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THE INDEPENDENT NEWSLETTER OF THE DANAU GIRANG FIELD CENTRE

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THE BORNEAN BEARDED PIGS ARE BACKI

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The Bornean bearded pigs are back!

After the outbreak of African Swine fever (ASF) in Borneo, the bearded pigs were almost fully wiped out. Up until recently we thought that they may not come back, but they are! We recently found footage at one of our WNC (Wildlife north corridor) camera traps of a small group foraging in Batangan in the Lower Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary!



The bearded pigs' absence had a significant effect on local communities and the ecosystem; it has even been linked to an increase in crocodile attacks. Although now the pigs' numbers are hopefully increasing there will be a positive outcome for the local communities and fishermen!

Link to article for more info: <u>https://www.telegraph.co.uk/global-health/science-and-disease/bearded-boars-borneo-african-swine-fever-crocodile-attacks/</u>



Another leopard cat for Amanda!

After several weeks of nocturnal walks and drives, Amanda, a second-year PhD student, along with her Field Assistants, successfully captured a male leopard cat in a plantation near the research centre. The team collared the cat, conducted a health check, and collected samples for ecotoxicology and genetic analysis.



The anaesthetised leopard cat before collaring

While the team has encountered numerous leopard cats during their outings, many were either too quick to catch or too small to collar. To be eligible for collaring, the cats must weigh at least 2 kg. Juvenile cats are especially challenging due to their unpredictable movements and home ranges, making collaring a significant risk. Capturing these cats requires substantial effort and resources, and the collars are highly valuable.

The data Amanda collects from this new cat, named Uno by one of the Professional Training Year students, will complement the information gathered from three other collared leopard cats in the same plantation. Uno's movements have already indicated the use of forested and high conservation areas within the plantation, making him the second cat in Amanda's study to exhibit this behaviour. We hope Uno stays safe and continues to provide valuable insights for Amanda's research.

A present from the plantation.



CheeChee the pangolin

On April 1, 2024, the Subok Plantation, a vital collaborator in our research on leopard cats and pangolins, gave us an unexpected gift: a pangolin. While harvesting palm fruit, a worker discovered and captured the creature, demonstrating the growing awareness among the plantation staff about the importance of these species. We named the pangolin CheeChee, after the sound the worker made to call us over, calmly announcing their find as if it were an everyday occurrence. CheeChee was sampled, tagged, and released into the nearby buffer zone. We are excited to monitor CheeChee's movements and interactions with another male pangolin we've been

tracking in the same area, Raya, anticipating valuable insights into their behaviour in the oil palmdominated landscape.

Collaring a Malay civet in one of our Regrow Borneo sites

Kaboi Stumping is a 20 year old secondary forest where active replanting and natural and restored regrowth is taking place. It was cut down due to logging and began to be restored by Kopel, working with the Regrow Borneo charity. Due to the flooding challenges, most restored sites are regrown with only a few species of trees, these trees being very tough and drought resistant. Therefore, the original diversity of the tree species is lost, and regrow efforts in rainforests have not been studied long enough to see the possible effects.

With the help of DGFC's resident vet, Reza and our PhD student Amanda, we managed to collar one male Malay civet (*Viverra tangalunga*). After two weeks of tracking and camera trap data we have been able to draw a preliminary home range where we can see use of the restored forest and natural forest surrounding.

Our main aim for this project is to track the movement of this individual and find out how it is using the restored forest. An important question to ask when restoring forests is if human assisted restoration allows for a return in the diversity of species originally present in forests before they were destroyed.

Terima Kasih Alut!

In May, one of our oldest and most knowledgeable field assistants, Alut, retired from DGFC after being here for over 10 years. He was here for countless different projects, had endless experience, was truly a human GPS and a 'jungle man'! If you were lost, he could find the way, and if you couldn't find a tagged pangolin, Alut would track it down. We wish him the best of luck; we just hope we can still find our hidden camera traps without him!



