Borneo, 2023: Sabah and Kalimantan

Aidan Place
Introduction

Borneo has been at the top of my list of most wanted travel destinations for a very long time. The list of incredible specialty birds is long and the chance to experience its legendary Sundaland birding has proven incredibly tempting. Having graduated from university the previous spring, and a gap between field jobs during the winter months, early 2023 seemed the perfect time to finally make my dream a reality. The status of Bulwer’s Pheasant shifting from near-cryptid to reliably gettable was another motivating factor on this trip as that species has been my most wanted world bird for some time. Combine the pheasant with the recent discoveries of Meratus Blue Flycatcher and White-eye as well as the rediscovery of Black-browed Babbler and there has maybe never been a better time to visit Borneo.

The trip came together as three weeks from January 12-30th, 2023. I would be accompanied by my father, Andrew Place, who is only a casual birder but does his own fair share of adventurous travel and was happy to be along for the ride. The island of Borneo is vast and split between three countries: Brunei, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Broadly speaking, the northern and western parts of the island are a part of Malaysia (split between the two states of Sabah and Sarawak) while the southern and eastern part of the island are a part of Indonesia (the province of Kalimantan). The first two weeks of the trip would be spent in the northernmost state in Malaysian Borneo: Sabah, focusing on (in addition to the Bulwer’s Pheasant on Gunung Trus Madi) the “classic” birding hotspots of Gunung Kinabalu, Sepilok, Sungai Kinabatangan, and Danum Valley. A third (somewhat rushed week) would be spent in Kalimantan visiting Gunung Besar and Serongga for the newly available specialty species there. In total 279 species were observed including 52 Bornean endemics.

Highlights

Black-browed Babbler, Everett’s Thrush, Meratus Blue Flycatcher, Whitehead’s Spiderhunter.

**Transport**

In Sabah, a car was rented with Hertz at the airport in Kota Kinabalu. While the roads between birding spots in Sabah are all paved and no driving through mud or on dirt would be necessary, the roads are incredibly badly rutted and potholed. As far as we could tell, this is the consequence of large trucks of palm oil and industrial equipment constantly moving along them without the Malaysian government investing much money for their upkeep or improvement. The bad conditions of the roads and the constant swerving around potholes made the driving much more tiring than it otherwise had business being.

In Kalimantan, rental car options were few and far between. In the end, we rented a car from TRAC rentals in Banjarmasin ($34/day). This turned out to be a bit of a headache. Attempting to book through the TRAC website required me to make an account and confirm my phone number. However, the confirmation message never arrived on my (US) SIM card. Eventually, after talking to the (very helpful) WhatsApp helpline (+62 813-9986-2575) I was pointed in the direction of the third party Southeast Asian travel app Traveloka. I was fairly easily able to book on there and I thought all was well. However, I received a confirmation WhatsApp from TRAC requiring a series of additional pieces of information including proof of employment, international drivers license, and a company email address. Getting them all the information needed to confirm the rental was a lengthy process with a series of seemingly endless steps. However, when we arrived in Banjarmasin the rental process itself was quite smooth. A TRAC employee was waiting outside baggage claim to meet us with the car, we inspected the car, signed the contract, and off we went. This was typical of our whole experience with TRAC: frustrating logistics to actually book a car, but very helpful staff to guide us through the process (a rarity at many rental car companies).

Flying between Sabah and Kalimantan was also a bit of a headache. While one might logically assume there would be direct flights from one end of Borneo to the other, this is, in fact, not the case. Once you're within Indonesia, it is straightforward to fly wherever in the archipelago you need to go. However, there don't seem to be many if any flights from
Malaysian Borneo to anywhere in Indonesia. Instead, we had to fly from Kota Kinabalu to Kuala Lumpur, then to Jakarta, and then, finally, to Banjarmasin. A whole day of travel in what could be a couple hour direct flight.

Language

English speaking was widespread in Sabah to the extent that I rarely had much reason to resort to Bahasa Malaya. However, one of the major differences from one side of the island to the other was the lack of English knowledge in Kalimantan– Even in Banjarmasin. At least some rudimentary Bahasa Indonesia is highly recommended for those traveling on the Indonesian half of the island. The large Chinese minority in Malaysian Borneo is prominent and Chinese-owned hotels and businesses are commonly encountered. I found occasion to use Mandarin almost as much as Malaysian while in Sabah.

Prior to the trip, Bahasa Indonesia was studied via Duolingo.

Weather

Temperatures ranged from pleasantly cool in the highlands to variable levels of swelteringly hot in the lowlands. January is officially the wet season in Borneo, but, to be honest, our birding was not hugely affected by this. Mostly the rain consisted of afternoon showers which, if anything, just made the heat a bit more bearable. At Sepilok, it never even rained at all. The only place where the weather negatively affected the birding was Mt. Kinabalu where extended periods of fog consistently made locating birds extremely difficult.

Literature

*The Philipps‘ Field Guide to the Birds of Borneo* (2014) was used in the field during the trip.

“A short survey of the Meratus Mountains, South Kalimantan province, Indonesia: two undescribed avian species discovered” (Eaton, 2016) is the paper from the expedition that discovered Meratus Blue Flycatcher and Meratus White-eye and was very valuable in planning my trip.
http://www.gunungbagging.com/besar/ has some other useful info on making ascents up Gunung Besar.

“No Longer an enigma: rediscovery of Black-browed Babbler Malacocinclaperspicillata in Kalimantan, Indonesia” (Akbar, et. al, 2021) is the paper describing the rediscovery of Black-browed Babbler outside Serongga, Kalimantan.

Trip planning was done via trip reports from cloudbirders.com. The most helpful are listed below:

“Sabah (Borneo)”: Alex Berryman, 2018
“Borneo”: Johann Buckens, 2017
“Sabah - Borneo”: Marten Hornsveld, 2018

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*Whitehead's Broadbill*
Taman Kinabalu-

**Logistics:** About two and a half days were spent birding on Mt. Kinabalu. This is the best spot in Sabah for a whole suite of montane specialties of the Central Highlands of Borneo. The primary targets here are the legendary “Whitehead’s Trio” (Trogon, Boradbill, and Spiderhunter) as well as Fruit-hunter, Everett’s Thrush, Mountain Serpent-Eagle, and Bare-headed Laughingthrush. Lodging was at Fairy Garden Resort ($38/night for two people) and J Residence ($30/night for two people). Both were perfectly lovely without much else to be said.

The general strategy for birding was to ascend the park road pre-dawn and start birding somewhere near the top before slowly working our way down and walking choice trails before arriving back at the headquarters in the early afternoon. After lunch we’d bird wherever we needed targets.

It should be noted that the road up the mountain was closed to all cars during our visit. We were informed that this is due to too much traffic making nature observation more difficult and because of people going up the road and drinking. This closure initially threw a wrench into our plans as we would have to walk up the road pre-dawn. However, after two days of this, the security guard watching the gate took pity on us and told us that we could ask the park ranger on duty for a permit to drive up the road. The rangers office was located at (6.005257, 116.543099) and we were able to obtain a permit easily. I'm not sure if this is a normal thing that the park is doing or not, but it is worth a try to avoid the extra walking.

The weather was a mixed bag. While it didn't rain a whole lot, heavy fog was a fixture every afternoon and one morning as well. While you could move around the mountain somewhat and get into areas where it was a bit less thick, its presence was unavoidable and it made picking through mixed flocks very challenging. Given how quickly conditions can change and how fickle the weather can be, take advantage of any periods of good weather you have for aerial species like Bornean Swiftlet (a species we dipped on due to the fog).
Birding: The first afternoon we had on the mountain was spent on the Bukit-Ular Trail. As other trip reports have noted, this trail remains officially closed. However, you can still access it from the southern end. The entrance is located at (6.024025,116.544147) and is very easy to miss. A Mountain Serpent-Eagle was seen perched in the thick fog (6.026483,116.544634) and a Bornean Forktail was flushed out of the gully at the bottom of the trail. Working back down the main road we had a Bornean Stubtail singing (6.019394,116.541117) and a Sunda Cuckooshrike (6.0198,116.537438).

