDAE**

**Yellow-rumped Flowerpecker**

*Prionochilus xanthopygius*

**BORNEO ENDEMIC**

A single bird was seen along the road near Borneo Rainforest Lodge, although our best look came of a male along a river on the extension close to Sukau.

**Thick-billed Flowerpecker**

*Dicaeum agile*

John picked out one of these scarce flowerpeckers attending a fruiting tree beside our lodge at Sukau on the extension.

**Orange-bellied Flowerpecker**

*Dicaeum trigonostigma*

Recorded several times, at three separate sites on the tour: Poring, Danum, and Sukau.

**Black-sided Flowerpecker**

*Dicaeum monticulum*

**BORNEO ENDEMIC**

Also known as *Bornean Flowerpecker*. Strangely scarce on this tour, with just sightings in total, with a male near the Mount Kinabalu HQ being our best viewing.

**Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker**

*Dicaeum cruentatum*

This stunning flowerpecker was seen at two sites on the extension of the tour: at Sepilok, and then again from our boat around Sukau.

**SUNBIRDS AND SPIDERHUNTERS: NECTARINIIDAE**

**Ruby-cheeked Sunbird**

*Chalcoparia singalensis*

A beautiful sunbird, seen several times at Sepilok and again at Sukau, both on the extension.

**Plain Sunbird**

*Anthreptes simplex*

This dowdy and unimpressive sunbird was seen at Poring and again at Sepilok.

**Plain-throated Sunbird**

*Anthreptes malacensis*

Also known as *Brown-throated Sunbird*. Seen at both Poring and Sepilok.

**Red-throated Sunbird**

*Anthreptes rhodolaemus*

A super male was seen around our lodge at Sukau on the extension.

**Purple-naped Sunbird**

*Hypogramma hypogrammicum*

Just recorded on the extension, where a single bird was seen well just behind our lodge at Sukau.

**Van Hasselt's Sunbird**

*Leptocoma brasiliانا*

A stunning male was seen perched in front of our lodge at Sukau, on the extension. Another male and female were also seen in the same area at the time.

**Copper-throated Sunbird**

*Leptocoma calcostetha*

Faye, John and Sam saw a few of these mangrove-loving sunbirds on Pulau Manukan on the arrival day of the tour.

**Olive-backed Sunbird**

*Cinnyris jugularis*

John and Sam saw a female around Likas on the arrival day of the tour, and the rest of the group caught up with a female in front our lodge at Sukau on the extension.

**Eastern Crimson Sunbird**

*Aethopyga siparaja*

One was seen by some at Danum Valley, and another was seen by only Sam at Sukau.

**Temminck's Sunbird**

*Aethopyga temminckii*

This strikingly bright sunbird was seen repeatedly in Sabah's mountains, at both Tambunan and on Mount Kinabalu.

**Little Spiderhunter**

*Arachnothera longirostra*

Seen just three times on the tour: at Danum, Sepilok, and close to Gomantong Caves.

**Thick-billed Spiderhunter**

*Arachnothera crassirostris*

**GUIDE ONLY**

One was seen by just Sam at Sepilok.

**Long-billed Spiderhunter**

*Arachnothera robusta*

Some of the group got on to a bird at Poring, which was the only sighting of the tour.

**Spectacled Spiderhunter**

*Arachnothera flavigaster*

Up to three birds were seen around Poring, with sightings on two days there.

**Yellow-eared Spiderhunter**

*Arachnothera chrysogenys*

A few were seen at Poring, with one further birds seen at Danum also.

**Streaky-breasted (Bornean) Spiderhunter**

*Arachnothera affinis*

**BORNEO ENDEMIC**

Previously referred to as *Bornean Spiderhunter*. Just the one bird was seen at Poring.

**Whitehead's Spiderhunter**

*Arachnothera juliae*

**BORNEO ENDEMIC**

This striking endemic was seen twice in the tour; a pair were seen for an extensive period at Tambunan, and another single was seen on Mount Kinabalu.

