

JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

REPORT ON EXPEDITION/PROJECT

Expedition/Project Title: PROJECT BORNEO 2004

Travel Dates: 16th July – 16th September 2004

Location:

1. Setia Alam Research Station, Sebangau National Park.
2. Camp Leakey, Tanjung Puting National Park.
3. Cabang Panti Research Station, Gunung Palung National Park.

Group Member(s): Hugh Sturrock & Anna Lewis

Aims:

1. Investigating the possible presence of geographical variation in the Great Call of Bornean agile gibbons (*Hylobates agilis*).
2. Taking part in educational projects with at Palangkaraya High School as part of their environmental module.

OUTCOME (not less than 300 words):-

Adult agile gibbon pairs produce loud and complex duets, which are dominated by the female. Her song (the Great Call) is around 15 seconds long and can be heard at dawn. In 2 months of fieldwork, we recorded 345 Great Calls (95 from the Sebangau; 113 from Gunung Palung; 137 from Tanjung Puting). At the time of writing we have not yet completed statistical analysis of the recordings, so we cannot make conclusions as to the presence or absence of geographic variation. This will be included in our final report, which we plan to submit by 31st January 2005.

The expedition was a great success. We successfully obtained our LIPI permits in Jakarta, which means that our data could be published in the future if we see fit. There were no major logistical or medical problems during the project, and we had sufficient time and funding.

Through a teacher called Ibu Ristemati, we gave a series of lessons at Palangkaraya High School. The pupils ranged from 12 to 18 years old. We taught in a mixture of English and Indonesian as part of an environmental component of their English course. With aid of an overhead projector, we spoke about gibbons, our project, and about conservation issues faced in Kalimantan today, such as palm oil plantations, forest fires, mining activities and the illegal pet trade. The orangutan is a flagship species for conservation in Borneo, and we talked about different aspects of their life history and need for protection. We gave them all a handout with important take-home messages and an accurately scaled diagram of a male orangutan hand to compare their own with. We played them recordings of gibbons and other jungle fauna, such as red-leaf monkeys and cicadas. The lessons were concluded with a quiz for which winning teams and individuals were awarded sweets.

We wrote an article about the project for the Orangutan Foundation's monthly newsletter, which can be viewed at <http://www.orangutan.org/misc/print.php?id=114>. Our best recordings are going to be donated to the British Library of Sounds and Macaulay Library of Sounds (Cornell Lab of Ornithology). Also, starting 17th January 2005, we are having an exhibition of photographs taken during the expedition. It is going to take place in the Chaplaincy Centre, Edinburgh University. Information about current conservation issues will be presented alongside the photos to raise public awareness of Borneo's highly endangered flora and fauna.

Since completion of the project, the Sebangau Catchment has been given official 'National Park Status'. As an area with possibly the highest number of wild orangutans in the world and ongoing illegal logging, this news is an optimistic step forward for the forest and its wildlife.