I was very surprised that night in the parking lot of the lodging (Fairy Garden Resort) to hear a Sunda Frogmouth singing. While the first bird kept singing, a second bird was seen in the spotlight chasing a third individual. Quite a surprising sighting.

Predawn the next morning we hiked up to the Kiau Gap View to look for Everett's Thrush. On the way we had a number of Mountain Scops-Owls including one singing close at (6.018911,116.537475). However, playback wouldn't get it to budge. The strategy for the thrush is to slowly walk from the View to about (6.022953,116.545769) at first light and look for thrushes foraging along the roadsides and in the gullies. If you don't find any thrushes retrace your steps and then try again. That first morning two Orange-headed Thrushes and a single Everett's Thrush were found (6.023147,116.542518) as well as plenty of Bornean Whistling Thrushes and a Crimson-headed Partridge crossing the trail. The Everett's had only been seen incredibly briefly before disappearing into the undergrowth so it was left as better view badly desired.
A view of the Kinabalu Massif

From there, we birded up the road to Timpohon Gate seeing Bornean Shortwing (6.023043,116.545885) and hearing Mountain Barbet (6.02364,116.546323). The birding around the gate was excellent and from the platform (6.02948,116.547008) I heard a small group of four Pale-faced Bulbuls (officially split from Flavescent in the time between the trip and the publication of this report) which then flew close and gave extended views. Only minutes after that a Mountain Black-Eye landed right next to the platform.

Working back down the road, a Mountain Serpent-Eagle was heard (their call is diagnostic and seems to be a good way to find them) (6.027086,116.547864). Spectacularly, a Whitehead’s Broadbill (6.023984,116.546427) responded to playback and was seen well as it zipped back and forth across the road. Another Mountain Barbet was heard from the Kiau Gap View. A good mixed flock (6.019224,116.540995) had multiple Sunda Cuckooshrikes and then another Whitehead’s Broadbill popped up and gave incredible looks!
Walking the Kiau View Trail proved productive with a group of Mountain Wren-Babblers and a Whitehead's Trogon as part of a nice mixed flock (6.014964,116.535124). A Bornean Forktail was flushed at (6.012661,116.536522) and further down the trail a Whitehead's Spiderhunter was heard (6.011818,116.536636), although it was high up in the mist and could not be seen before it flew off. This would be the only one we had on Kinabalu which was incredibly disappointing. Regardless, the Whitehead's Trio had been swept.

Despite the persistent fog, we started the third morning up at the Everett’s Thrush spot again (this time having driven up). Predawn, a Whitehead's Broadbill was heard calling about halfway up the road. The thrushes were much more accommodating this time with two Everett’s Thrushes giving great views along the roadside (6.024012,116.543795). The Pale-faced Bulbuls were seen again at Timpohon Gate as were a few Sunda Laughingthrushes mixed into a flock of Chestnut-hooded Laughingthrushes. Right at the top of the Silau-Silau Trail I had a Black-and-crimson Oriole (6.0184,116.536947). The first couple hundred metres from the top of the trail are supposed to be a good area for the Whitehead’s Trio and a pair of Whitehead’s Trogon were found at (6.017782,116.537341). A Crimson-headed Partridge (6.010945,116.542112) and Black-sided Flowerpecker (6.009551,116.542123) were seen on the network of trails connecting Silau-Silau to the restaurant area. A mixed flock (6.010078,116.536942) on the Kiau View Trail included a Bornean Leafbird.
In the mid-afternoon we started the drive towards Sepilok. However, we stopped at the Zen Garden Resort in Kundasang \((5.970451,116.575143)\) which is known to be a good spot for Pygmy White-eye. At the front desk we were quickly granted permission to bird the grounds (they seemed used to people asking), and after a bit of searching, a flock of 12 Pygmy White-eyes were located \((5.969738,116.575372)\).

**Gunung Trus Madi**

**Logistics:** Gunung Trus Madi is the second tallest mountain in Malaysia (after Kinabalu) and is home to some excellent birding. Largely off the radar for foreign birders, it has entered the limelight since the pandemic due to a number of Bulwer's Pheasants that are now coming into a blind outside the Trus Madi Entomology Camp. This is the result of the hard work of Calvin Ng, a bird guide and photographer from Kota Kinabalu who invested a huge number of hours over the course of the pandemic shut down into locating the Pheasants and encouraging them to come in for cracked corn. It’s a stunning achievement and a
testament to the innovation of the local birding community in Sabah. In addition to the Pheasants, Calvin has Great Argus, Bornean Banded Pitta, Crested Partridge, Dayak Blue Flycatcher, Short-tailed Babbler, and more coming in for some combination of mealworms and corn.

The area around the Trus Madi Entomology Camp is hill forest which seemed to me to be in pretty good condition. It holds a number of species that aren't present at Taman Kinabalu and that typically people would bird the Crocker Range and the Rafflesia Information Center for (namely Bornean Bulbul and Bornean Barbet).

Lodging is at the Trus Madi Entomology Camp which is a lovely and comfortable research station atop a ridge. The owner prepares excellent Chinese food for meals and a number of moth sheets are fantastic entertainment at night.

To access the Pheasant blind, you need to get in contact with Calvin (whom I contacted via Facebook). He charges $400/day (for 2 people) for guiding which is extremely expensive, but in my opinion justified given the calibre of this bird and the effort Calvin expended in creating this situation. The previous night we stayed at OYO Hilltop Hotel in Kota Kinabalu ($24.50/night) per Calvin's suggestion as he seems to have a deal with them for people to be able to leave their cars in the parking lot. We met Calvin there at 0600 and left in his Toyota Land Cruiser for Trus Madi. The drive was about three hours and some sections would not be doable without a fairly serious off-road vehicle (such as a Land Cruiser which, I think we can all agree, is the best car ever made). On the drive, we passed a Red-breasted Partridge on the roadside at (5.819958,116.337512).

**Birding:** Arriving in the late morning, we first went to the Calvin's secondary blind to try for the Banded Pitta and Crested Partridge. Both Bornean Banded Pitta and Crested Partridge were heard close, but stubbornly refused to come in. Short-tailed Babbler and White-crowned Shama came in for mealworms and (very exciting for me) a Helmeted Hornbill was heard calling in the distance.

That afternoon was the first stint in the Bulwer's blind. A female Great Argus came in briefly and great views of a Dayak Blue Flycatcher were had. A Mountain Barbet was heard as was Bornean Banded Pitta and a Rhinoceros Hornbill foraging in the fig tree above the blind. However, no Pheasant made an appearance. That evening an attempt was
made for Barred Eagle-Owl which often comes into the moth sheets near the camp at night. However, the wind was heavy and no owls were to be found.

We left the camp pre-dawn the next morning to return to the Bulwer’s blind. Three Large-tailed Nightjars were seen hunting around the moth sheets or flushed off the road and a flock of fifteen Eyebrowed Thrushes zipped over the ridge. At the blind, most of the birds from the previous day were seen or heard again (with the exception of the Argus). The morning stretched on with me getting increasingly anxious about the Pheasant. Just as I was starting to lose hope, a male Bulwer’s Pheasant stepped into the clearing in front of the blind. It wandered around eating corn for about ten minutes before vanishing again. An absolutely incredible experience. My hands were shaking almost too badly to hold the camera steady as this striking bird wandered around in front of us. Probably the greatest moment with a bird I’ve ever had– absolutely world class. Another Helmeted Hornbill was heard from the blind as well.
Main target out of the way, we returned to the camp where a couple hours of wandering around and birding produced **Bornean Spiderhunter**, **Bornean Bulbul**, **Black-sided Flowerpecker**, and **Greater Green Leafbird**. Two **Changeable Hawk-Eagles** were seen calling and circling above the ridge.

**Sepilok**

**Logistics:** The Rainforest Discovery Center on the edge of the Kabili-Sepilok Forest Reserve is a good first taste of Sundan lowland rainforest birding. The area is relatively small with well-maintained trails which makes for good practice before the intensity of a place like Danum. The main attraction, however, is the excellent series of canopy towers and walkways throughout the park. My basic strategy each day was to sit at a tower for a couple hours at dawn (usually the Hornbill Tower), then bird the rest of the walkway, bird some trails, and then return to the walkways in the evening.