**WAGTAILS AND PIPITS: MOTACILLIDAE**

**Oriental (Paddyfield) Pipit**

*Anthus rufulus*

One bird was present at the airfield on arrival at Lahad Datu, for our transfer into Borneo Rainforest Lodge.

**OLD WORLD SPARROWS: PASSERIDAE**

**Eurasian Tree Sparrow**

*Passer montanus*

Recorded on eight different days of the day at numerous sites.

**WEAVERS AND ALLIES: PLOCEIDAE**

**Baya Weaver**

*Ploceus philippinus*

This species has recently colonized the Sandakan area, where we visited a newly established colony, and saw at least two males attending their oddly shaped nests.

**WAXBILLS AND ALLIES: ESTRILDIDAE**

**Dusky Munia**

*Lonchura fascans*

**BORNEO ENDEMIC**

A good year for this species, seen on nine different days of the tour, around Poring, Tambunan, and around our cabins at Danum. Also recorded close to Gomantong Caves.

**Chestnut Munia**

*Lonchura atricapilla*

More than ten birds were seen in a flock as we were leaving Danum, with others seen around Sukau on the extension too.

## **MAMMALS**

33 mammal species recorded; 13 endemics

### **TREESHREWS: TUPAIIDAE**

**Mountain Treeshrew**

*Tupaia Montana*

**BORNEO ENDEMIC**

Two singles were seen in Mount Kinabalu NP.

### **FRUIT-BATS: PTEROPODIDAE**

**Large Flying-Fox**

*Pteropus vampyrus*

One of these massive bats was seen by spotlight on one of the fantastic night drives out of Borneo Rainforest Lodge.

### **FREE-TAILED BATS: MOLOSSIDAE**

**Wrinkle-lipped Bat**

*Tadarida plicata*

Many of these bats were roosting in the swiftlet caves at Gomantong on the extension.

### **COLUGOS: CYNOCEPHALAE**

**(Malayan) Colugo**

*Cynocephalus varieagatus*

Two of these odd animals were seen during one night drive, which included views of them gliding above us. The same night drive yielded a Marbled Cat too.

### **MONKEYS: CERCOPITHECIDAE**

**Maroon Langur**

*Presbytis rubicunda*

**BORNEO ENDEMIC**

Also known as *Red Leaf-Monkey*. At least three troops of these beautiful monkeys were seen in the lowlands: at Danum, and also at Sepilok and Gomantong Caves on the extension.

**Silvered Langur**

*Presbytis cristata*

Also known as *Silver Leaf-Monkey*. A convenient troop of half a dozen or so animals was seen behind our lodge at Sukau, on the extension.

**Proboscis Monkey**

*Nasalis larvatus*

**BORNEO ENDEMIC**

This comical monkey is astonishingly common at Sukau on the extension, where our favorite sighting was when a troop of them decided to cross from one side a wide creek to another, leaping, rather ungracefully, into the water, and then swimming across.

**Long-tailed Macaque**

*Macaca fascicularis*

Also known as *Crab-eating Macaque*. Recorded on four days of the extension, always the best leg of the tour for primates, due to the remarkable richness and abundance of primates around Sukau, where our best views came.

**Pig-tailed Macaque**

*Macaca nemestrina*

Four animals were seen blocking the entrance to the canopy walkway at Danum, with further troops seen at Sukau and Gomantong. The latter troop was the most impressive, the male of which bared his considerable fangs at us.

### **GIBBONS: HYLOBATIDAE**

**Bornean Gibbon**

*Hylobates muelleri*

**BORNEO ENDEMIC HEARD ONLY**

Heard regularly around Danum and Sukau, though never close.

**GREAT APES: PONGIDAE**

**(Bornean) Orang-Utan**

*Pongo pygmaeus*

**BORNEO ENDEMIC**

Four sightings on the tour: a female was seen close to the lodge at Danum, then another female was seen nest building from the canopy walkway there. On our journey out of Danum we came across two animals in very close proximity to each other, a rare occurrence for this usually solitary ape. Lastly, a female with a baby clasped to its chest was seen night nest building along a tributary close to the Kinabatangan.

