

# SUMATRA

## THE LEUSER ECOSYSTEM

5<sup>th</sup> February – 5<sup>th</sup> March 2017

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*A female Sumatran Orangutan, 'Lisa', swings effortlessly through the swamp forests of the Leuser Rainforest, one of the last Orangutan strongholds on the planet.*

### I. INTRODUCTION

Sumatra is at once the most dazzling and depressing place I have ever travelled to. On the one hand, the remaining forests hold an almost fairytale diversity and abundance of life. Not only are there still forests where orangutans, tigers, rhinos and elephants still roam in the jungle, but these forests are perhaps some of the most diverse that have ever existed. When early explorers visited Sumatra, they startled tigers in its jungles not every few miles, but every hundred metres, and even now, the remaining areas of primary rainforest are extraordinarily rich.

At the same time, Sumatra is being destroyed with a self-destructive fury, not just by palm oil but local villages, cutting down huge tracts of rainforest to plant chillis, a crop that can be grown for just a few years, whilst the deforestation causes landscapes that bury the very villages cutting down the forest. Likewise, in spite of its extraordinary tourism potential, terrible infrastructure and a very conservation form of Islamic government in Aceh effectively prevents the establishment of the thriving tourism trade that could save these forests from destruction. Against this backdrop, and with the sound of chainsaws almost constant even as we filmed, we visited the Suaq Balimbing Research Station, in the Leuser Ecosystem, to capture the flagship species of Sumatra's vanishing rainforests, Sumatran Orangutans, for the Netflix series *Our Planet*. I was fortunate to work with cameraman and top bird Matt Aeberhard, and in between our twelve-hour days following the animals, we were able to glimpse, at least, some of the vanishing birds still left in Sumatra's forests.

### II. THE LEUSER ECOSYSTEM

Whilst most of Sumatra's remaining forests are now what David Quammen would refer to as 'useless scraps' of ecological material, there is one enormous contiguous area that, if protected, is still large enough to save Sumatra's wildlife, and that is Leuser. As we soon learned, its official designations and protections are meaningless, with huge amounts of illegal logging visible throughout, but Leuser does have one thing on its side and that is its geography. A large amount of the rainforest is still very difficult to reach from the river, with the most remote and shy animals, the Sumatran Rhinos, living up to 15 day's walk from the nearest road or village.

Access to the region is understandably restricted, except, regrettably, for those cutting it down. We visited the Suaq Balimbing Research Station on a filming permit, accessing the site via the Kluet River, from Pasi Lembang, Aceh Province (3.018093, 97.356700). The Sumatran Orangutan Conservation Project ([www.sumatranorangutan.org](http://www.sumatranorangutan.org)) determines access at this site. I also visited Soraya Station, accessed via the Pulau River, inland from Pulau Jabi-jabi (2.815280, 97.875120). This is a study site monitored by the Forum Konservasi Leuser (FKL), who protects the region against large mammal poaching, and whose work has effected a good resurgence in the numbers of species such as Sumatran Tigers here, partly by destroying illegal palm oil and encouraging the growth of new secondary forest, which becomes suitable for a wide range of species to recolonize over time. Information on visiting Leuser as a tourist is perhaps best sought from SOCP and also from the website [www.sumatra-ecotravel.com](http://www.sumatra-ecotravel.com). This is a troubled place, but the more tourists see its wildlife, the more chance it has of a future.

### III. NOTABLE BIRD SPECIES

#### **Lesser Whistling Duck** *Dendrocygna javanica*

One seen flying over clearfell behind Suaq Balimbing Research Station (GPS c. 3.092365, 97.500182) on 22 February.

#### **Crested Partridge (Roulroul)** *Rollulus rouloul* (CT)

A covey of a male and three females recorded running through a camera-trap set for Sumatran Tigers at the Soraya Research Station (GPS c. 2.989291, 97.934253) on 13 February. Apparently a shy but quite common species of primary and secondary rainforest here.

#### **Woolly-necked Stork** *Ciconia episcopus*

One over the rice fields of Pasi Lembang village, Aceh Coast (3.030027, 97.357878) on 10 February.

#### **Yellow Bittern** *Ixobrychus sinensis*

One seen just upstream from Pasi Lembang village on the Kluet river on 1 March.

