



JUNGLE TIMES

VISITORS HIGHLIGHT



University of Freiburg
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Thirsty Orangutan
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Selamat Hari Raya

On 29th March we at the field centre celebrated Hari Raya, a holiday which celebrates the end of fasting for Ramadan in the Muslim calendar. We had the joy of joining the local village Kopel in celebrating Hari Raya, visiting current staff and old friends of DGFC's open houses. During the festival, the PTYs and staff got to dress in the traditional clothing (Baju kurung / melayu) and visited eight houses. were fed in everyone, meaning we were incredibly full by the end of the day.



Throughout the day we took many photos of the DGFC team, befriended cats and tried all the food we could. A massive thank you to everyone in KOPEL that welcomed us into their homes.



Parasite communities of understory birds - Hannah Yexley



Hey! I'm Hannah a PTY here at DGFC. After 7 months, I have finally been able to start my project. I am using mist netting to catch understory birds then look at their parasite infection patterns, focusing on the natural and restored Regrow Borneo sites. On the 28th of March, I sampled my first site, Ladang Restored, and will have completed half of my sites by the time this Jungle Times edition is out! I collect biomaterials such as blood, faecal and ectoparasite samples, analysing them under a microscope.

Recently, I have seen parasitic worm eggs, feather mites and chewing lice...and yes, it does sometimes give me the heebie jeebies. Within the next few weeks I will be analysing blood for diseases, such as avian malaria, using staining methods called Giemsa and DIFF QUIK. After many long mornings, we have sampled and recorded over 15 different understory bird species and I'm so excited for more!

Lastly, a special mention and a massive thank you to Rayzigerson (right) as without his knowledge and hard work, my project would never have been possible.



Hail the Health and Safety Week!

From the 1st to the 4th of April, DGFC hosted an insightful Health and Safety week led by Dr Milena and Dr Tini. The week began with a presentation by Milena on zoonotic diseases, covering key risks on vector-borne illnesses and highlighting prevention strategies to fieldwork in the Kinabatangan.

Additionally, DG collaborated with the Vector Control Unit from the Kinabatangan Health Office under the Ministry of Health. The team offered practical guidance on managing exposure to diseases such as malaria. They also took a blood sample to carry out malaria testing!



The team also carried out a small mammal trapping exercise, allowing us to better understand potential risks and explore the ways to minimise it in the field.

The week concluded with a session led by Dr Kunal, who provided valuable guidance to dental hygiene and maintaining oral health in remote field conditions. We also got a free check up!

Regrow Borneo renewal



Left to right- Saidal Bin Udin (KOPEL General manager), Abdul Sanih Bin Nasri (Chairman), Benoit Goossens, Amaziasizamoria Jumail, Nur Syazana Fatimah Binti Mohamad Juhari (KOPEL assistant conservation manager)

Regrow Borneo is one of the core and long-term studies here at DG. Its success is a result of a very close partnership between DGFC and KOPEL. The latter is a local community reforestation and ecotourism cooperative which has been relentlessly planting trees into degraded areas of the Kinabatangan forest, since the 1990s!

KOPEL plant the trees and we assess the reforestation success via biodiversity and carbon surveys (Maz's PhD).

In April Dr Benoit and Amaziasizamoria visited the KOPEL team to renew this crucial partnership for another year, helping bridge the gap between science and the community.

For the love of Freiburg

Since 2018 we have been welcoming the University of Freiburg, Dr Kim Mortega & Dr Johannes Penner into the Kinabatangan flood-plain for two weeks at a time and this year was no exception. As you can expect from a group with such experienced leaders, they wasted no time lounging around. Every waking minute was spent scouring the forest floor for snakes, frogs and spiders.



Along with their sharp senses, these groups were armed with military grade telescopic camera lenses and some of the most furious trigger fingers DGFC have ever seen. Most of the photos used in this edition are a testament to the dedicated photographers of Freiburg, so a big thank you from us. The onslaught can be seen on the left....

With a mix of master and undergraduate students (as well as a few tag a longs) Freiburg had a huge range of mini projects; bird prevalence in plantations vs secondary forest, invasive plant species, stick insect diversity and the effect of riparianism on animal distribution to name just a few.

Along with the DGFC team who gave their presentations, we were lucky enough to hear about Kim's PhD (stone chat speciation in Africa) and some of Johannes research (invasive terrapins and mountain Nimba toads)



From the never-ending nights walks, to the constant excitement to the dance party we thank you Freiburg for choosing to come back to DG. Also, a special mention to Johannes and Kim (left) for teaching us so much about the forest we live in.

Eyeshine in the Dark: Following Crocs along the Kinabatangan River



Hi! I'm Shaveena Tania Jeyabalan, a third-year Conservation Biology student currently on placement at Danau Girang Field Centre. I'm originally from Malaysia but studying in the UK, so being out here in the Kinabatangan feels a little like coming home, with a lot more crocodiles involved!

My project focuses on understanding how saltwater crocodiles use the river, particularly looking at differences between juveniles, sub-adults, and adults. Through regular night surveys, I head out on the river to spot crocodiles using their eyeshine and record their estimated size. During the day, I assess riverbank habitats, noting things like vegetation cover and whether there are overhanging plants that might provide shelter.

