

CAMERA TRAPPING OF WILDLIFE IN THE NEWLY ESTABLISHED BALEH NATIONAL PARK, SARAWAK

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Abstract: The persistence of biodiversity in the Bornean rainforest depends on its ability to adapt to anthropogenic exploitation. The remaining forests in Sarawak are fragmented and isolated and their ability to support large sized mammals is of great concern. In view of this, camera trapping survey was conducted in the recently gazetted Baleh National Park to record the richness, activity pattern and distribution of medium-to-large sized mammals. A total of 15 infrared camera traps were set within the park. We identified at least 27 species of mammals, 12 birds and two reptiles. From the total mammalian species detected, four were listed as “totally protected” and 15 as “protected” under the Sarawak Wild Life Protection Ordinance 1998. Additionally, under the IUCN 2018 Red List criteria, one species was identified as “critically endangered” (*Manis javanica*), one as “endangered” (*Catopuma badia*), seven as “vulnerable” and four as “near threatened”. This study had identified the occurrence and distribution of some rare, endangered and threatened species. The presence of these species can be used to identify core conservation sites within Baleh National Park.

Keywords: Birds, reptiles, mammals, *Manis javanica*, *Catopuma badia*.

Introduction

Species distribution and habitat needs are critical in planning wildlife conservation. The lack of information on the distribution of many Borneo species has impeded conservation efforts, especially for critical species. The terrestrial mammals of Borneo comprise some 288 species, which are dominated by 102 chiropteran and 61 rodent species (Payne *et al.*, 1985; Phillipps & Phillipps, 2016). Medium- to large-sized terrestrial mammals are generally charismatic and they are often used to promote tourism. But many of them are also of conservation concern (Leu *et al.*, 2011). Mammalian species respond differently to changes in their habitats and some may be very sensitive to environmental distress (Pires *et al.*, 2012). Since they are an important component of terrestrial ecosystems, a decrease in their population through hunting, and/or loss of habitats may affect other species, including humans.

Many existing protected areas in Sarawak, including Baleh National Park, has had some

history of logging and agriculture use, which leads to the growth of secondary forests and human settlements (Mohd-Azlan & Lawes, 2012). Gaveau *et al.* (2014) estimated that oil palm planting and logging were carried out on approximately 10 % (78,480 km²) of the Borneo landmass in 2010. The density of logging roads in Borneo is high (the highest was reported in Sarawak at 0.89 km per km²) compared to international standards. The primary logging road density in Central Africa is 16 times lesser than in Borneo (Laporte *et al.*, 2007; Gaveau *et al.*, 2014). Those roads have caused many protected areas in Sarawak to become fragmented and isolated. Yamada *et al.* (2014) had studied the impact of logging roads on dung beetles and small mammals in Temengor forest reserve in Perak, Malaysia. They observed that the construction of logging roads to a selective logging site in the forest would not only negatively affect the species' biodiversity, but also their ecological functions. (Laurance *et al.*, 2009).