

Rare Bay Cat spotted



Endangered: Photo image of the Bay Cat.

Endangered species recorded in Upper Baram logging concession

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KUCHING: The Bornean Bay Cat (*Pardofelis badia*), one of the rarest and most elusive cats in the world, has been recorded in the Sela'an Linau Forest Management Unit (FMU), a logging concession in Upper Baram, Sarawak.

In Sarawak, it had previously only been recorded in the Lanjak Entimau Wildlife Sanctuary, Pulong Tau National Park, and last year in the Anap Muput FMU.

The cat is classified as 'Endangered' on the IUCN (World Conservation Union) Red List of Threatened Species and is totally protected in Sarawak under the Wild Life Protection Ordinance 1998.

The Sela'an Linau FMU covers an area of approximately 56,000ha and lies in the interior of northern Sarawak, north of the upper Baram River.

Due to its close proximity to the Pulong Tau National Park and its location within the central spine of the greater "Heart of Borneo" initiative, the FMU is important for many of Borneo's highland species by providing a suitable habitat for dispersal, thereby ensuring the genetic exchange between the subdivided population.

Photo images of the cat were obtained by researchers from the Hose's Civet and Small Carnivore Project, Borneo (Hoscapp Borneo), a research-based conservation project under the Institute of Biodiversity and Environmental Conservation (IBEC), Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas).

Images of the species were obtained from two locations in the Murud Kecil mountain range in September and October this year.

This mountain range is set aside as a 'Protected Zone' by the logging concessionaire Samling for conservation purposes. However, it is not gazetted under the state government and thus has no legal protection.

IBEC director Professor Dr Andrew Alek Tuen said "the records of the Bay Cat highlight the Sela'an Linau FMU, particularly the Murud Kecil mountain range, as an important area for wildlife".

The FMU is one of the few places in Borneo that has four of the five wildcat species.

It also has the highest number of encounters of the rare Bornean endemic, the Hose's Civet

This is an excellent opportunity for all stakeholders to work together and show that we truly care about our environment and are able to manage Sarawak's forests sustainably for the conservation of its biodiversity.

— PROFESSOR DR ANDREW ALEK TUEN

(*Diplogale hosei*), one of the world's least known carnivores.

"The Hoscapp Borneo team has also recorded six different species of hornbills there and at least three species listed as 'Endangered' on the IUCN Red List: the Bay Cat, Bornean Gibbon (both endemic to Borneo) and the Pangolin. Other rare Bornean endemics recorded in the area include the Tufted Ground Squirrel and Bulwer's Pheasant. The Hoscapp Borneo team has released a video clip on YouTube of such footage from the wild, including rare footage of the Hose's Civet," Alek said.

"This is an excellent opportunity for all stakeholders to work together and show that we truly care about our environment and are able to manage Sarawak's forests sustainably for the conservation of its biodiversity."

He hoped that the state government would continue in its efforts to promote high standards and good timber harvesting practices in logging areas.

"With Unimas, Samling, Sarawak Forest Department and Sarawak Forestry Corporation working together with support from the public and corporate donors, we can make sustainable forest management a reality. If we all play our part, there is no reason why we cannot do this."

Hoscapp Borneo is funded by The Care-For-Nature Trust Fund (administered by HSBC Trustee (Singapore) Limited) and Ocean Park Conservation Foundation, Hong Kong while logistical support is provided by the Yaw Teck Seng Foundation.