So far, the project has been both exciting and challenging. Field conditions, especially changing water levels, have meant adapting my approach, but it has also opened up new directions in the research. I'm starting to see interesting patterns in where different sized crocodiles are found and how this may change over time.

Overall, it's been an incredible experience combining fieldwork, research, and a lot of time out on the river, definitely a placement I won't forget anytime soon! I'm looking forward to seeing what this project may unravel about these ancient creatures.



Saltwater crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*)



Tessa Dinsch

Kerisha crushes crocodile conflict

Danau Girang Field Centre recently held a stakeholder engagement session with plantation managers at KOPEL, Batu Putih, as part of a two-year crocodile conflict mitigation project.

The session was well received, with active participation and strong interest in collaboration. Plantation representatives expressed clear support for the project, particularly in facilitating outreach and awareness programs, allowing worker participation in training, and sharing data on crocodile sightings and incidents.



Saltwater crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*)



There was also interest in developing tailored programs for children within plantation communities. Discussions highlighted that most incidents are situational, often linked to human activity near water and limited awareness. There was strong support for new signage installation and, most importantly, education and awareness initiatives. Overall, the session established a positive and collaborative relationship, with plantation stakeholders committed to supporting outreach efforts and improving safety through better awareness and cooperation.

Kudos to Cornwall College

From 9th-17th April we welcomed Cornwall College field course to DGFC. What they lacked in numbers they made up for in enthusiasm, undertaking daily morning and afternoon primate and bird boats. Along with afternoon presentations from our major projects at Danau Girang (Regrow Borneo, pangolin project and cat project) and our PTY projects.



Throughout the week, the field course joined Jerry pangolin tracking and Megan on her butterfly biodiversity surveys. In the evenings our amphibian enthusiast Claire (research assistant on the pangolin project) carried out nightly frog surveys in the trails around DGFC. Camera traps were set by the students throughout the week to capture the wildlife around the field centre; and they were lucky enough to capture orangutans, a storm stork and a pangolin passing through!

Later in the week, the group visited Gomantong caves (a must see in Kinabatangan) with our new volunteer Candice to watch the nightly sunset event, when all the bats stream out of the cave to hunt. The group also went with Maz

to our planting site, Sungai Pin, where they contributed to the Regrow Borneo project by planting saplings, leaving their mark on the Kinabatangan.



A big thank you to the Staff and students at Cornwall College for their interest and enthusiasm in our projects and their activities, even when post lunch tiredness hits.

Orangutan fights thirst

On the morning of the 8th of April, seven of us set out onto the river for a birdwatching boat trip. We spotted storm's storks, darters, a blue-eared kingfisher, black-and-red broadbills, hornbills, a few proboscis monkeys, and plenty of crocodiles. Content with everything we had already witnessed, we were happily making our way back to the centre when Rebecca, a lovely visitor staying at DGFC with her family, suddenly shouted "STOP THE BOAT!". Uncle Lee immediately listened and turned us around. We slowly approached a shape on the riverbank that we could not quite make out, or perhaps could not quite believe what we were seeing. Was that an...orangutan? Drinking from the river? It was a flanged male orangutan, taking a few careful sips from the water's edge. This behaviour is unusual, and risky for the orangutan, but likely explained by the severe lack of rainfall and the limited availability of water within the forest. After quenching his thirst, he propped himself on a small tree near the riverbank, scratched his head, rested for a while, and eventually disappeared back into the jungle, leaving all of us completely rapt with wonder. You never know what you might see on the Kinabatangan River.



Selamat Datang (welcome) Yantie!



Hi! I'm Yantie, the new trainee research assistant at DGFC! I am a nature enthusiast, with a deep interest in mammals. I am excited to begin my journey here in the rich forests of Kinabatangan. I look forward to exploring and gaining experience, as well as being part of the conservation efforts.

PTY point of view

See the Jungle through our (Freiburg's) lenses!

Rusty millipede (*Trigoniulus corallinus*)



Johannes Penner

Black and yellow broad bill (*Eurylaimus ochromalus*)



Tessa Dinsch

Wreathed hornbill (*Rhyticeros undulatus*)



Mallien Völkel

Asian water monitor (*Varanus salvator*)



Tessa Dinsch

Asian water monitor (*Varanus salvator*)



Mallien Völkel

Stork-Billed kingfisher (*Pelargopsis capensis*)



Tessa Dinsch



Silver Leaf monkey (*Trachypithecus cristatus*)

Johannes Penner



Long-tailed macaque (*Macaca fascicularis*)

Tessa Dinsch



Smooth-coated otter (*Lutrogale perspicillata*)

Flavia Kersten



Oriental pied hornbill (*Anthracoceros albirostris*)

Tessa Dinsch



Storm's stork (*Ciconia stormi*)

Tessa Dinsch

!Creature feature!

The spores of the zombie fungus (too immature to ID) enters the insect and 'hijacks' the behaviour causing the host to climb upwards, outside of its usual range. Subsequently the insect preforms the 'death grip' and a mushroom sprouts out of its body. Therefore, increasing the spore dispersal distance, to infect more....



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