Lodging was at the Sepilok B&B ($37/night for a private room) which provides a series of rooms or dorms just three minutes from the park entrance.

**Birding:** I started the first morning up on top of the Hornbill Tower (5.872034,117.943296) which is a good spot in the morning for one of my top targets at Sepilok: the monotypic Bornean Bristlehead. **Rhinoceros** and **Black Hornbills** were seen from the tower, as were two **Buff-rumped Woodpeckers**, a **White-bellied Woodpecker**, and a **Ruby-cheeked Sunbird**. A pair of **Wallace's Hawk-Eagles** were seen as well (they had recently been nesting near the walkways, but the nest seemed inactive during my time at Sepilok).
Around 0800, the distinctive call of a **Bornean Bristlehead** was heard and soon a flock of four were giving excellent views in the canopy all around the tower. Walking along the rest of the walkway produced **Maroon** and **Grey-and-buff Woodpeckers** (the later were, surprisingly, the only ones of the trip). At the far northern end of the walkway, I had close views of one of the **Wallace’s Hawk-Eagles** eating some unidentified prey.

![Bornean Bristlehead](image)

**Bornean Bristlehead**

I next birded some of the trails around the park, specifically sections of Pitta Path, Mousedeer Crossing, and Tarsier Crossing (the later Crossing especially had been mentioned as a good area in trip reports). The first **Red-naped Trogon** of the trip was at **(5.870672,117.940281)** and a **White-crowned Forktail** (the more widespread Sundan lowland species from which the highland-dwelling Bornean Forktail was split from this year) was flushed on Mousedeer Crossing **(5.871645,117.939989)**. A surprise **Tiger Shrike** was repeatedly seen in a brushy clearing of Tarsier Crossing **(5.873878,117.941152)**. My first **Rufous Piculet** was in the same spot.
At night I walked some of the same trails again and had a **Barred Eagle-Owl** from Pitta Path (5.875495,117.941444) and a close **Reddish Scops-Owl** calling along the Tarsier Crossing (5.87296,117.940668).

From Hornbill Tower the next morning I had an **Oriental Honey-Buzzard** and from the canopy walkway I had great views of a **White-bellied Woodpecker** (5.873724, 117.942446). The trails managed to net me **Rufous-collared Kingfisher** (5.874045,117.939534). This is a good bird to get at Sepilok where they are typically quite easy as compared to other hill and lowland areas in Sabah where they can be somewhat scarce.

After lunch I birded the area around the RDC parking lot, mostly looking for Sunbirds at the flowering trees. There I had **Brush Cuckoo**, a flyover **Violet Cuckoo**, and **Brown-throated, Ornate**, and (after a bit of waiting), **van Hasselt’s Sunbirds**.

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**Sungai Kinabatangan-**

**Logistics:** Birding the narrow corridor of forest along the Kinabatangan River by boat is an absolute must on a trip to Sabah. Not only does the openness of the river allow for excellent views of Raptors and Hornbills (including White-crested), but it is an excellent spot for Kingfishers as well as the endangered Storm’s Stork. There is also excellent night birding for Buffy Fish-Owl, Oriental Bay Owl, and Large Frogmouth. And, of course, this is by far the best spot for Bornean Ground-Cuckoo with a number of known territories along the river and its tributaries.

The Kinabatangan is one of the most popular areas for ecotourism in Sabah and consequently there are a series of lodges along the river near Sukau. To my understanding however, these are quite pricey. Instead, I stayed at Osman’s Homestay ($26/night including food). This was arranged by contacting Osman’s wife, Yanti, on WhatsApp (+60 19-841 5259). She seems to be the one who mostly runs the place.

There are two guides in the area who know how to get the Ground-Cuckoo: Romzi Wang and Robert Chong. Romzi (WhatsApp: +60 11-3152 1176) is Yanti’s brother which
makes hiring him while staying at Osman's quite convenient. Because all the birding is done by boat, hiring a guide is necessary at this spot. Osman's has to be reached by boat from the Lepit Jetty in the town of Sukau (5.50790,118.28165). Romzi offered to pick us up, and it was 10 minutes or so to the Homestay.

**Birding:** We arrived in the evening from Sepilok just in time to see Osman release a Bushy-crested Hornbill that had apparently been stunned in a fight with an Oriental Pied and that he had been keeping in a box in a dark place until it recovered. Sabah Partridge was heard across the river from the homestay as well.

That evening we went out with Romzi to look for night birds. In particular, we went to the Silau Tenangang– a tributary of the Kinabatangan– where Romzi knows some spots for the Bay Owl. On the way there we had decent views of a Buffy Fish-Owl along the main arm of the Kinabatangan. At the first Bay Owl spot we reached, we quickly had two birds start calling back and forth. Beaching the boat and continuing on foot, Romzi was easily able to locate one of the Oriental Bay Owls which sat for great views (and was also my 2000th life bird!). On our way back downstream we heard another bird singing. Back at Romzi's, we heard a Large Frogmouth that hangs out behind the homestay. However, we were unable to get it to come in to tape. It would continue to sing off and on throughout the night.
The next morning, we headed to another tributary of the Kinabatangan: the Menanggol River. A number of good birds were had over the course of the morning including a flyover Storm’s Stork, great looks at Sabah Partridge, Scarlet-rumped Trogon, Blue-eared Kingfisher, Stork-billed Kingfisher, Puff-backed Bulbul, and Malaysian Blue Flycatcher. At the farthest point we went down the tributary, we had incredible views of four Great Slaty Woodpeckers calling and displaying while flying back and forth across the river. Getting such incredible views of the world’s largest extant woodpecker would end up as a trip highlight for me. Unfortunately, no Ground-Cuckoos were heard despite using playback at known territories. Back on the main river, two soaring Lesser Adjutants were seen briefly.

After lunch, we attempted to go to the Gomontong Caves– a famous spot to watch echolocating swifts go to roost as they get predated upon by large numbers of raptors. However, Romzi was not sure if the caves were open, as there had been ongoing construction on a bridge at the site. We arrived, and sure enough, the site was not presently accessible. The construction workers present were unsure when it would reopen. A little disappointed, we returned to the river where we went birding down the main stem, downstream of Sukau. We quickly located a White-crowned Hornbill which gave great views along the riverside. A Crested Goshawk was further downstream. Heading back, a couple of Bat Hawks zipped through the trees and at dusk a Buffy Fish-Owl was seen at the bend in the river just upstream from Sukau. At Osman’s we were finally able to tape in the Large Frogmouth which gave great views.

Large Frogmouth and White-crested Hornbill
The following day was all in for Ground-Cuckoo. Before we left the homestay, I heard a **Bornean Bristlehead** calling from the opposite side of the river. We first tried an oxbow lake connected by a small passage to the main river. This is a well-known spot for the Cuckoos and is mentioned in a number of other trip reports. At one territory a **Bornean Ground-Cuckoo** was heard distantly and came in slowly, but suddenly went silent on the backside of a small hill out of sight. Disembarking from the boat and trying to track it down on foot was (unsurprisingly) a failure. The Cuckoos are incredibly skittish and will flee as soon as they detect your presence. Walking seems like it only should be attempted as a last resort. Two **Jerdon’s Baza** and a **Crested Goshawk** were consolation at the oxbow.

We headed back out to the main river where we had three **Storm’s Stork** soaring low over the trees. Heading up the Tenangang River, we got a response from a Ground-Cuckoo on the left bank of the tributary. As we tried to get it to make an appearance, two more **Bornean Ground-Cuckoos** started calling from the right bank! Switching sides, we were finally able to get good looks through the vegetation at one of these monster Cuckoos as it called. An incredible experience with one of the best birds on an island of incredible birds.

