

Western Tarsier *Cephalopachus bancanus* at Matang Wildlife Centre, Sarawak

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Photographs by: Qhairil Shyamri Rosli.

Subject identified by: Nur Mukminah Naharuddin.

Location: Matang Wildlife Centre, Sarawak, Malaysian Borneo. (Lat 1° 36.547'N Long 110° 9.623'E).

Elevation: About 30 metres.

Habitat: Tropical heath forest (*Kerangas*).

Date and time: 25 February 2015, 22:00 hrs.

Identity of subject: Western Tarsier, *Cephalopachus bancanus* (Mammalia: Primates: Tarsiidae)

Description of record: A single Western Tarsier was observed climbing the trunk of a slender tree (of 15 cm estimated diameter) to an estimated height of around 7 metres (Figs 1 and 2), before leaping around 5 to 7 metres to another tree. It was then seen jumping to the ground and walking along the forest floor for about 5 metres before disappearing into the forest (Fig. 3). It was also observed rotating its head from a forward position to a backward-looking position i.e. a 180° turn (Fig. 4).



Fig. 1. Close-up the head showing the huge, forward-facing eyes and dentition.



Fig 2. Preparing to leap to another tree.



Fig 3. On the ground, apparently foraging.



Fig 4. Turning its head to a 180° position.

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Remarks: The huge, forward-facing eyes, large ears and small body size (Fig. 1) immediately identify this animal as a tarsier. The Western Tarsier *Cephalopachus bancanus* is the only species currently recognized on the island of Borneo: it mainly inhabits lowland areas, but there are montane records up to 1200 metres elevation (Phillipps & Phillipps, 2016).

The most recent IUCN assessment lists its range as " Brunei, Indonesia (Bangka, Belitung, Karimata, southeastern Sumatra, Serasen in the South Natuna Islands, and Kalimantan Borneo), and Malaysia (Sabah and Sarawak)" (Shekelle & Yustian, 2008). The assessment categorises its status as "Vulnerable", mainly due to habitat loss.

The activity documented in these images (Figs. 2 and 3) is typical of the species. It is known to be nocturnal and active from ground level up to at least 7 metres, often jumping between vertical supports at lower levels, and it is known to "leap down from a vertical sapling perch to snatch prey on the ground" (Phillipps & Phillipps, 2016).

The tarsier was not seen capturing any prey, however it is known to feed primarily on large insects (Phillipps & Phillipps, 2016), and we therefore interpret that it was foraging for prey on the forest floor.

Matang Wildlife Centre is located on the western side of Kubah National Park: the habitat in the area is comprised of tropical heath forest or *Kerangas* (Hazebroek and Morshidi, 2000).

References:

- Hazebroek, H. P. & Kashim bin Abang Morshidi. (2000). *National Parks of Sarawak*. Natural History Publications (Borneo). 502 pp.
- Phillipps, Q. & Phillipps, K. (2016). *Phillipps' Field Guide to the Mammals of Borneo and Their Ecology: Sabah, Sarawak, Brunei, and Kalimantan*. Princeton University Press. 400 pp.
- Shekelle, M. & Yustian, I. (2008). *Tarsius bancanus*. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. <<http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/19565/0>> (Accessed 26 June 2017).