**SQUIRRELS: SCIURIDAE**

**Giant Squirrel**

*Ratufa affinis*

This huge and impressive squirrel was seen along a mountain trail in Mount Kinabalu NP.

**Prevost's Squirrel**

*Callosciurus prevostii*

The most abundant of the squirrels in Borneo, recorded at Mount Kinabalu, Danum, Sukau, Sepilok, and Gomantong.

**Kinabalu Squirrel**

*Callosciurus baluensis*

**BORNEO ENDEMIC**

One was seen along a mountain trail in Mount Kinabalu NP.

**Bornean Black-banded Squirrel**

*Callosciurus orestes*

**BORNEO ENDEMIC GUIDE ONLY**

One was seen by Sam only within Mount Kinabalu NP.

**Plantain Squirrel**

*Callosciurus notatus*

Recorded several times on Mount Kinabalu, and also at Sepilok and Sukau.

**Low's Squirrel**

*Sundasciurus lowi*

One was seen at Gomantong Caves on the extension.

**Jentink's Squirrel**

*Sundasciurus jentinki*

**BORNEO ENDEMIC**

Seen at Tambunan, and then subsequently on Mount Kinabalu half a dozen times or so.

**Bornean Mountain Ground Squirrel**

*Dremomys everetti*

**BORNEO ENDEMIC**

One was seen by Sam scampering across a trail on Mount Kinabalu.

**Whitehead's Pigmy Squirrel**

*Exilisciurus whiteheadi*

**BORNEO ENDEMIC**

This amazing squirrel, with the comical white ear tufts, was seen perched on a crash barrier at Tambunan, and then again on a more traditional perch - *a tree* - at Poring.

**Plain Pigmy Squirrel**

*Exilisciurus exilis*

**BORNEO ENDEMIC**

Seen once at Danum Valley, right around the lodge, and then again several times on the extension out of Sukau. This squirrel is inconceivably tiny, and always a thrill to see. ONE OF THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE TOUR.

**Red-bellied Sculptor Squirrel**

*Glyphotes simus*

**BORNEO ENDEMIC**

One angry individual seemed react loudly, and persistently, to our presence at Mount Kinabalu.

**FLYING SQUIRRELS: PETAURISTINAE**

**Red Giant Flying Squirrel**

*Petaurista petaurista*

Two were seen on each of two of the night drives out of Borneo Rainforest Lodge - one of the classic experiences in Borneo.

**Thomas's Flying Squirrel**

*Aeromys thomasi*

**BORNEO ENDEMIC**

A single animal was seen on two out of three night drives taken at Borneo Rainforest Lodge.

**CIVETS AND MONGOOSES: VIVERRIDAE**

**Malay Civet**

*Viverra zibetha*

Also known as *Tangalung*. This handsome, cat-like civet, was seen on one night drive out of Borneo Rainforest Lodge.

**Common Palm Civet**

*Paradoxurus hermaphrodites*

One was seen during one of the three night drives taken out of Borneo Rainforest Lodge.

**Binturong**

*Arctictis binturong*

Also known as *Bearcat*. This fascinating creature was seen day-roosting from the canopy walkway at Danum Valley.

**MARTENS, WEASELS, BADGERS, AND OTTERS: MUSTELIDAE**

**Oriental Small-clawed Otter *Aonyx cinerea***

One of these small otters was seen along the road out of the Danum Valley Conservation Area.

**CATS: FELIDAE**

**Marbled Cat**

*Felis marmorata*

This rarely seen cat was, remarkably, seen on two consecutive night drives at Borneo Rainforest Lodge.