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**Danum Valley Field Centre**

**Logistics:** Danum Valley is the crown jewel of Sabah. One of the largest protected areas in Borneo with some significant chunks of old growth, it is an essential stop for birders visiting the region. We stayed at Danum Valley Field Centre (DVFC), which primarily exists as
accommodations and facilities for researchers. However, they also have fairly extensive infrastructure for visiting tourists. Traditionally this has existed as a great alternative to the hyper-expensive Borneo Rainforest Lodge. However, the situation seems to have changed somewhat since the pandemic and DVFC has gotten significantly more expensive– it has essentially doubled in cost. There are two options for lodging at DVFC: the hostel and a private room. Because I was traveling with my father, we opted for a private room. It was very comfortable and was outfitted with a fan. For a room I was quoted for 4 days, 3 nights at 2,085 Malaysian Ringgit ($447.62) per person. For a hostel during the same time period I was quoted 1,950 Malaysian Ringgit ($418.63) per person. Since we opted to stay for five nights, the price breakdown we were given was 3,710 Malaysian Ringgit ($796.48) per person. These are pretty exorbitant prices and, while pandemic difficulty is likely the reason for the increase, it is a disappointment nonetheless as this used to be an effective budget option for birders to access the incredible Danum Valley.

In addition, when we checked in for the bus to DVFC at their office in Lahad Datu, we were automatically assigned a “guide” for the duration of our stay. Upon arrival, the guide, Jeffrey, told us that he was required to accompany us at all times on trails (the entrance road is fine though). This would have been perfectly fine if it weren’t for the fact that Jeffrey was also assigned to another group of (nonbirding) visitors simultaneously! As far as I can tell, this is a significant aberration from how it used to be. While there’s a number of references in older trip reports to the rule about not being on trails unattended (which people seem to largely ignore without issue), I cannot find other references to people being assigned a guide to enforce said rule. When we enquired to Jeffrey about it, he said that at some point a tourist had gotten lost on a trail and DVFC has been strict about the rules since.

We followed the procedure on the first day, going on a general nature hike with the other group of tourists on the Waterfall Trail. Our hope was that Jeffrey, seeing that we weren’t just incompetent tourists, but instead have a lot of experience out in the field and in the tropics, would make him okay with us hiking some trails solo. This worked pretty well and the following morning he was alright with us walking the Waterfall Trail again by ourselves. After that second day, the other group of visitors’ trip was over and we had Jeffrey’s full attention. He was perfectly happy to accompany us out birding, and frankly, although not a birder himself, was an excellent guide with a lot of knowledge of the area.
and perfectly accommodating of all the whims of birders anxious about their target list. A really good guy whose company I greatly enjoyed. However, he was reluctant to go out in the rain (even light rain) due to falling tree limbs which did cut down on our birding time somewhat. Between that and the first day being largely a wash, we definitely missed a couple species from the whole situation. Given our experience, for birders visiting in the future it is worth checking with the office in Lahad Datu about any trail regulations prior to making reservations. At the very least, when booking, specify that you are a birder and if a guide is required while on trails that you will not be able to share a guide with other groups of visitors due to the specialized nature of your visit.

Despite these difficulties and the significant price increase, DVFC still remains the cheapest way to visit Danum Valley as far as I can tell. With Danum being so expensive now, perhaps Tabin, Maliau Basin, or Deramakot will eclipse it as go-to spots for birders looking to travel on a budget. However, for the time being, Danum remains an incredible birding destination and (despite the cost) an important location for a visiting birder in Sabah. A first trip to Borneo would simply be incomplete without it.

A lot of previous trip reports note having difficulty making reservations at DVFC, but I found this to be relatively straightforward. I reached out initially to one of their office employees Suzan (never got a last name) (WhatsApp: +60 13-884 6968), but she went on vacation part way through the booking process and I was transferred to her colleague, Siti Haslina Badaron (WhatsApp: +60 17-993 2492). Making reservations over WhatsApp was easy and I would reach out to either of the above.

Danum is only accessible by prescheduled bus (cheaper) or private transfer (more expensive). For us, the bus left at 1500 from the DVFC office in Lahad Datu (5.02957, 118.326109). The return was at 1030, although it seems you can request an earlier time depending on how many people are returning to Lahad Datu that day.

**Birding:** There are five main areas to bird at Danum: the (Tembaling) Waterfall Trail, the research grid, the entrance road, the field centre grounds, and the East Trail. Of the trails, we had by far the most success on the Waterfall Trail which is also the best spot for the sought-after Blue-banded Pitta. Our typical strategy was to start on one of the trails in the morning and then spend the afternoon on the entrance road, around the grounds, or looking for a specific target on a trail closer to the centre.
The first morning was a late start up the Waterfall Trail due to the aforementioned guide requirements. However, we had been told that there was a fruiting fig tree immediately behind the accommodation (4.962744,117.804805) and so I spent the time around dawn sitting to see what would come in. In addition to a number of mammals (including Bornean Orang-utans!), I had a large flock of Thick-billed Green-Pigeon as well as a smaller number of Large Green-Pigeon. A Bornean Crested Fireback wandered by which is a common site around the centre grounds, especially in the early morning. Surprisingly, I also sighted an immature Nankeen Night-Heron which would hang around the centre for the duration of our stay.

Birding along the Waterfall Trail was a mixed bag that morning as a result of having to go at a regular hiking pace as opposed to a birding one. However, a few good things were had. On the Nature Trail Extension at the bottom, there was a Scarlet-rumped Trogon (4.959919,117.79895) and Diard's Trogon (4.959377,117.800433). On the Waterfall Trail itself, a Bornean Wren-Babbler was heard at the junction with the Nature Trail Extension (4.953217,117.805935). Just a bit farther down the trail a Bornean Blue Flycatcher was taped in and showed incredibly well (4.952412,117.806016) with a Short-toed Coucal heard at the same spot (Short-toed Coucal was heard in this general area on most occasions that we hiked the Waterfall Trail). Down at the waterfall itself, there was a Chestnut-naped Forktail (4.941837,117.808525). On the return hike, Black-crowned Pitta (4.954011,117.806495), Striped Wren-Babbler (4.959152,117.803941), and Rufous-tailed Shama (4.960145,117.802892) were heard.

While eating lunch, a Bornean Spiderhunter zipped in to feed on some flowers (4.96265,117.80283). This traplining species would make occasional appearances at that patch throughout the week.

In the afternoon I walked down the entrance road. It was a bit slow, but I had a Large Woodshrike at (4.968891,117.805683) and two Great Slaty Woodpeckers at the old rhino enclosure (4.969017,117.813139).

At night we went on a night walk along the East Trail with Jeffrey that resulted in a calling Brown Wood-Owl and roosting Rufous-backed Dwarf-Kingfisher and Striped Wren-Babbler.
The next day we started up the Waterfall Trail again, at dawn this time. Early on we heard a Blue-headed Pitta at (4.959047, 117.804144) and then got great looks at one walking along the side of the trail (4.95767, 117.806037). A Green Broadbill was heard downslope at (4.957106, 117.806333)– one of the great sounds of the Asian Tropics! Most exciting however was two Bornean Ground-Cuckoos that started booming on the left side of the trail (4.95646, 117.806656). I expected to have no chance of seeing them, but as I very quietly approached where they had called from, I got a brief but incredible look at one crossing the trail! A bit of playback induced them both to start energetically calling again and I was able to position myself to have both visible at the same time (although obscured by vegetation)– one on either side of the trail. After how much trouble I’d had with this species on the Kinabatangan I was taken aback by how easily and well I’d now seen them at Danum, a place where I had been assured by many people it would be very difficult tracking them down.

At (4.945272, 117.811209) I heard and then saw a Rufous-collared Kingfisher, another surprise as this species is markedly less common at Danum than at Sepilok. Soon we reached the best part of the trail for Blue-banded Pitta (4.94415, 117.811027). This is the section of the trail right before it begins to descend towards Tembeling Waterfall and has been the best stake-out for this species for some years. After about 30 minutes of waiting and sporadic playback, a Blue-banded Pitta responded from downslope to the left of the trail (as you face the waterfall). The slope drops off steeply here forming a deep bowl with fairly wide visibility. Despite this, I could not see the bird and, after seeming to be moving closer for a while, it stopped responding and was not heard from again. Discouraged, I headed back down the trail. On the return, I heard a close Black-crowned Pitta which I went off trail to look for (this species didn’t seem to move much in response to playback) and eventually located (4.958745, 117.804521). A Rufous-tailed Shama was heard at (4.956019, 117.80674) and the only Grey-chested Jungle Flycatcher of the trip was seen.
The afternoon saw me searching the grounds around the HQ, lodging, and hostel for White-fronted Falconet without success. I also explored the East Trail without much of note.

