Issue Number: #167
July-August 2026



Bornean orangutan (*Pongo pygmaeus*)
Photo Credit: Pablo Orozco-terWengel

JUNGLE TIMES

VISITORS HIGHLIGHT

Cardiff University

Miami University

DANAU GIRANG • FIELD CENTRE

IN THIS ISSUE

New pangolin publication [page: 1]

Saving Scales [page: 1-2]

Mycorrhizae on the move [page: 2]

Cardiff University [page: 3]

Miami University [page: 4]

PTY farewell [page: 4]

Palm tree toil [page: 5]

PTY point of view [page: 6-7]

New Publication: Understanding Where Sunda Pangolins Feel Safest


Photo Credit: Wendi Wu

We are delighted to share that our latest research on the sleeping-site ecology of wild Sunda pangolins has been published in *Scientific Reports*.

This study represents around five years of fieldwork by the Danau Girang Field Centre team and collaborators. During this period, we radio-tracked more than eight Sunda pangolins across the Lower Kinabatangan landscape. Data from eight individuals were included in the final study, resulting in over 1,000 successful relocations and the documentation of more than 600 sleeping sites across forests and oil palm plantations.

Our findings show that while Sunda pangolins use both forest and plantation habitats, their sleeping sites tell a different story. Forests provide more secure refuges, such as tree hollows and burrows, whereas plantations are dominated by exposed oil palm crowns that are used less consistently. These results highlight that habitat use does not necessarily equal habitat suitability, and that retaining structurally complex forest refuges is likely critical for the long-term conservation of this Critically Endangered species.

This publication would not have been possible without the dedication of our field assistants, student volunteers, collaborators and partner organisations, whose commitment over many years made this work possible.

Read the full Open Access paper:
Refuge limitation structures habitat use in agricultural landscapes: evidence from Sunda pangolins
https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-026-60234-1

Saving Scales: Confiscation of 10 Sunda Pangolins

On the evening of 19 June 2026, 10 Sunda pangolins (*Manis javanica*) were seized during an operation led by Ops Khazanah. As the confiscation formed a part of a legal investigation, the animals could not be released immediately and were temporarily transferred to Sepilok Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre (SORC) for specialist care.



While under the care of the SORC team, each pangolin underwent a health assessment led by Dr. Nabila Sarkawi. Veterinary procedures included biological sample collection, morphometric measurements and the implantation of microchips to provide permanent identification.

Following court approval on 22 June 2026, preparations began for the pangolins' return to the wild. Seven adults were fitted with numbered identification tags, while one adult female was additionally equipped with a



VHF radio transmitter to enable post-release monitoring of her movements and survival. The remaining two sub-adult pangolins were released without external tags due to their age and size.

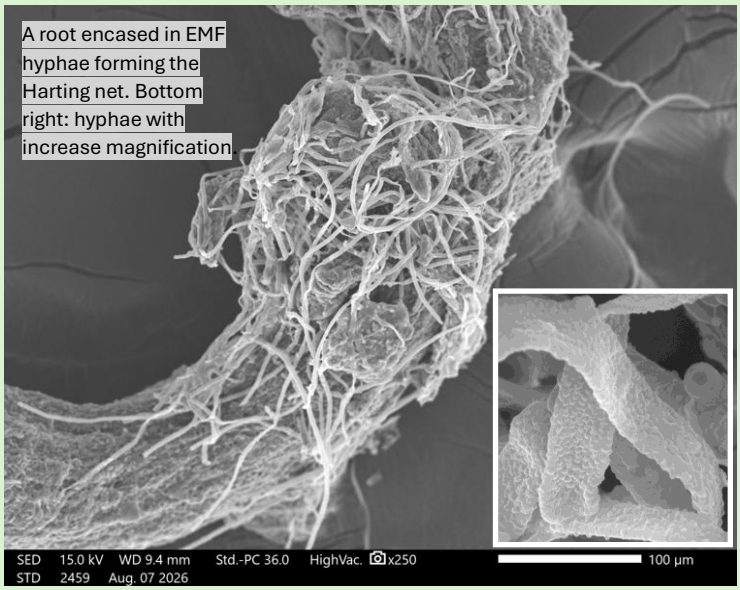
The DGFC and SORC team successfully released all 10 Sunda pangolins into suitable forest habitat within the Lower Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary. The group comprised eight adults and two sub-adults, including six males and four females.



Their successful return to the wild represents an important step in the conservation of one of the world's most heavily trafficked mammals and highlights collaborative efforts of enforcement agencies, veterinarians and conservation practitioners in combating the illegal wildlife trade.