#### **Striated Heron** *Butorides striata*

Fairly common in low bushes along the Kluet and Pulau rivers heading into Leuser on all boat journeys during the trip.

#### **Eastern Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus coromandus*

Common around Pasi Lembang village, Aceh, on 7 February.

#### **Intermediate Egret** *Ardea intermedia*

One with Eastern Cattle Egrets in rice fields around Pasi Lembang village, Aceh, on 7 February.

#### **Crested (Oriental) Honey-buzzard** *Pernis ptilorhynchus*

Apparently regular as a wintering bird, with sightings of 1 over the Pulau River on the way to Soraya, and 1 over Suaq Balimbing, both in palm-oil/marginal habitats.

#### **Crested Serpent Eagle** *Spilornis cheela*

Two sightings of perhaps the same adult on territory on the river just north of Pulau Jabi-jabi (2.815280, 97.875120), from 10 February by Ben, and another hunting a cleared area at Suaq Balimbing.

#### **Bat Hawk** *Macheiramphus alcinus*

One seen near nest site on the Pulau River by Ben; a dead tree in open secondary forest with clearings.

#### **Changeable Hawk-eagle** *Nisaetus cirrhatus*

A pale-phase bird flew across the Pulau River, just south of Soraya Station, at close range on 1 March, seen by Ben.

#### **Wallace's Hawk-eagle** *Nisaetus nanus*

Superb views of a pair with Matt, from the boat just south of Suaq Balimbing on 28 February.

#### **Japanese Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter gularis*

One wintering bird seen hunting the coastal palm oil plantations south of Pasi Lembang on 7<sup>th</sup> February.

#### **Zebra Dove** *Geopelia striata*

Present as a common bird in Pasi Lembang village from 7<sup>th</sup> February in human agricultural habitats with open ground.

#### **Spotted Dove** *Spilopelia chinensis*

Seen in typical cultivated habitat with palms, south of Pasi Lembang village on 7<sup>th</sup> February.

#### **Thick-billed Green Pigeon** *Treron curvirostra*

One of a number of fruit dove species seen visited an enormous fig tree, at the edge of a clear-fell above Suaq Balimbing, from 22 February, with a perched individual seen well on 27 February.

#### **Large Green Pigeon** *Treron capellei*

A group of several visiting a fig tree, as above, were probably this species, but a pair confirmed with Matt on 20 February.

#### **Sumatran Green Pigeon** *Treron oxyurus*

Seen mixed in with other species in flight and therefore difficult to distinguish with certainty; confirmed sightings by Matt on 27 February (as above species), and seen perched on dead tree at close range, south of Suaq Balimbing, by Ben on 1 March.

#### **Greater Coucal** *Centropus sinensis*

One seen in vegetation at the river edge on the Pulau River on 10 February, by Ben.

#### **Lesser Coucal** *Centropus bengalensis*

One seen south of Pasi Lembang village on 7 February in secondary forest-edge habitat.

**Raffles' Malkola (Rhinortha) *Rhinortha chlorophaea***

One seen well in the mid-layer of primary peat-swamp rainforest at Suaq Balimbing on 20 February.

**Black-bellied Malkola *Phaenicophaeus diardi***

One seen half-way between Pasi Lembang and Suaq Balimbing, on the Kluet River, on 1 March, by Ben.

**Plaintive Cuckoo *Cacomantis merulinus***

One seen on wires in palm oil agricultural habitat (wintering), south of Pasi Lembang village on 7 February, by Ben.

**Reddish Scops Owl *Otus rufescens* (H)**

Heard nightly at Suaq Balimbing Research Station in secondary river-edge forest.

**Collared Scops Owl *Otus lettia* (H)**

Heard by Ben at Soraya Research Station in secondary rainforest habitat on 7th February.

**Brown Boobook *Ninox scutulata* (H)**

Heard by Matt at Suaq Balimbing in early February in secondary riverside rainforest.

**Grey-rumped Treeswift *Hemiprocne longipennis***

Excellent views of birds commonly over clear-fell at Suaq Balimbing, particularly shortly after rain, across the trip.

**Giant Swiftlet *Hydrochous gigas***

One arrived over the clear-fell at Suaq Balimbing literally minutes in advance of a storm breaking (exactly as the book suggests), on 20 February.

