

## Applying the HCVF toolkit to assess the conservation value of Gunung Singai, Sarawak, East Malaysia

Andrew Alek Tuen<sup>1\*</sup>, Alexander K. Sayok<sup>1</sup>, Indraneil Das<sup>1</sup>, Gabriel Tonga Noweg<sup>2</sup>, Charlie J. Laman<sup>2</sup> and Les Met<sup>3</sup>

### Abstract

The HCVF Toolkit for Malaysia was primarily developed to help forest managers comply with Principle 9 in both the Forest Stewardship Council and the Malaysian Criteria and Indicators for Forest Management Certification. These are standard adopted by the National Steering Committee for certification of natural forests in Malaysia. Here, we use it to assess the conservation value of Gunung Singai, an isolated mountain massif in western Sarawak. Based on Criteria HCV 1.2 (Threatened and Endangered Species), HCV1.3 (Endemism), HCV4.1 (Watershed Protection), HCV4.2 (Erosion Control), HCV5 (Basic Needs of Local Communities) and HCV6 (Cultural Identity of Local Communities) Gunung Singai is found to have high ecological and cultural values and warrant management and conservation.

### Introduction

Gunung Singai is a flat-top sandstone mountain, with a peak (01.30.37°N, 110.9.66°E) at 573 m above sea level. The mountain can be clearly seen by those who historically sailed up the Sarawak River towards Kuching, from the Satok Bridge, as well as from any high rise building in Kuching town. It is located about 30 km south-west of Kuching, and can now be reached by a tar-sealed road through Batu Kawa and then through the main Singai Road from Kampung Sudoh, or through a number of smaller roads that passes through Kampung Sinibung, Kampung Tanjong Poting, Kampung Atas. Alternatively, the mountain can be reached via Matang through Sungai Tengah, Kampung Sagah and Kampung Daun. The summit can be reached via a jungle trail, from Kampung Tanjong Bowang, that passes through the Catholic Memorial Pilgrimage Centre.

Gunung Singai was the ancestral home of the Singai Bidayuh (called Bisingai) with eight villages (Giang, Daun, Puot [Segong], Moti, Sajuong, Tuben, Saga and Somu [Atas]) located on the shoulder of the mountain (Nuek, 2002). In the 1970's, the Bisingai started to dismantle their longhouses and settle in their farmlands on the plains. Initially, five longhouses were built near the base of the mountain but now only three (Daun, Atas and Segong) are functional. From the original eight villages at Gunung Singai, there are now 12 villages in the lowland. The site of the old villages at Gunung Singai is now overgrown with

<sup>1</sup>Institute of Biodiversity and Environmental Conservation, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, 94300 Kota Samarahan, Sarawak, Malaysia

<sup>2</sup>Faculty of Resource Science and Technology, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, 94300 Kota Samarahan, Sarawak, Malaysia

<sup>3</sup>Association of Research and Development Movement of Singai, Sarawak (REDEEMS), Sarawak, Malaysia