Mycorrhizae on the move

On the 28th of August, I broke free from the forest and ventured to Kota Kinabalu to start a three-week induction at Universiti Malaysia Sabah's (UMS), mycology laboratory. Supervised by Dr Jaya Seelan and guided by Muhammad Shahbaz I have been learning how to extract DNA from my mushroom and root samples, Viewing ectomycorrhizal fungal (EMF) roots under the Scanning electron microscope (see below) and learning microscopy techniques to hopefully record new species!



A root encased in EMF hyphae forming the Harting net. Bottom right: hyphae with increase magnification

It has really been the cherry on top of the cake to finish this year with some molecular / DNA extraction experience and the data I have collected here should massively increase the reliability of my study. I shall be depositing all 200+ samples at the UMS fungarium so students may be able to study them in the coming years hopefully uncovering some fungal dark taxa.

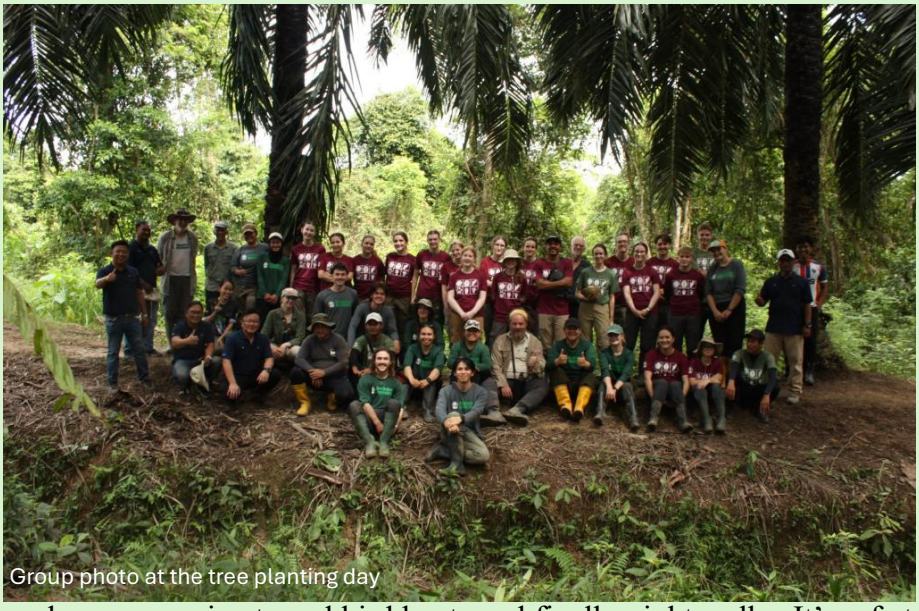
Terima kasih banyak to Dr Jaya for opening up your lab to me and thank you to Dr Benoit and Dr Milena for your hospitality and this opportunity!

Just like climate change the fungal future is increasing in intensity exponentially, don't miss out on the myco-movement! Ollie.





Cardiff University Field Course


Group photo at the tree planting day

From 20th June to 4th July, we welcomed Cardiff University along with Dr. Pablo Orozco-terWengel and DGFC director Dr Benoit Goossens for the busiest field course of the year. The first five days of the field course comprised of jam-packed days filled with first aid training and progressing to learning common field techniques of many of the projects here. The field course was split into four groups for the first four days, rotating between days spent measuring in botanic plots, mist netting, insect identification, fungal surveys, primate and bird boats and finally night walks. It's safe to say everyone, students and DGFC staff alike, was exhausted after the first week!

But the following week was where the students could put their new field skills to the test in designing and carrying out their own research! The students came up with a broad array of projects ranging from scorpion diversity to kingfisher surveys. Between busy field workdays collecting their data, field course students also had the opportunity to shadow some of the projects going on at DGFC such as squirrel tracking and trapping with Lindsey (Msc student), cat tracking with Amanda (Research Officer and Phd student) and pangolin tracking with Jerry (Phd student). Along with this, each afternoon presentations from DGFC PTYs, Masters and Phd students took place showing students what goes on at the field centre. I think it's safe to say not a minute was wasted in the jungle!


Dr Benoit Goossens with a tree sapling

As the field course came to a close, the Cardiff students with the DGFC team went to Hillco plantation to plant Ficus trees. We were joined by legend in the conservation field Dr. John Payne who discussed with us the importance of tree planting and food sources in such a fragmented ecosystem such as Sabah, with Ficus being a preferred food source for orangutans. The field course took to the HCV area (high conservation area) wading through the slightly boggy grass to plant trees, placing saplings in forks of existing tree and securing with wire mesh. Over the course of the morning the students planted over 50 Ficus saplings, ending the morning with lunch from the plantation management.

