

A Study On Primates of Kuala Lawas

By

Sundai Silang

Biodiversity and Conservation Department
Protected Areas and Biodiversity Conservation Unit
Sarawak Forestry Corporation

Abstract

The Kuala Lawas is near the border of Sarawak and Sabah and it is accessible by road with less than a 30-minute drive from Lawas town. Kuala Lawas is primarily covered by peat swamp forest in the interior and mangrove forest near the coast. The expedition on 27 September 2004 to 07 October 2004 was organized by the Protected Areas and Biodiversity Conservation (PABC) Unit of Sarawak Forestry Corporation. The main objective of the expedition was to collect baseline information on wildlife in order to support the nomination of Kuala Lawas as a Totally Protected Area (TPA). Meanwhile, the objectives of this study are (i) to determine primate diversity in Kuala Lawas area, (ii) document primate distributions in Kuala Lawas and (iii) to provide baseline information on wildlife (e.g. primates) for supporting the nomination of Kuala Lawas as a TPA. In this study data collection was collected using line transect and boat survey methods.

Four primate species were documented and however, only two species *Nasalis larvatus* (Proboscis monkey) and *Macaca fascicularis* (Long-tailed macaque) were sighted whereas the *Presbytis cristata* (Silvered leaf monkey) and *Macaca nemestrina* (Pig-tailed macaque) were determined to be present in the area based on the information from villagers and also locals that were hired during the expedition. The Proboscis monkey was found to be common along Sg. Lawas. Meanwhile, the Long-tailed macaque was abundant at Sg. Belansat site.

Generally results from the expedition suggested that primate populations (especially those of *Nasalis larvatus*) in Kuala Lawas are still healthy. This was probably due to the fact that habitat along the river systems in Kuala Lawas were still largely intact. The mangrove, which is a primary habitat for Proboscis monkey, is still in good condition in most of areas such as Sg. Belansat, Sg. Malipat, Sg. Kaku and Sg. Lawas. It was also observed that most of the peat swamp forests along the rivers were still intact. Although the forest fire in 1997/98 destroyed vast tracts of peat swamp forest in the inland, the patches of forest along the rivers seem to have provided refuge for the animals, which may explain why most of the animals observed were along the rivers.