**Plume-toed Swiftlet *Hydrochous gigas***

Formerly lumped as part of the Indonesian Glossy Swiftlet complex. The common swiftlet of riversides seen commonly along the Pulau and Kluet rivers and around Suaq Balimbing.

**White-throated Needletail *Hirundapus caudacutus***

One seen along Kluet River just inland of Pasi Lembang, by Ben, on 10<sup>th</sup> February.

**Silver-backed Needletail *Hirundapus cochinchinensis***

Excellent views of 5+ birds shortly after storms, hawking the clear-felled edge of primary rainforest at Suaq Balimbing from 22<sup>nd</sup> February onwards.

**Brown-backed Needletail *Hirundapus giganteus***

Seen hawking very low over the open river, in typical fashion, along the Pulau, headed to Soraya Research Station, on 10<sup>th</sup> February, by Ben.

**Asian Palm Swift *Cypsiurus balasiensis***

Common, for perhaps the wrong reasons, in the palm oil plantations around Pasi Lembang village from 7<sup>th</sup> February onwards.

**Pacific Swift *Apus pacificus***

One wintering bird seen over the Kluet River, just inland of Pasi Lembang, by Ben on 10<sup>th</sup> February.

**House Swift *Apus nipalensis***

Locally common around houses in Pasi Lembang village from 10<sup>th</sup> February.

**Scarlet-rumped Trogon *Harpactes duvaucelii***

One bird seen hunting in the lower storey, just after rain, at Suaq Balimbing on 21<sup>st</sup> February only.

**Oriental Dollarbird *Eurystomus orientalis***

Became suddenly apparent on old trees beside the Kluet and Pulau rivers from 28<sup>th</sup> February, where hawking in roller-like fashion for large insects.

**Stork-billed Kingfisher *Pelargopsis capensis***

Spectacular and common along the Kluet river leading to Suaq Balimbing throughout our stay.

**Blue-banded Kingfisher *Alcedo euryzona***

Flushed from a path in deep, flooded peat-swamp forest, during an exceptionally rainy period, at Suaq Balimbing forest on 24<sup>th</sup> February only.

**Collared Kingfisher *Todiramphus chloris***

Three or more seen in mangrove-palm edge habitat along road south of Pasi Lembang on 10<sup>th</sup> February, by Ben.

**Blue-eared Kingfisher *Alcedo meninting***

One seen flying along broad river, with secondary rainforest edge, at Suaq Balimbing, on 15<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> February.

**White-breasted Kingfisher** *Halcyon smyrnensis*

Relatively common between Pasi Lembang on the road south to Pulau Jabi-jabi in disturbed agricultural habitats with palms and mangroves, perched on roadside wires, on 7-10<sup>th</sup> February and 1<sup>st</sup> March.

**Rufous-backed Dwarf Kingfisher** *Cryx (erithaca) rufidorsa*

Seen by Matt only perched in mature trees at riverside edge, at Suaq Balimbing, on 27<sup>th</sup> February.

**Blue-tailed Bee-eater** *Merops philippinus*

Excellent views of birds prospecting earthy banks below secondary vegetation growth, and near palm plantations, on the Pulau River (Ben on 7<sup>th</sup> February) and the Kluet river from Pasi Lembang.

**Blue-throated Bee-eater** *Merops viridis*

Seen on two occasions sallying from dead trees next to cultivated habitats; along the Pulau River just inland from Pulau Jabi-jabi on 7<sup>th</sup> February and in the clear-fell at Suaq Balimbing Research Centre on 22<sup>nd</sup> February.

**Rhinceros Hornbill** *Buceros rhinoceros*

Quite simply one of the most remarkable birds I have ever seen, and the kind of species that looks as if it should already be consigned to a book on improbable birds of the Jurassic, not still flying the planet in the twenty-first century. Matt and I were very fortunate in having a territorial pair around the Suaq Balimbing Research Station throughout our visit, favouring an enormous fig tree at the logged edge of the primary rainforest. Also seen further down the Kluet, towards Pasi Lembang, being mobbed by drongos, and rather poignant sighting of one perched in a palm oil plantation, in an area being rapidly forested, just above the village.

**Oriental Pied Hornbill** *Anthracoceros albirostris*

The common hornbill in disturbed secondary rainforest, and even mature palm oil plantations, along the Pulau River, headed towards Soraya, on 7<sup>th</sup> February and 1<sup>st</sup> March, with up to five seen. Also one seen in the clear-fell behind Suaq Balimbing, visiting the giant fig, on 22<sup>nd</sup> February.