The final afternoon was spent listening to the field course present their research findings, each giving 10-minute presentations followed by questions from Dr. Goossens and Dr. Orozco-terWengel. All the projects gave interesting results with special mentions to the scorpion project which found hundreds more scorpions than expected around the field centre and the fungi project by the "Fungals" who impressed everyone with their passion and enthusiasm in learning new identification and love for fungi.

A massive thank you to the whole of the Cardiff field course, whose enthusiasm and initiative made what could have been a hectic 2 weeks enjoyable!

Miami University Field Course



Miami field course at Eco-camp


Miami field course planting trees

Although possibly not the Miami you were thinking of, Miami University Ohio brought amazing enthusiasm and energy. From 12th-22nd July Miami joined us shadowing DGFC's current projects: cat tracking, pangolin tracking, squirrels, Regrow Borneo. They also joined primate, bird boats and night walks looking out for insects, owls and amphibians (though if Ollie was present, they soon turned into fungi walks).

As well as the normal DGFC team project presentations, Miami also held their own afternoon discussions on parts of conservation that is sometimes forgotten in the field, such as how to encourage empathy towards animals in order to engage others to conservation. These discussions also highlighted the importance of community in conservation, something that DGFC has worked hard to encourage.

Throughout the week, our frequent neighbours (Bornean elephants) came to visit near the field centre making boat rides all the more exciting. The field course ended the week by joining Kopel for a day in learning about the local community, learning traditional Sabahan dancing and planting saplings in one of Maz's Regrown Borneo sites Sungai Pin.

A big thank you to Miami University, a lovely final field course for the 25/26 PTYs!

WE ARE PTYS GET US OUT OF HERE



The passage of time waits for no one and oh boy has the time passed. We've been dreaming in this jungle paradise (minus the mosquitoes, early mornings and lack of beer) for almost a whole year now, but like all good things it must change. We arrived as strangers ignorant to the jungle, yet we shall leave with brains full of irreplaceable memories and hearts even fuller nourished by the friendships we have made. Thank you to all the wonderfully passionate and encouraging people who have joined us on our marathon sprint, the energy you brought enabled us to get over the finish line. No matter how short your stay was, we appreciate you all! But the real thanks and praise goes to our DGFC family who welcomed us in and made us feel at home. We've definitely been influenced by all the role models and local legends in and out of the centre. It's safe to say our life's trajectories have been altered forever from the conversations we have had under the canopy of the Kinabatangan.

Anyone whose visited the centre knows that jungle life isn't always plain sailing, yet with the support of friends we've had the year of

a lifetime and experienced things which would make our childhood selves smile from ear to ear. Even now we are looking forward to our reintroduction into society “we are wondering now, what to do, now we know this is the end”…….

Stay lucky, PTYS of 2025/26. Ollie Hall, Megan Rees, Hannah Yexley and Shaveena Jeyabalan

‘Palm Tree Toil’ – A documentary by Garret Ball



Garret was a 3-month volunteer (May-July) here at DGFC. Whilst helping in the field with on-going projects, he was also developing his own project called ‘Palm Tree Toil’.

“My short documentary ‘Palm Tree Toil’ is out on the 9th of August!

It’s been my passion project whilst living and working in the jungle. I’m stoked it’s finally ready to go.

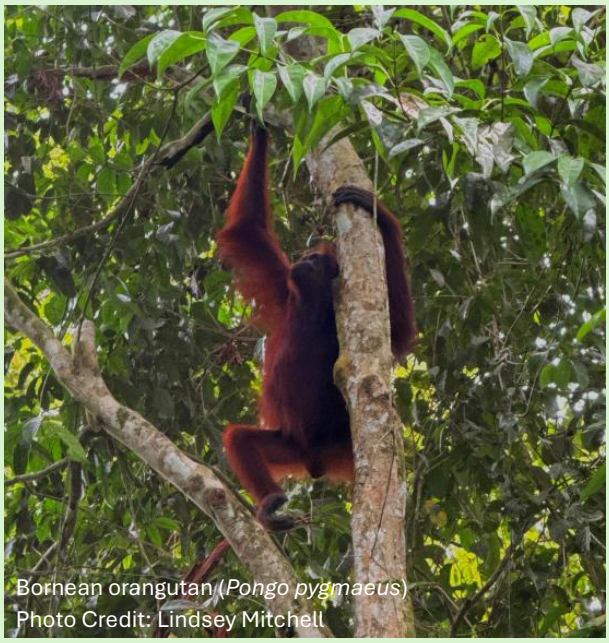
I knew I wanted to develop a larger project at the Danau Girang Field Centre, but this was not the film I expected to make. Palm oil is a double-edge sword and the line between conservation and development blurs more and more everyday. Nowhere is this more obvious than Borneo.” – Garret Ball.