The following morning it was raining so Jeffrey was unwilling to take us out on any trails or let us go on any by ourselves. Somewhat frustrated, I was reduced to birding the entrance road. I finally managed to track down a Hooded Pitta at the rhino enclosure (4.969017,117.813139) and also found Spectacled Spiderhunter, Black Eagle, and two Rufous-backed Dwarf-Kingfishers.

During an afternoon break in the rain, we talked Jeffrey into exploring the grid system for Black-throated Wren-Babblers. On the way, we stopped at a tall, dead snag visible at (4.964664,117.803348) (although the snag is physically located to the east of here in a clearing with some research buildings) where there were two White-fronted Falconets sitting! According to Jeffrey this is a favoured spot of this species.
No Wren-Babblers were to be found on the grid and it soon started raining again, forcing us to retreat.

That evening, a night drive along the entrance road (mostly for mammals) yielded roosting Great Argus and a Brown Boobook.

The following morning saw one last pre-dawn attack on the Waterfall Trail, this time booking it almost non-stop to the Blue-banded Pitta spot. However, just as last time, the Bornean Ground-Cuckoos had other plans. One was calling low down on the trail (below the intersection with Riverine Trail) and then two more were calling (quite possibly/probably the same two as the other day) at (4.953744,117.806384). Once again, I was able to get great looks at the two birds, this time together calling just off the trail. It was then that I realized I had left my camera battery charging back at the lodging! Poor digibins would be all I’d come away from this incredible encounter with.

A Blue-headed Pitta was heard further up (4.951684,117.805926). When I reached the Blue-banded Pitta spot I settled in quietly to wait—sporadically using playback to entice a response. While I was waiting I heard both Great Slaty Woodpecker (distantly) and Helmeted Hornbill (very distantly, its crescendo echoing off the hills). After about an hour I had almost entirely given up hope (and gotten tired of flicking away leeches), when
suddenly a **Blue-banded Pitta** materialized silently below me (in the same bowl it’d been calling from the other day). It hopped around the bowl foraging for about five minutes before vanishing again. Spectacular!

![Two Terrible Digibins of Two Incredible Birds: Bornean Ground-Cuckoo and Blue-banded Pitta](image)

The return down the trail produced a **Black-throated Wren-Babbler** (finally!) **(4.948855,117.8087)**, **Sunda Scimitar-Babbler**, **Crimson-winged Woodpecker**, two **Maroon-breasted Philentoma**, and more calling **Blue-headed Pittas** at **(4.949508,117.808061)** and **(4.95874,117.804715)**. There was a **Bornean Crested Fireback** at the bottom of the trail, just before the bridge.

That afternoon, I searched the East Trail for Giant Pitta without success, although I did hear another **Black-throated Wren-Babbler**. Another night drive that evening turned up a roosting **Bornean Crested Fireback**.

The following morning I searched again for Giant Pitta on the East Trail. I had no sign of these hulking **Hydrornis** and I eventually had to return to the lodging to pack for our scheduled bus departure from the incomparable Danum Valley.

**Gunung Besar-**

**Logistics:** In 2016, an expedition up Gunung Besar in Kalimantan's isolated Meratus Mountains turned up an undiscovered White-eye and Blue Flycatcher. I had been eyeing up these species for a while and the Clement's Checklist (and therefore eBird) recognizing them in the fall of 2022 cemented it for me. I got in contact with Simon Mitchell (one of the
members of the original expedition) who provided me with the name of a local contact– Pak Amat– who organizes trekking up Gunung Besar and would be able to guide me. I was told to ask around for him in the town of Loksado at the base of the mountain. However, while flipping through the Lonely Planet Guide to Indonesia while on the plane to Banjarmasin, I was surprised to find Pak Amat’s WhatsApp listed (+62 813-4876-6573). Unfortunately, when I messaged him, he responded that he is sick (“keadaan sakit”), has been for three years, and is no longer guiding. He gave me the WhatsApp of another local guide, Paman Yansyah (+62 812-5814-4949), whom he suggested might be able to help me. However, in the short time before I intended to make my ascent, I did not get a response. I messaged back Pak Amat that I was thinking of going up the mountain solo and he responded that that should be fine.

![View of Gunung Besar from Kadayang](image)

We drove from Banjarmasin to Loksado in the morning, arriving around midday. In Loksado, I was pointed in the direction of the town ojek stand (-2.795097,115.494163) where I was able to hire bikes to take us up to the tiny, off-the-grid hamlet of Kadayang (-2.747,115.555) where the trail up the mountain starts. I got the contact of Harun, one of
our ojek drivers (+62 831-5252-3323), who is maybe worth contacting in the unlikely case you have trouble finding a bike. The trip up to Kadayang took about 45 minutes and was mostly easy-going with the exception of a number of steep inclines. The plan was to hike up the mountain, camp overnight at the same spot as the original expedition had (a pin for the campsite was obtained from the paper), get the birds in the morning, and then descend to meet our ojek drivers at around 1200. All straightforward in theory. However, while we'd been informed that the trail was pretty easy to follow, what we encountered in practice was a series of branching trails with little to show which was the correct one. We attempted to keep a heading towards the camp and stay on what seemed the biggest and most obvious trail. The trail we were on soon became exceptionally steep– largely an upwards mud scramble with tiny footholds and a log chute carved into the side. We started to doubt we were on the right trail but saw little alternative other than to keep going. It was incredibly slow and labourious, but we eventually reached a ridgeline just before nightfall (and in the pouring rain). As the expedition paper described camping along a ridgeline that you reach on the trail, we figured we were in the right area and decided to set up camp before continuing along the ridge to find the actual campsite the next day. Our campsite was at (-2.722406,115.559135). However, the following morning as we continued down the ridge, the trail began to split dramatically and each branch quickly ended at a different small, make-shift logging camp. This was when it became very clear to us that somewhere along the line we had taken a wrong turn and had ended up on the wrong ridgeline. We birded around the forest on the ridge before the need to meet our ojek drivers forced a descent. The whole thing was a frustrating and challenging ordeal, but a very memorable misadventure none-the-less.

The gist of all of this is: it’s probably best to go up Gunung Besar with local guides/porters. It’s not clear to me whether the branching trails have always been there or are a product of increased small-scale logging during the pandemic, but either way, we found it much more difficult to navigate than expected. I suggest contacting Paman Yansyah (or Pak Amat as he may have recovered from his illness) to organize a trip up. You may also be able to ask around in Loksado for a guide, but be warned that almost no English is spoken in this part of Indonesia.
**Birding:** The first part of the hike is through disturbed, semi-plantation secondary growth seemingly replanted from logging. It was only about \( \frac{2}{3} \) of the way up that we encountered unlogged forest. However, we did find a **Little Cuckoo-Dove** during the ascent.

The ridgeline we camped on was seemingly in fairly decent condition and was pretty good birding. However, as the trail(s) quickly petered out, there was only a limited stretch to walk. We finally found a **Meratus Blue Flycatcher** singing at \((-2.721809, 115.562863\)) and a mixed flock held the endemic subspecies (and potential split) of “**Meratus**” Penan Bulbul. The biggest surprise of the morning was a singing **Malaysian Rail-Babbler** just before our camp \((-2.723493, 115.557816\))! Our camp was at ~900m and the ridge never ascended above ~950m. I suspect our failure to find Meratus White-eye was simply a result of being too low.

![The Author, his Father, and Harun Following a Grim 24 Hours on Gunung Besar](image)
Serongga-

**Logistics:** In 2020, Muhammad Suranto and Muhammad Rizky Fauzan, two bird catchers from Serongga, Kalimantan rediscovered the Black-browed Babbler, a species first described in 1850 and not known to formal science since. This bird represented one of the most stunning bird rediscoveries in recent memory, and I couldn't pass up the opportunity to see it.