**Bushy-crested Hornbill** *Anorrhinus galeritus*

Seen by Matt only deep within the peat-swamp forest, where it kept a very low profile, at Suaq Balimbing on 11<sup>th</sup> February.

**Wreathed Hornbill** *Rhyticeros undulatus*

Superb views of a pair visiting the giant fig tree in the clear-fell behind Suaq Balimbing on 10<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> February only.

**Wrinkled Hornbill** *Rhabdotorrhinus corrugatus*

Another fairytale-colour Disney bird, first seen by Matt over the peat-swamp forest at Suaq in late January; and superb views of one at the edge of a clear-fell south of here on 22<sup>nd</sup> February.

**Brown Barbet** *Caloramphus fuliginosus*

One, seen only in the low storey of primary peat-swamp forest at Suaq on 14<sup>th</sup> February.

**Red-crowned Barbet** *Psilopogon rafflesii*

Heard from 20 February in mature edges of primary rainforest at Suaq from 20<sup>th</sup> February and seen briefly by Ben in a marginal emergent tree here on 22<sup>nd</sup> February.

**Red-throated Barbet** *Psilopogon mystacophanos*

Pair found inspecting dead tree and believed to be in process of excavating a nest, in central peat-swamp forest on 14<sup>th</sup> February. Head daily around Suaq in marginal primary rainforest from early February.

**Coppersmith Barbet** *Psilopogon haemacephalus*

Pair of the distinctive Sumatran race *delicus* seen in the low storey of central primary swamp forest, by Ben, on 14<sup>th</sup> February only.

**Banded Woodpecker (Banded Yellownap)** *Chrysophlegma miniaceum*

An absolutely superb species, watched displaying around a tree in a secondary stand of rainforest, next to the Kluet river at Suaq, on 18<sup>th</sup> February. Wing-flicking whilst synchronously climbing the trunk.

**Checker-throated Woodpecker (Checker-throated Yellownap)** *Chrysophlegma mentale*

One in central swamp forest at Suaq, waterlogged, in area with high density of dead trees, on 19<sup>th</sup> February.

**Common Flameback** *Dinopium javanense*

One in palm plantations along the Kluet river, north of Pasi Lembang, on 1<sup>st</sup> March, separated from Greater Flameback by lack of white stripe on back in flight, seen by Ben only.

**Buff-necked Woodpecker** *Meiglyptes tukki*

One seen by Matt on 18<sup>th</sup> February in secondary growth along the Kluet river at Suaq, heard only by Ben.

**Blue-crowned Hanging Parrot** *Loriculus galgulus*

Small groups seen whizzing over the canopy edge at Suaq Balimbing from mid February onwards.

**Black and Red Broadbill** *Cymbirhynchus macrorhynchus*

Several nests (disused) seen in low, dense vegetation along the Kluet river, from Pasi Lembang to Suaq Balimbing, and superb views of this 'ceramic'-like bird on 10<sup>th</sup> February. Became common during drier periods by 28<sup>th</sup> February onwards.

**Black and Yellow Broadbill** *Eurylaimus ochromalus*

An equally sculptured/polished looking bird, one seen very well in large secondary trees at Suaq, beside camp, on 15<sup>th</sup> February.

**Bar-bellied Cuckooshrike** *Coracina striata*

Split by some (but not IOC) into Roving Cuckooshrike. One seen in the Suaq Balimbing clear-fell on 15<sup>th</sup> February, shortly after intensive rains.

**Mangrove Whistler** *Pachycephala cinerea*

Seen singing between the shrub layer and mid-storey in semi-open swamp vegetation, within the peat swamp forest at Suaq, from 15<sup>th</sup> February onwards.

**Common lora** *Aegithina tiphia*

Seen by Matt only in garden/cultivated habitat with scattered young trees and bushes at Suaq Balimbing camp in late February.

**Tiger Shrike** *Lanius tigrinus*

Female seen well in Suaq Balimbing clear-fell, on scattered secondary trees close to chilli cultivations, on 15<sup>th</sup> February, with a pair here by 27<sup>th</sup> February (wintering).