You can find it on:

YouTube: (25) Palm Tree Toil: The Line Between Conservation and Development - YouTube

Substack: substack.com/@fourmore?r=77zzg2&utm_medium=ios&utm_source=profile

PTY POINT OF VIEW



Bornean orangutan (*Pongo pygmaeus*)
Photo Credit: Lindsey Mitchell



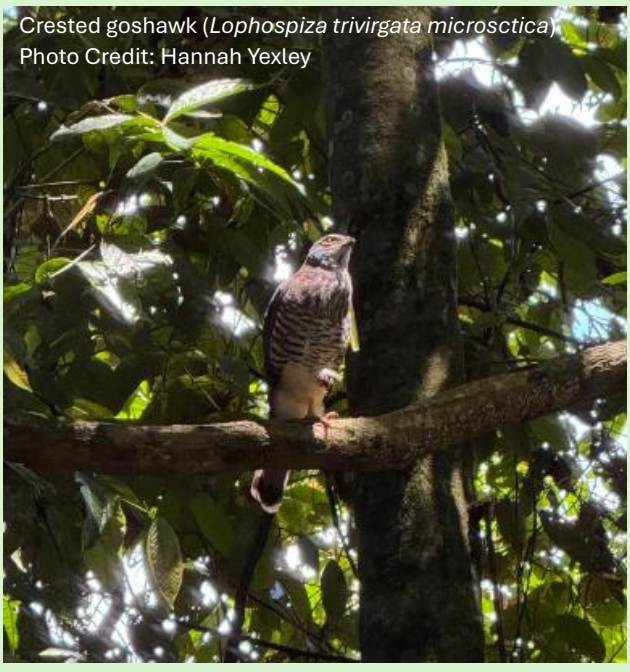
Rainbow over the jetty
Photo Credit: Ollie Hall



Napasi the Sunda pangolin (*Manis javanica*)
Photo Credit: Hannah Yexley



Psilocybe Sp growing on elephant dung
Photo Credit: Ollie Hall



Crested goshawk (*Lophospiza trivirgata microsctica*)
Photo Credit: Hannah Yexley



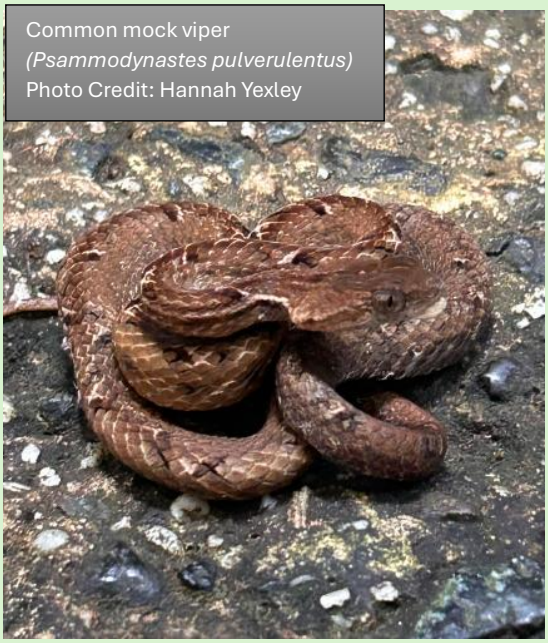
Bornean orangutan (*Pongo pygmaeus*)
Photo Credit: Drew Walker



Photo Credit: Ollie Hall



Bornean colugo *(Galeopterus borneanus)*
Photo Credit: Megan Rees



Common mock viper
(Psammodynastes pulverulentus)
Photo Credit: Hannah Yexley



Photo Credit: Ollie Hall



Borneo white-lipped frog (*Chalcorana raniceps*)
Photo Credit: Hannah Yexley



Gallerina sp
Photo Credit: Ollie Hall

enquiry@danaugirang.com.my

www.danaugirang.com.my

Director of Publication:

Benoit Goossens

Editor:

Hannah Yexley

Megan Rees

Ollie Hall