To see the bird, I contacted Panji Gusti Akbar, the Jakarta-based ornithologist and first author on the paper of the bird’s rediscovery, who put me in touch with Muhammad Suranto (+62 831-4243-5584) who in turn directed me to his brother Slamet (+62 858-2026-9301). Slamet was available to show us the bird (I failed to write down exactly how much we paid per day but it was somewhere in the $50-100 range).

We stayed at the Hotel Libra in Serongga which was cheap and comfortable. It is also within walking distance of a number of restaurants in the center of town.

**Birding:** On the first morning, Slamet met us on an ojek at our hotel and we followed him to where the Babblers are. We parked and followed Slamet into the Babbler’s habitat. He and his brother Suranto know a number of stake-out territories for the bird (they are apparently quite common!) which all require less than five minutes of walking into the forest– luxurious compared to the previous day’s experience on Gunung Besar. A number of Wreathed Hornbills were calling and seen flying by. No sign of the Babbler at the first territory, but one responded to playback at the second, although it stubbornly refused to show itself. We finally got excellent looks at a Black-browed Babbler at the third territory we tried! It was absolutely incredible to be looking at a bird that had been lost to science for 170 years– a once in a lifetime experience. Not having known much about what the spot was going to be like in advance, I had feared it would be a logistical nightmare. I was pleasantly surprised by how relaxed and easy the whole thing was! We departed the forest in advance of an afternoon thunderstorm and stopped at Slamet’s house for coffee where we met Suranto and both their families.
Not knowing how easy the Babbler would be, I had given two days to look for the bird. We returned to Slamet's house the next morning where we accompanied him and Suranto to go enjoy more views of this rare species. We saw two more individuals, getting even better looks (and recordings!) that day. A perfect way to end an incredible trip to Borneo!

Huge thanks are due to Suranto and Slamet, Suranto's wife Yuni, and the rest of their family for their hospitality and for their services guiding us to these birds. I hope that they are able to make a good bit of money showing people these birds and that the forest the Babbler is living in is preserved.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Phil Chaon, Panji Gusti Akbar, Pak Amat, and Simon Mitchell for their help in planning this trip. Thanks to Romzi Wang, Calvin Ng, Muhammad Slamet, and Muhammad Suranto for their guiding services and knowledge of the local birdlife.
Species List

**Crested Partridge:** 1 heard from blind at Trus Madi.

**Red-breasted Partridge:** 3 at Mt. Kinabalu, 1 on road while passing through Crocker Range.

**Bulwer’s Pheasant:** 1 from blind at Trus Madi.

**Bornean Crested Fireback:** 1 seen around the grounds of DVFC.

**Great Argus:** 1 seen at Trus Madi blind, 2 seen at DVFC (one a roosting bird at night), frequently heard calling at Danum.

**Sabah Partridge:** A split this year from Chesnut-necklaced Partridge. 4 at Kinabatangan, 2 at DVFC.

**Crimson-headed Partridge:** Heard frequently at Kinabalu, 2 seen crossing the road or a trail.

**Rock Pigeon:** Seen in Kota Kinabalu and along the roadside in Kalimantan.

**Spotted Dove:** Common in lowlands disturbed areas.

**Little Cuckoo-Dove:** 1 at Gunung Besar.

**Asian Emerald Dove:** 1 at Trus Madi, 5 at Sepilok, 1 at DVFC.

**Zebra Dove:** Abundant in lowland disturbed areas.

**Thick-billed Green-Pigeon:** 35 seen frequently in fruiting fig tree at DVFC.

**Large Green-Pigeon:** 15 seen frequently in fruiting fig tree at DVFC.

**Green Imperial-Pigeon:** Common at all lowland sites.

**Bornean Ground-Cuckoo:** 5 at Kinabatangan (1 seen), 3 at DVFC (2 seen).

**Short-toed Coucal:** 1 at DVFC.
Greater Coucal: Common in lowland areas.

Raffles’s Malkoha: Common at Sepilok, 2 at DVFC, 1 at Serongga.

Red-billed Malkoha: 1 at DVFC.

Chestnut-breasted Malkoha: Common at Sepilok.

Black-bellied Malkoha: 1 at Trus Madi.

Chestnut-winged Cuckoo: 1 at Kinabatangan.

Violet Cuckoo: 1 at Sepilok, 1 at DVFC.

Banded Bay Cuckoo: 1 at DVFC, 2 at Gunung Besar.

Plaintive Cuckoo: Common at every lowland sight. Especially commonly heard in the evening and into the early night.

Square-tailed Drongo-Cuckoo: 4 at Kinabatangan, 4 at DVFC.

Dark Hawk-Cuckoo: 1 at Kinabalu.
Indian Cuckoo: Commonly heard at Sepilok and DVFC.

Sunda Cuckoo: 3 at Kinabalu.

Large Frogmouth: 2 at Kinabatangan.

Sunda Frogmouth: 3 at Fairy Garden Resort.

Large-tailed Nightjar: 3 at Trus Madi.

Silver-rumped Needletail: Fairly common at Sepilok and Danum.

Plume-toed Swiftlet: Extremely abundant everywhere from city centers, to the top of Kinabalu, to the middle of Danum.

House Swift: 1 at Trus Madi, 5 in Banjarmasin.

Grey-rumped Treeswift: A few seen at both Sepilok and DVFC.

Whiskered Treeswift: 3 around the grounds at DVFC.

White-breasted Waterhen: 1 at Tanjung Aru Beach, seen sporadically in rice paddies in lowlands.
Whimbrel: 1 at the waterfront of Lahad Datu.

Common Sandpiper: 1 at Kinabatangan.

Wood Sandpiper: 2 in rice paddies in Kalimantan.

White-winged Tern: 12 in a rice paddy in Kalimantan.

Lesser Crested Tern: 7 off the coast of Kalimantan, seen from the road.

Storm's Stork: 4 seen at Kinabatangan.

Lesser Adjutant: 3 seen over the Menanggol River.

Oriental Darter: A common sight along the Kinabatangan River with one individual seen at Danum Valley and one in Lahad Datu.

Black-crowned Night Heron: A number of individuals seen along the Kinabatangan.

Nankeen Night Heron: One seen around the DVFC lodging throughout our stay and another at the Lahad Datu Seafront.

Little Egret: Frequently seen along the Kinabatangan as well as single individuals at the Lahad Datu Seafront and along a roadside rice paddy in Kalimantan.

Striated Heron: A number seen along the Kinabatangan and roadside rice paddies in Kalimantan.

Javan Pond-Heron: One seen at a roadside rice paddy in Kalimantan.

Eastern Cattle Egret: Seen on the roadside in Kota Kinabalu and Kalimantan.

Great Egret: A common sight throughout the trip.

Purple Heron: Seen along the Kinabatangan and one along the roadside in Kalimantan.

Black-winged Kite: One seen on the roadside during the drive from Sukau to Lahad Datu.

Oriental Honey-Buzzard: 1 from the Sepilok canopy walkway, 1 from the Kinabatangan, 1 from the roadside in Kalimantan.
Jerdon's Baza: 2 seen at the oxbow at the Kinabatangan.

Mountain Serpent-Eagle: 2 seen on Mt. Kinabalu: 1 perched low in the fog along the Bukit-Ular Trail and 1 along the road just below Timpohon Gate.

Crested Serpent-Eagle: A common sight across lowland sights.

Bat Hawk: 3 seen along the Kinabatangan in the evenings and early mornings.

Wallace's Hawk-Eagle: A pair (which bred next to the canopy walkway) were seen a number of times at Sepilok, 2 seen at the Kinabatangan, 1 at Danum.

Changeable Hawk-Eagle: 2 at Trus Madi, 2 at the Kinabatangan.

Black Eagle: 1 flying over the entrance road at Danum.

Crested Goshawk: 2 at the Kinabatangan.

Brahminy Kite: A fairly common sight at lowland spots.