Marie Dannay



Cardiff Field Course

Dr Marie Dannay is a French plant biologist who visited Danau Girang Field Centre as a volunteer over the past few months. She received her PhD in 2023 while researching the effect of uvB radiation on the photosynthetic activity of microalgae. While here, she enjoyed working alongside other PTY students in the field and understanding what is required to undertake work in this type of environment. She also enjoyed picking up some new hobbies, learning how to crochet was one of her favourites! One of her favourite moments while at DG was being able to see the Bornean elephant in the wild. She managed to see a group of them crossing the river. After leaving DG, she will be travelling to Peninsular Malaysia before heading back to France to continue with her work.

This year, Cardiff University returned for their undergraduate annual field course which included six masters students who conducted an extensive biodiversity survey at our new Mike Bruford and Peter Riger Regrow Borneo sites. These sites are located in the HCV (High Conservation Value) area within a nearby plantation – Hillco. Kopel will start preparing the site for replanting in 2025, and so before this, a survey of the general biodiversity would be beneficial for our Regrow Borneo PhD student, Maz. The MSc students completed a 5-day survey of small mammals, butterflies, passerine birds and assessing the general habitat. This valuable data will be used as a baseline for upcoming projects in that area.

The undergraduates also spent two weeks of intensive training in tropical biodiversity research techniques taking part in pangolin and leopard cat tracking, primate and night boat surveys, forest walks, small mammal trapping, biodiversity monitoring at DGFC's botanical plots. Amongst the busy



Cardiff University Field Course tree planting at Regrow Borneo site, Sungai Pin

learning and training programme they enjoyed seeing the rare and spectacular wildlife.

During Cardiff's visit this year, we unfortunately experienced our first ever outbreak of food poisoning. As the health and well-being of all our visitors are of the utmost importance to us, we enlisted the support of the local health authority and immediately took steps to investigate and address the situation. We hope the outbreak did not spoil what was otherwise a unique learning experience.

Visit from Professor Tristram Hales and Wyoming University

During a 10-day visit to the Danau Girang Field Centre, three delegates from the University of Wyoming—Brent, Danielle, and Michael—along with Prof. TC Hales, Cardiff University and co-chair of the Regrow Borneo Charity (UK) and Dr Pablo Orozco-ter Wengel, Cardiff University, collaborated on a short research project. This partnership is part of the ongoing collaboration between the University of Wyoming and Cardiff University.



L-R: Marie (Volunteer), Danielle and Brent (University of Wyoming), Ray and Maz (DGFC) and TC (Cardiff University)

The team's focus was on analysing plant stress in Regrow Borneo restoration sites at Sungai Pin, Ladang, and Kaboi Stumping. They concentrated on two particular species: Bongkol (*Nauclea* sp.) and Salongapid (*Mallotus muticus*). To assess how these species are coping with the challenging environment—characterized by intense heat, abundant sunlight, and low soil moisture—they measured variables including surface leaf temperature, chlorophyll efficiency, and soil moisture.

Their findings revealed that Bongkol is remarkably tolerant to environmental stresses and is difficult to kill. In contrast, Salongapid was found to be more susceptible to the environment.

After returning to Wyoming, the team hopes that their work at DGFC will help secure funding to continue their research in collaboration with Cardiff University. They are eager to return to DGFC to build on the progress made during their visit.

PHOTO GALLERY

Cinnamon frog (*Nictyxalus pictus*). Taken by: Alyssa Whittle

> Bornean elephant visiting the centre (Elephas maximus borneensis). Taken by: Lizzy Price

The elusive banded linsang (*Prionodon linsang*) spotted along the centre's main path. Taken by: William Evans

> Blue-eared kingfisher (Alcedo meninting) pictured whilst mist netting at one of our Regrow Borneo sites. Taken by: William Evans



enquiry@danaugirang.com.my www.danaugirang.com.my

> Director of Publication: **Benoit Goossens**

> > Editor: Sabah Redman

Assistant Editors: John Robertson Harry Cholerton

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