

INDONESIA APRIL 2015 – BALI, FLORES, BORNEO & SUMATRA



This is a report of a 2 week visit to 5 Indonesian islands (since most flights travel via Jakarta), arranged by Ecolodges Indonesia, involving a 3 night stay at each of 4 lodges, thereby considerably extending our Indonesian travel experience, and to form a pre-tour recce for our idea to take groups of birders here.



We began in Bali where we stayed at the Udayana Kingfisher Ecolodge, enjoying a brief view of a Javan Kingfisher from the window during the company's AGM. Next morning we flew on to Labuan Bajo at the western end of Flores. We checked in to the Bajo Komodo Lodge and birded the local forest in the late afternoon. After an early start next morning our guide, Simin, took us on a full day boat trip to Komodo Island. We were well underway by sunrise and a sprinkling of small islands bathed in the red light of dawn welcomed us at breakfast. A few distant birds included a Red-footed Booby, a Great-billed Heron and flocks of terns and egrets. On arrival at Komodo

Island, the famous dragon was not hard to find; our first one was a small youngster emerging from a hole in a tree at eye-level, and a further 20 or more very much larger ones stared lazily at us from the shade of the forest. We were lucky to see the highly endangered Yellow-crested Cockatoo, along with a few other interesting birds like the Flame-breasted Sunbird, endemic to Flores.

The following day Simin and our driver, Gusti took us to Puar Lolo, a forest reserve along the road to Ruteng, well-known for more special birds of Flores, a selection of which made an appearance, although observation was quite difficult – **Flores Monarch, White-rumped Kingfisher, Crested, Thick-billed and Yellow-spectacled White-eyes.**

Three short flights took us off Flores and onto Borneo for 3 nights stay at Rimba Lodge in southern Kalimantan. Under the excellent guidance of Hakim, we were whisked upriver from Kumai and spent 2 enjoyable days along the upper reaches of the Sekonyer river. At 6 each morning we climbed onto our exclusive boat, breakfast was laid out for us and steam wafted up from the scrambled eggs. As we motored slowly upriver,





early morning wildlife watching provided constant interest, wild **Orang Utans**, some in family parties, entertained us, also **Silvered Langurs** and **Proboscis Monkeys**, flocks of **Long-tailed Parakeets** squawked over, birds like **Lesser Adjutant** and **Black Bittern** flew slowly over, there were mixed species groups of **Green Pigeons** in the waterside trees, and a host of other birds.

There was some forest walking and our visit to Camp Leaky to observe the feeding of the monitored Orangs was coupled with a surprise sighting of one of Borneo's special endemic birds, the **Bornean Bristlehead**, a strange mainly red and black bird in a family of its own. We did well with mammals; apart from the primates, we found **Black-eared Pygmy Squirrel**, **Prevost's** and **Black Giant Squirrels**, while spotlighting produced a **Lesser Mouse Deer** and the dog-like call of the **Colugo (or Flying Lemur)**, although we didn't see it.

Then it was back to Jakarta, the 'HQ' of nearly all the flights, and on to Bandar Lampung in Sumatra. We were picked up and taken on the 2 hour journey to Satwa Lodge which is close to the well-known Way Kambas National Park.

The first evening we met with Hary, our guide, and planned 2 full days in the Park. This was the most productive birding of the trip and with an excellent selection of bird sound recordings, Hary found many species which we would never have seen otherwise. These included **Hooded Pitta**, **Black-thighed Falconet**, no less than 10 species of babblers including the exquisite **Fluffy-backed Tit-Babbler**, and a magnificent male **Red-naped Trogon**. The growling and squealing of both **Siamang** and **Agile Gibbons** was sometimes deafening and on 2 occasions **Siamang Gibbons** gave reasonable views in the trees over the road.



On the second afternoon we did a boat ride upstream from the centre of the Park, intending to walk a trail to seek out some wetlands and look for the rare **White-winged Duck**. When we found what was apparently the start of the trail, it was a metre underwater; the recent rain will have created wetlands everywhere and Hary thought the chances of a sighting were very slim. We opted to look for other species and struggled further upstream among the dense bush. A moment later a male **White-winged Duck** flew over, perched in a tree where it posed for a photo or 2 before flying off. Birding is just so unpredictable!

Spotlighting in Way Kambas was exciting with so many possibilities for both birds and mammals. In spite of frequent rain, we managed to observe **Reddish Scops Owl**, **Large-tailed Nightjar**, the rare little **Bonaparte's Nightjar** and a **Brown Hawk Owl**. Among the mammals we enjoyed a **Red Giant Flying Squirrel**, a brief **Flat-headed Cat** which crossed the road, and a **Slow Loris**, living up to its name just a short distance from the

Lodge. On the departure morning we put up with a 5 am torchlight start, groping through thick wet forest, copious leeches and various unidentified biting insects inflicting over 20 bites on my ankles and feet, for a superb pair of **Large Frogmouths** before dawn – a fair swop!

All the lodges offered comfortable accommodation and facilities, and all strategically placed for maximum convenience for visitors to appreciate a good cross-section of Indonesia's precious wildlife. We look forward to more acquisitions in new areas when this can be achieved. After a final day in Denpasar with local excursions, we returned to New Zealand with well enriched knowledge of a new destination. We hope to return soon, hopefully with other enthusiasts to share the wonders of this superb country.



Detlef and Carol Davies