White-bellied Sea-Eagle: 3 at Sepilok.

Lesser Fish-Eagle: 1 at the Kinabatangan.
Grey-headed Fish-Eagle: 1 at the Kinabatangan.

Oriental Bay-Owl: 3 seen along the Tenegang tributary of the Kinabatangan.

Reddish Scops-Owl: 1 heard from Tarsier Crossing at Sepilok.

Mountain Scops-Owl: 4 heard along the road at Kinabalu.

Buffy Fish-Owl: 2 seen at the Kinabatangan, 1 seen and heard every evening around the lodging at Danum.

Barred Eagle-Owl: 1 heard at Sepilok.

Brown Wood-Owl: 1 heard on the East Trail at Danum.

Brown Boobook: 1 heard on the entrance road at Danum.

Red-naped Trogon: 2 seen at Sepilok.

Diard’s Trogon: Frequently seen at Danum.

Whitehead’s Trogon: 1 seen at the Kiau View Trail, a pair along the upper stretch of the Silau-Silau Trail on Kinabalu.

Scarlet-rumped Trogon: 2 seen at the Kinabatangan, frequently seen at Danum.

White-crowned Hornbill: 2 seen at the Kinabatangan.

Helmeted Hornbill: Unfortunately this Buceros was only heard and never seen. 1 heard at Trus Madi, 3 heard at Danum.

Rhinoceros Hornbill: Frequently encountered at Trus Madi and all lowland sites.

Bushy-crested Hornbill: Seen less frequently than I would have imagined. 3 at the Kinabatangan, 1 at Danum.

Black Hornbill: Common, although low density, at all lowland sites.

Oriental Pied Hornbill: The most common Hornbill in Sabah, seen at all lowland sites.
**Wreathed Hornbill:** 4 encountered on Kinabalu (this is the only Hornbill to reach such high elevations in Borneo), 3 seen at the Black-browed Babbler spot in Kalimantan.

**Wrinkled Hornbill:** 4 along the Kinabatangan.

**Blue-eared Kingfisher:** 3 along the Menanggol tributary of the Kinabatangan.

**Rufous-backed Dwarf-Kingfisher:** 1 along the Menanggol tributary of the Kinabatangan, 3 at Danum.

**Stork-billed Kingfisher:** 3 at the Kinabatangan, 4 at Danum, 1 seen repeatedly at the roadside outside Seronnga.

**White-throated Kingfisher:** 2 along the roadside in Kalimantan.

**Collared Kingfisher:** 1 at Tanjung Aru, 1 at Lahad Datu Seafront, 1 on roadside in Kalimantan.

**Rufous-collared Kingfisher:** 1 at Sepilok, 1 seen multiple times on Waterfall Trail at Danum.

**Red-bearded Bee-eater:** 1 at Danum was the only one seen of the trip.
**Blue-throated Bee-eater:** Common in lowlands.

**Dollarbird:** Common in lowlands.

**Brown Barbet:** 1 at Sepilok, 4 at the Menanggol tributary of the Kinabatangan.

**Black-eared Barbet:** The most common barbet at lowland sites. Their calls would often border upon being cacophonous at Danum.

**Red-throated Barbet:** Frequently seen in lowlands, most common at Trus Madi.

**Golden-naped Barbet:** A common sight and sound at Kinabalu.

**Yellow-crowned Barbet:** 2-3 seen each day at Danum.

**Mountain Barbet:** 2 at Kinabalu, 3 at Trus Madi.

**Gold-whiskered Barbet:** 3 at Trus Madi, 1 at Gunung Besar.

**Rufous Piculet:** 2 at Sepilok, 2 at Danum.

**Grey-and-buff Woodpecker:** 2 seen on the canopy walkway at Sepilok were the only ones of the trip.

**Maroon Woodpecker:** 1 at Sepilok, 1 at Danum.

**Buff-rumped Woodpecker:** 2 at Sepilok, 1 at Danum.

**Olive-backed Woodpecker:** A good species to get, 1 was encountered at Sepilok.

**Crimson-winged Woodpecker:** 1 at Danum.

**Checker-throated Woodpecker:** 2 at Kinabalu.

**Great Slaty Woodpecker:** The world's largest extant woodpecker; a group of 4 were encountered at the Menanggol tributary of the Kinabatangan, 3 at Danum.

**White-bellied Woodpecker:** 2 at Sepilok.

**White-fronted Falconet:** A pair found near the lodging at Danum.
Long-tailed Parakeet: Seen in large number at Tanjung Aru Beach and at Sukau, a few seen at Sepilok.

Blue-crowned Hanging-Parrot: Commonly seen zipping around at Sepilok.

Green Broadbill: 1 heard at Danum.

Whitehead's Broadbill: 4 at Kinabalu, the most commonly encountered of the Whitehead's trio.

Dusky Broadbill: 4 on the entrance road at Danum.

Black-and-red Broadbill: Encountered a few times at all the lowland sites.

Banded Broadbill: 1 on the Menanggol tributary of the Kinabatangan, common at Danum.


Black-crowned Pitta: The most commonly encountered Pitta at Danum with a few heard or seen every day.

Blue-banded Pitta: 1 at the known spot on the Waterfall Trail at Danum.

Bornean Banded Pitta: 3 at Trus Madi, only heard only unfortunately.

Blue-headed Pitta: Somewhat common at Danum.

Western Hooded Pitta: 5 at Danum, mostly along the entrance road.

Fiery Minivet: Small groups encountered at Sepilok, 1 at Danum.

Grey-chinned Minivet: Common at Kinabalu, especially in mixed flocks.

Sunda Cuckooshrike: 5 at Kinabalu, largely in mixed flocks.

Pied Triller: 3 at Tanjung Aru Beach.

White-browed Shrike-Babbler: Common in mixed flocks at Kinabalu.

White-bellied Erpornis: Single individuals at Kinabalu, Sepilok, and Danum.
**Bornean Whistler:** A common member of mixed flocks on Kinabalu.

![Bornean Whistler](image)

**Ventriloquial Oriole:** 2 at both Danum and Sepilok.

**Black-and-crimson Oriole:** 2 at Kinabalu.

**White-breasted Woodswallow:** 1 at Tanjung Aru Beach, 1 at the Kinabatangan, a few seen on roadsides in Sabah and Kalimantan.

**Large Woodshrike:** 2 at Danum.

**Black-winged Flycatcher-Shrike:** 1 at Sepilok, 6 at Danum.

**Rufous-winged Philentoma:** Uncommon at Danum with 2 seen, 2 on Gunung Besar.

**Maroon-breasted Philentoma:** Another uncommon Philentoma, 3 were seen at Danum.

**Bornean Bristlehead:** This monotypic endemic was encountered more frequently than I would have thought: 4 at Sepilok, 1 heard at the Kinabatangan, 2 heard at Danum.

**Common Iora:** Common in disturbed and second growth lowlands.

**Green Iora:** Common at Sepilok.
Spotted Fantail: 5 at Danum.

Malaysian Pied Fantail: Fairly common in lowlands including a nest right outside our room at Danum.

White-throated Fantail: Common in mixed flocks at Kinabalu.

Ashy Drongo: A common sight at Kinabalu.

Bronzed Drongo: 1 at Sepilok, 2 at Danum.

Hair-crested Drongo: Only 1 at Kinabalu.

Greater Racket-tailed Drongo: A few at Sepilok and Danum.

Black-naped Monarch: A couple encountered every day at Trus Madi, Sepilok, and Danum.

Blyth's Paradise-Flycatcher: A common sight and sound at Danum.

Crested Jayshrike: 1 at Danum.
Tiger Shrike: 1 at Sepilok.

Long-tailed Shrike: Frequently seen on roadsides.

Black Magpie: 1 at Danum, 1 on bus from Danum to Lahad Datu.

Bornean Green-Magpie: 1 at Kinabalu.

Bornean Treepie: Common at Kinabalu, often roaming in small groups.

Slender-billed Crow: Common in lowlands.

Malaysian Rail-Babbler: Quite a surprise to encounter at our campsite on Gunung Besar.