**Black-and-crimson Oriole** *Oriolus cruentus*

The book categorically states this to be an upland species, but an unmistakable male of the species was seen in old-growth trees, lining a clear-fell edge along the Kluet river, on 1<sup>st</sup> March.

**Bronzed Drongo** *Dicrurus aeneus*

One seen well on way down the Kluet river, from Suaq Balimbing, on 4<sup>th</sup> March only.

**Lesser Raquet-tailed Drongo** *Dicrurus remifer*

One seen on way down the Kluet river, from Suaq Balimbing, on 3<sup>rd</sup> March only.

**Spangled Drongo** *Dicrurus bracteatus*

One seen on way down the Kluet river, from Suaq Balimbing, on 28<sup>th</sup> February only; just a small notch in the tail making this species distinctive.

**Greater Raquet-tailed Drongo** *Dicrurus paradiseus*

Seen regularly in old-growth trees lining the Kluet river at Suaq Balimbing from 15<sup>th</sup> February onwards.

**Amur Paradise Flycatcher** *Terpsiphone incei*

Wintering bird observed by Matt only in primary peat-swamp forest in mid-February.

**Black-naped Monarch** *Hypothymis azurea*

Bird observed by Matt only in mid-storey of dense primary peat-swamp forest on 25<sup>th</sup> February.

**Black Magpie** *Platysmurus leucopterus leucopterus*

Seen in dense vegetation tangles within trees close to the water's edge, along the Kluet river on 27<sup>th</sup> February (Matt) and 1<sup>st</sup> March (Ben).

**Slender-billed Crow** *Corvus enca*

Also considered as a separate species, Sunda Crow *Corvus compilorator*. Seen just once, on the Kluet river just inland from Pasi Lembang, in bushy river-edge vegetation, by Ben on 10<sup>th</sup> February.

**Black and White Bulbul** *Pycnonotus melanoleucos*

Pair seen by Ben flying over clear-fell at Suaq Balimbing on 22<sup>nd</sup> February.

**Black-headed Bulbul** *Pycnonotus atriceps*

1-2 territorial pairs in the clear-fell at Suaq Balimbing, usually around the edges of secondary trees adjoining chilli and palm-oil. From 15<sup>th</sup> February onwards.

**Ruby-throated Bulbul** *Pycnonotus dispar*

One of the most interesting observations of the trip. Found in typical forest clearing edge (as per book) at Suaq Balimbing on 10<sup>th</sup> February. However, showed a distinct raised crest at all times, and very warm brown-ochre underparts, with this colour extending uniformly all the way down the under-parts. Certainly worth keeping an eye out for this species in Leuser as it does look remarkably different from anything in the books and could merit further attention.

**Sooty-headed Bulbul** *Pycnonotus aurigaster*

An introduced species, seen in secondary clear-felled areas at Suaq Balimbing and around the village of Pasi Lembang on 22<sup>nd</sup> February.

**Yellow-vented Bulbul (Sunda Yellow-vented Bulbul)** *Pycnonotus goiavier*

Commonly seen in heavily agricultural habitats, such as banana plantations, along the Kluet river, from 7<sup>th</sup> February onwards.

**Cream-vented Bulbul** *Pycnonotus simplex*

Found in low to mid-storey primary peat-swamp forest at Suaq from early February, by Ben from 11<sup>th</sup> February.

**Asian Red-eyed Bulbul** *Pycnonotus brunneus*

Seen in the mid-storey of large trees adjoining the forest edge from 15<sup>th</sup> February onwards.

**Grey-cheeked Bulbul** *Alophoixus bres*

Found singing in thickety, low (c.1m) vegetation within peat-swamp forest at Suaq from 15<sup>th</sup> February.

**Buff-vented Bulbul** *Iole crypta*

Observed in large stands of secondary trees at Suaq from 14<sup>th</sup> February.

**Pacific Swallow** *Hirundo tahitica*

Breeding commonly in all villages, alongside wintering Eurasian Barn Swallows.

**Bar-winged Prinia** *Prinia familiaris*

Found in low, dense scrub in newly clear-felled area south of Suaq Balimbing on 28<sup>th</sup> February.

**Yellow-bellied Prinia** *Prinia flaviventris*

Seen by Ben in village gardens with flowering bushes, at Pasi Lembang on 10<sup>th</sup> February.

