

A Faunal Study of Rajang River Basin

By

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Abstract

A wildlife survey was conducted in the Batang Rajang basin from May to December 2004 aimed at assessing the diversity of bird and mammal species as well as species that has important conservation and socio-economic value. The sampling sites were (i) Selalang (ii) Pasin (iii) Lanjak Entimau Wildlife Sanctuary (LWES) (iv) Hose Mountain (v) Bakun, and (vi) Teluk Bulat (Bintangor). Detection methods include observation of wildlife and their signs, mist-netting for bats and birds and interviews with the local people.

One hundred and twenty-two species of birds were recorded and 15 species were present in all the stations sampled. The station that is located near the mouth of Rajang River (Selalang) was the least diverse (21 species) while stations that are located in the interior have greater diversity (96 species at Hose Mountain, 88 species at Lanjak Entimau). The only endemic species was Dusky Munia and these were associated with padi fields. Four species (Pacific swallow, Little Spiderhunter, Phillipine Glossy Starling and Dusky Munia) were classified as abundant while 99 species were classified as uncommon.

Twenty species of birds are protected (mainly eagles, egrets, kingfishers, woodpeckers) and seven species (mainly hornbills and pheasants) are totally protected under the Sarawak Wildlife Protection Ordinance 1998.

A total of 30 species of mammals were recorded as present based on information obtained from hunters. The station that was located near the mouth of Rajang River (Selalang) was the least diverse with 5 species, but this was also the only place where dolphins were sighted. Wild pigs for example were not sighted but their tracks, wallows and nest shows their abundance, especially in LEWS and Hose Mountains.

Thirteen species and eight species of mammals recorded along Sg. Katibas and at LEWS were categorized as protected and totally protected, respectively. Totally protected animals includes the gibbons and langurs, giant squirrels, slow loris and tarsier. The Sarawak Wildlife Protection Ordinance 1998 also accord protection to all civets and otters, all bats, treeshrews and primates.

Wildlife that are hunted for food and those that are attractive to tourist have direct economic value. Wild pig and deer are the most frequently hunted animals by the locals, mostly for their own consumption. However other smaller and medium sized animals, including primates, may be hunted incidentally. Primates and other large mammals and birds that can be easily seen and photographed are potential tourist attraction.