Grey-headed Canary-Flycatcher: Frequently seen at Danum, 1 at Gunung Besar.

Ashy Tailorbird: Abundant in lowlands.

Rufous-tailed Tailorbird: 2 at Sepilok, 3 at Gunung Besar.

Yellow-bellied Prinia: Common in disturbed habitat.

Pacific Swallow: Abundant everywhere.

Barn Swallow: Large numbers seen on the Kinabatangan and at Trus Madi.

Hairy-backed Bulbul: 4 at Danum.

Yellow-bellied Bulbul: 3 at Danum.

 Grey-cheeked Bulbul: Common at Danum.

Penan Bulbul: Fairly common at Kinabalu and Trus Madi. 1 of the endemic Meratus subspecies seen at Gunung Besar.

Finsch’s Bulbul: 1 at Danum.

Charlotte’s Bulbul: A few seen at Danum.

Streaked Bulbul: 4 at Sepilok.
Puff-backed Bulbul: 2 at the Kinabatangan, 4 at Danum.

Black-headed Bulbul: 4 in a group at the Kinabatangan.

Spectacled Bulbul: 1 at Danum.

Bornean Bulbul: Pair at Trus Madi behind the camp lodging.

Cream-vented Bulbul: A few at Sepilok.

Olive-winged Bulbul: A few at Sepilok.

Red-eyed Bulbul: Abundant in the lowlands.

Cream-eyed Bulbul: 2 at Sepilok, 1 at Danum.
Pale-faced Bulbul: 6 at Timpohon Gate on Kinabalu.

Yellow-headed Bulbul: Common in the lowlands.

Sooty-headed Bulbul: A common introduced species along roadsides in Kalimantan.

Yellow-breasted Warbler: Common on Kinabalu.

Mountain Leaf-Warbler: Common at Kinabalu.

Bornean Stubtail: 5 at Kinabalu.

Yellow-bellied Warbler: 2 at Gunung Besar.

Mountain Tailorbird: Common on Kinabalu.

Aberrant Bush Warbler: Common higher up on Kinabalu.

Chestnut-crested Yuhina: Large flock of 20 seen on Kinabalu.

Pygmy White-eye: 12 at Zen Garden Resort near Kundasang.

Black-capped White-eye: A few seen daily on Kinabalu.
Mountain Black-eye: 2 seen at Timpohon Gate on Kinabalu.

Bold-striped Tit-Babbler: Fairly common in lowlands.

Fluffy-backed Tit-Babbler: 5 at Danum, 2 at Black-browed Babbler Spot.

Grey-hooded Babbler: 1 at Sepilok, 1 on the Menanggol tributary of the Kinabatangan, Fairly common at Danum.

Rufous-fronted Babbler: 1 at Danum.

Sunda Scimitar-Babbler: 1 at Danum.

Chestnut-rumped Babbler: A few seen on most days at Danum.

Grey-throated Babbler: 5 seen at Kinabalu, 5 at Gunung Besar.

Black-throated Wren-Babbler: 2 heard at Danum.

Sooty-capped Babbler: 8 at Danum.

Scaly-crowned Babbler: Common at Danum.

Rufous-crowned Babbler: Common at Danum.

Moustached Babbler: 1 at Danum.

Bornean Black-capped Babbler: 1 at Danum.

Short-tailed Babbler: 2 at Trus Madi, 1 at Danum.

Temminck’s Babbler: 2 at Kinabalu, 5 at Trus Madi, 4 at Gunung Besar.

White-chested Babbler: 2 at Sepilok, 6 at the Kinabatangan.

Ferruginous Babbler: 3 at Danum.

Striped Wren-Babbler: 6 at Danum.

Black-browed Babbler: 3 at a karst outcrop outside Serongga.
Mountain Wren-Babbler: 3 at Kinabalu.

Bornean Wren-Babbler: 2 at Danum.

Brown Fulvetta: 6 at Danum.

Sunda Laughingthrush: 8 at Kinabalu.

Chestnut-hooded Laughingthrush: Fairly common on Kinabalu.

Velvet-fronted Nuthatch: 5 at Kinabalu, 4 at Sepilok.

Asian Glossy Starling: Quite common in lowlands, especially in disturbed areas.

Common Hill Myna: Fairly common in lowlands.

Javan Myna: Common at Sepilok and the Kinabatangan.

Everett’s Thrush: 3 above the Kiau Gap View at Kinabalu.

Orange-headed Thrush: 4 at the same area of Kinabalu as the Everett’s.

Eyebrowed Thrush: 1 at Kinabalu and a flock of 15 at Trus Madi.
**Dark-sided Flycatcher:** 1 at Danum, 1 at Gunung Besar.

**Asian Brown Flycatcher:** 2 at Kinabalu, 1 at Trus Madi.

**Oriental Magpie-Robin:** Common on lawns and around habitation.

**Rufous-tailed Shama:** 7 at Danum.

**White-crowned Shama:** Common in lowlands and hill forest. Constant visitor to the blinds at Trus Madi.

**Blue-and-white Flycatcher:** 2 at Kinabalu, 1 at Trus Madi, 1 at Gunung Besar.

**Indigo Flycatcher:** Fairly common at Kinabalu.

**Dayak Blue Flycatcher:** 2 at Trus Madi coming into the blinds.

**Meratus Blue Flycatcher:** 1 at Gunung Besar.

**Malaysian Blue Flycatcher:** 1 on the Menanggol Tributary of the Kinabatangan.

**Bornean Blue Flycatcher:** 1 at Danum.
Grey-chested Jungle Flycatcher: 2 at Danum.

Eyebrowed Jungle Flycatcher: 3 at Kinabalu.

Bornean Shortwing: 5 at Kinabalu.

Siberian Blue Robin: 2 at Danum.

Bornean Whistling-Thrush: Common at Kinabalu, especially flushed off the roadsides at dawn.

White-crowned Forktail: 2 at Sepilok, 1 at Danum.

Bornean Forktail: 4 at Kinabalu.

Chestnut-naped Forktail: 1 at Danum.

Mugimaki Flycatcher: 4 at Kinabalu.

Snowy-browed Flycatcher: Common at Kinabalu.

Little Pied Flycatcher: 1 at Kinabalu.

Yellow-breasted Flowerpecker: 5 at Danum.

Yellow-rumped Flowerpecker: Fairly common in lowlands and hill forest.

Orange-bellied Flowerpecker: 2 at Sepilok.

Black-sided Flowerpecker: 1 at Trus Madi, 2 at Kinabalu.

Scarlet-headed Flowerpecker: 1 on roadside in Kalimantan.

Ruby-cheeked Sunbird: 2 at Sepilok, 1 at Danum.

Plain Sunbird: Common at Danum.

Brown-throated Sunbird: Common at Sepilok.

Red-throated Sunbird: 4 at Danum.
Van Hasselt's Sunbird: 1 at Sepilok, 1 at Danum.

Ornate Sunbird: Common in gardens.

Temminck's Sunbird: Common at Kinabalu and Trus Madi.

Crimson Sunbird: Fairly common in lowlands.

Purple-naped Spiderhunter: 2 at Danum.

Long-billed Spiderhunter: 1 at Sepilok, 1 at Danum.

Little Spiderhunter: 1 at Sepilok, 1 at Danum.

Whitehead’s Spiderhunter: 1 at Kinabalu.

Yellow-eared Spiderhunter: 2 at Sepilok.

Spectacled Spiderhunter: 1 at Danum.

Bornean Spiderhunter: 1 at Trus Madi, 1 frequently seen traplining near the lodging at Danum.

Asian Fairy Bluebird: 2 at Sepilok, 3 at Danum.

Greater Green Leafbird: Fairly common in lowlands.

Lesser Green Leafbird: Fairly common at Sepilok and Danum.

Blue-winged Leafbird: 3 at Gunung Besar.

Bornean Leafbird: 1 at Kinabalu.

Dusky Munia: Common in scrub and disturbed areas.

Chestnut Munia: 9 at Tanjung Aru, 2 at Sepilok.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow: Common in disturbed areas and around human habitation.

Grey Wagtail: Common at Kinabalu and Trus Madi.