**Ashy Tailorbird** *Orthotomus ruficeps*

Seen in low dense scrub in cultivated areas around Suaq Balimbing from early February.

**Spot-necked Babbler** *Stachyris striolata* (CT)

A camera-trap record of this furtive species, 'walking' around the forest floor, was captured in secondary rainforest, at sub-montane altitude, at Soraya Station, on 20<sup>th</sup> February.

**Chestnut-winged Babbler** *Stachyris erythroptera*

Found in dense under-storey of the primary peat-swamp forest at Suaq from 15<sup>th</sup> February and seen by Ben on 21<sup>st</sup> February.

**Pin-striped Tit-babbler** *Macronus gularis*

Recently split from Bold-striped Tit-babbler (endemic to Borneo and Java). Seen by Matt in mature clear-fell edge trees at Suaq from 27<sup>th</sup> February; heard only by Ben on 28<sup>th</sup> February.

**Fluffy-backed Tit-babbler** *Macronus ptilosus*

Vocal specialist of very low (<1m) bushy understory in primary peat swamp forest at Suaq, seen well from 20<sup>th</sup> February.

**Sooty-capped Babbler** *Malacopteron affine*

No details of sighting but recorded at Suaq Balimbing on 15<sup>th</sup> February.

**Rufous-crowned Babbler** *Malacopteron magnum*

Excellent views of one in dense understorey in the peat swamp forest at Suaq on 20<sup>th</sup> February.

**Oriental White-eye** *Zosterops palpebrosus*

Split by some authorities as 'Sunda White-eye'. Seen in garden/cultivated habitat with flowering bushes and scattered trees at Suaq Balimbing on 15 February.

**Asian Fairy Bluebird** *Irena puella*

Another fairy-colour species, seen well in flight into a fig tree at the Suaq Balimbing clear-fell, by Ben, on 22 February.

**Common Hill Myna** *Gracula religiosa*

Up to five seen flying over the Kluet river, headed into primary rainforest, on 21<sup>st</sup> February.

**Asian Glossy Starling** *Aplonis panayensis*

One seen by Ben on wires close to Pasi Lembang village on 1<sup>st</sup> March.

**Lesser Green Leafbird** *Chloropsis cyanopogon*

Pair in dense 'ivy-type' tangle of new scrub in the Suaq Balimbing clear-felled area at the forest edge on 22<sup>nd</sup> February.

**Blue-masked Leafbird** *Chloropsis venusta*

One seen by Ben in flight, with diagnostic bluish tail, flying into fig tree at Suaq Balimbing on 22<sup>nd</sup> February.

**Scarlet-breasted Flowerpecker** *Prionochilus thoracicus*

Male seen foraging in open mid-storey primary peat-swamp forest at Suaq on 16<sup>th</sup> February.

**Orange-bellied Flowerpecker** *Dicaeum trigonostigma*

Amazing behaviour seen by Matt, with one mobbing a green leaf viper in the mid-canopy of the peat swamp forest on 17<sup>th</sup> February.

**Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker** *Dicaeum cruentatum*

Seen by Matt, joining the above species to mob snake, on the same date as above.

**Ruby-cheeked Sunbird** *Chalcoparia singalensis*

Found nest-building in garden at Suaq (open flowery bushes) on 15<sup>th</sup> February.

**Plain Sunbird** *Anthreptes simplex*

Female seen in young, marginal trees at edge of clear-fell at Suaq Balimbing on 22<sup>nd</sup> February.

**Brown-throated Sunbird** *Anthreptes malacensis*

Seen in mature secondary rainforest trees at edge of clearing in Suaq from 12<sup>th</sup> February.

**Copper-throated Sunbird** *Leptocoma calcostetha*

Seen by Matt only, joining flowerpeckers in primary swamp forest to mob a green leaf viper on 17<sup>th</sup> February.

**Crimson Sunbird** *Aethopyga siparaja*

Seen only in very dense, primary peat-swamp forest, in the lower mid-storey at c.4m height in young trees, on 11<sup>th</sup> February (Ben) and 17<sup>th</sup> February (Matt).

**Temminck's Sunbird** *Aethopyga temminckii*

Stunning views by Ben of this bird in palms at forest edge along the Kluet river at Suaq on 27<sup>th</sup> February.