**ELEPHANTS: ELEPHANTIDAE**

**Borneo Elephant**

*Elephas maximus borneensis*

**BORNEO ENDEMIC**

At least eight animals were seen in a herd which caused a slight detour en-route to the lodge at Sukau. Donna was especially pleased by this, as she'd had this as her number one target for the trip!

**PIGS: SUIDAE**

**Bearded Pig**

*Sus barbatus*

Now that the resident animal seems to have disappeared from the lodge at Danum, not the shoe-in for the list that it once was. However, we managed to stumble into one foraging during the daytime in the forest, while we were trying to track down a calling *Bornean Banded Pitta*.

**MOUSE-DEER: TRAGULIDAE**

**Greater Mouse-Deer**

*Tragulus napu*

One of these impossibly small deer, was seen on a night drive out of Borneo Rainforest Lodge.

**DEER: CERVIDAE**

**Sambar Deer**

*Cervus unicolor*

From one of the smallest (mouse-deer) to the very largest deer in Asia – Sambar Deer. This was seen on three of our four nights in Danum Valley.

**OTHER WILDLIFE**

**TREE AND FLYING FROGS: RHACOPHORIDAE**

**Wallace's Flying Frog**

*Rhacophorus nigropalmatus*

One of these striking frogs was spotlit on a night drive at Danum.

**CROCODILES: CROCODYLIDAE**

**Saltwater Crocodile**

*Crocodylus porosus*

One was seen very well on the banks of the Kinabatangan River on the extension.

**AGAMID LIZARDS: AGAMIDAE**

**Crested Green Lizard**

*Bronchocela cristatella*

This handsome lizard was seen sprinting along the hand railing on the trail to Gomantong Caves, with legs and tail flailing amusingly in the process. Another was seen at the lodge at Sukau.

**Bornean Angle-headed Lizard *Gonocephalus bornensis***

**BORNEO ENDEMIC**

One of these striking lizards was seen along a forest trail at Danum.

**GECKOS: GEKKONIDAE**

**Yoshi's Bent-toed Gecko**      *Cyrtodactylus yoshii*

**BORNEO ENDEMIC**

This strikingly-patterned gecko was seen at night on the boardwalk to Gomantong Caves.

**Asian House Gecko**      *Hemidactylus frenatus*

A regularly encountered reptile throughout.

**SKINKS: SCINCIDAE**

**Mangrove Skink**      *Emoia atrocostata*

These skinks were commonly encountered by Faye, John and Sam during their visit to Pulau Manukan on the arrival day of the tour.

**MONITOR LIZARDS: VARANIDAE**

**Rough-necked Monitor Lizard** *Varanus rudicollis*

This large arboreal lizard was seen along a trail near the Borneo Rainforest Lodge.

**Water Monitor Lizard**      *Varanus salvator*

One was seen swimming in the river beside the Borneo Rainforest Lodge; and several others were seen from the boat as we cruised around Sukau on the extension.

**TYPICAL SNAKES: COLUBRIDAE**

**Mangrove Cat Snake**      *Boiga dendrophila*

One of these strikingly marked snakes was seen curled up in trees along the river edge near Sukau on the extension.

**Lined Reed Snake**      *Calamaria griswoldi*

**BORNEO ENDEMIC**

An individual of this species was seen tussling with an *Eye-browed Jungle-Flycatcher* on the road at Mount Kinabalu, with the flycatcher looking a little nervous of its recently caught, though still very much alive, prey!

**RAFFLESIAS: RAFFLESIACEAE**

**Rafflesia keithii**

**BORNEO ENDEMIC**

This is one of the famous parasitic flower plants that produce some of the largest blooms on Earth. This species is endemic to Sabah, and can produce flowers of up to one meter across. We saw one in bloom near Poring, which was found due to the rather large banner advertising that it was in flower. These plants only bloom for around five days, of which they are only at their peak beauty for around three days, and so locals make the most of it when they have one in bloom, charging a premium entrance fee! The flower that we saw was only in its second day of flowering, and so was in peak condition.



*Pyrops sultana*, a lantern fly seen at Poring