**Little Spiderhunter** *Arachnothera longirostra*

Again seen by Matt mobbing a green leaf viper with sunbirds and flowerpeckers on 17<sup>th</sup> February in the primary peat swamp forest.

**Grey-breasted Spiderhunter** *Arachnothera modesta*

Vocal and believed nest nest in scattered mature trees beside river, at Suaq Balimbing camp, on 22<sup>nd</sup> February.

**Baya Weaver** *Ploceus philippinus*

Seen close to characteristic hanging nest in dense vegetation adjoining the Kluet river, between Pasi Lembang and Suaq Balimbing, by Ben on 7<sup>th</sup> February.

**Pin-tailed Parrotfinch** *Erythrura prasina*

Good views of one perched in high tree-top, in primary tree on logging front alongside the Kluet river on 3<sup>rd</sup> March (Ben).

**White-rumped Munia** *Lonchura striata*

A specialist of disturbed young palm oil plantations, seem commonly on the Pulau River by Ben on 7<sup>th</sup> February.

**Scaly-breasted Munia** *Lonchura punctulata*

Found in flowering garden bushes in Pasi Lembang village, by Ben, on 10<sup>th</sup> February.

**Paddyfield Pipit** *Anthus rufulus*

Seen south of Pasi Lembang in roadside scrub adjoining oil-palm, near rice fields, by Ben on 10<sup>th</sup> February.

## I. NOTABLE MAMMALS & OTHER FAUNA

**Sumatran Orangutan** *Pongo abelii*

The stars of the show in the peatswamp forests at Suaq Balimbing. We followed two families in particular and were fortunate enough to record tool-use. During our visit there were perhaps over 20 individuals in the swamp, including infants of a range of 6 months or older, to two flanged males, and at least two unflanged males. The animals are extremely mobile and can spend many hours in the same tree, eating figs, but this remains perhaps the best site in the world to enjoy views of Orangutans if you are lucky enough to gain access.

**Sumatran Tiger** *Panthera tigris sondaica*

Though globally rare, most of the remaining Sumatran Tigers in the world now call Leuser home. There were two females on territory around the camp itself, sometimes being sighted from the boardwalk. On one memorable occasion, walking along the boardwalk at Suaq, I startled an adult, which moved quickly away into the jungle vegetation, leaving me rather on edge for some time. At the Soraya Research Station, fresh prints were found, and another female heard as we approached a favoured site; we quickly left the area. Like all of the megafauna left in Sumatra, the tiger's depend on habitat connectivity and a lack of conflict with villagers as areas along rivers are deforested.

**Siamang** *Symphalangus syndactylus*

An extremely impressive arboreal primate, we were very lucky to have a local family of these frequenting a fig-tree at the edge of the forest, where, ironically, the clear-felling made it easier to get a 'cross-section' of the tree and the animals within it. One young animal was watched chasing hornbills over 150 feet above the ground and their huge spider-like silhouettes made a memorable sight.

**White-handed Gibbon (Lar Gibbon) *Hylobates lar***

Heard across the Leuser rainforests, a female was seen at Soraya carrying her baby in secondary forest, and inspecting us curiously.

**Sumatran Surilli (Mitre Leaf Monkey) *Presbytis melalophos***

Seen briefly in the treetops of a section of hilltop primary rainforest at Soraya Research Station.

**Silvered Langur (Silver Leaf Monkey) *Trachypithecus cristatus***

One seen well in treetops adjoining clear-fell at Suaq Balimbing on 28<sup>th</sup> February.

**North Sumatran Leaf Monkey *Presbytis thomasi***

Seen well peering through its 'spectacles' in secondary rainforest edge, along the Kluet river, in late February.

**Asian Palm Civet *Paradoxurus hermaphroditus***

One seen visiting a fig-tree, nimbly running along branches at well over 100 feet, at the edge of the clear-fell at Suaq Balimbing. We also had a probable sighting of Masked Palm Civet in the same tree but it was too brief to confirm.

**Long-tailed Macaque *Macaca fascicularis***

Fairly common in riverside trees and higher vegetation in the lower storey.

**Rajah Brooke's Birdwing Butterfly *Trogonoptera brookiana***

This spectacular butterfly was seen regularly at Suaq Balimbing alongside a range of impressive *Papilionadae* including several swallowtail species.