

As far as the eyes can see: The lush panorama of the Sela'an Linau FMU. (Inset) The area is vast, covering 55,949ha or roughly 560sq km in the upper Baram, Sarawak.

A haven of rich biodiversity

Researcher: Gazette mountain top of Sela'an Linau FMU as totally protected area

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THE mountain tops of Sela'an Linau Forest Management Unit (FMU) in upper Baram should be gazetted as a totally protected area.

Emphasising this call, Hose's Civet and Small Carnivore Project, Borneo (Hoscapp) founder and project leader John Mathai stressed that biodiversity was at its maximum in the area.

Speaking to *The Star* here recently, the research fellow at Universiti Sarawak Malaysia (Unimas) said initial studies had shown that ideally the mountain tops should be legally protected because images captured on camera trappings showed that there were more animals there compared to elsewhere in the lower elevation.

"The whole Sela'an Linau FMU is rich in biodiversity but the maximum (number of animal species) is up on top. Eventually we need to identify a corridor to join the mountain tops to nearby Pulong Tau National Park to better protect the biodiversity in the area," he said.

The Sela'an Linau FMU covers 55,949ha or roughly 560sq km, of which Samling Group is the licensed

concessionaire.

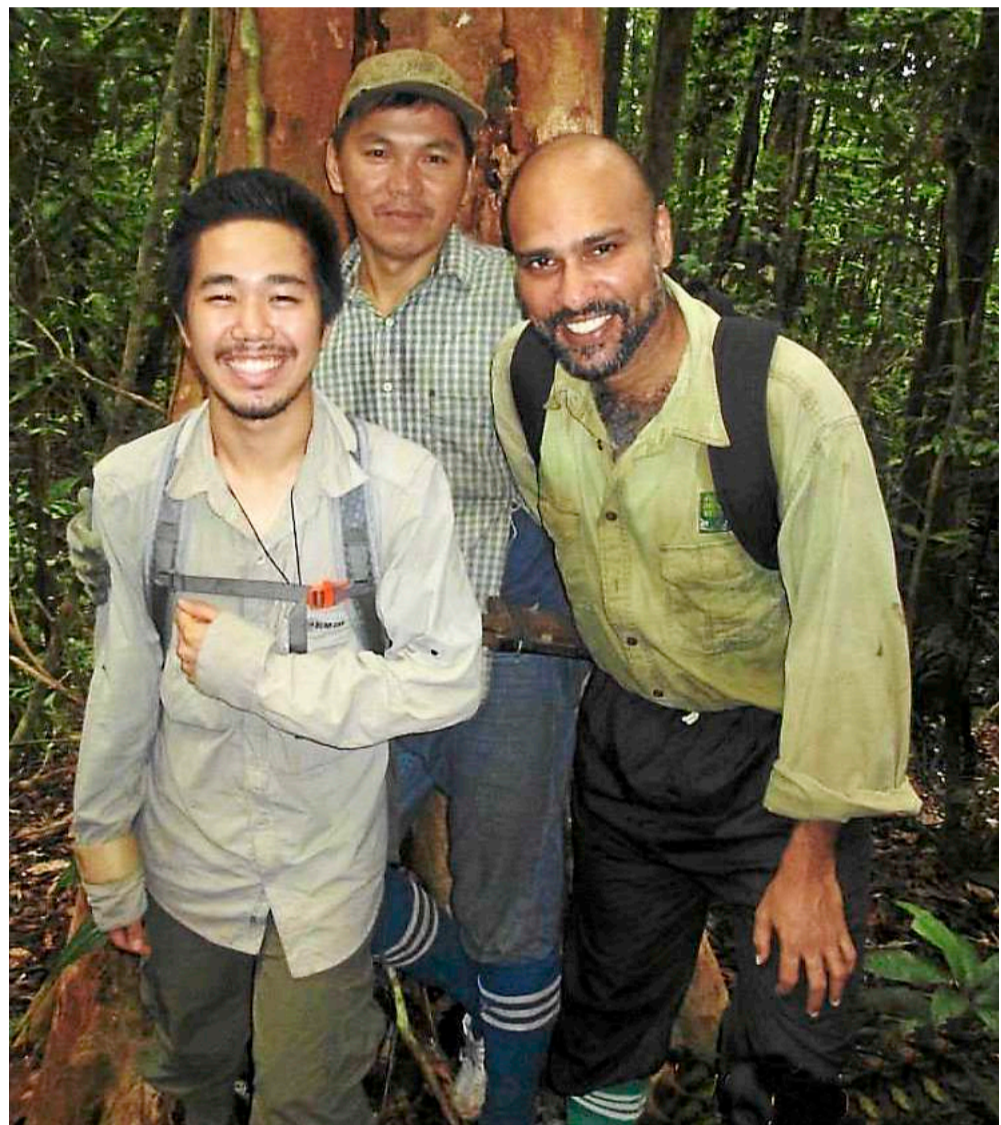
The FMU is thriving with biodiversity, particularly small carnivores, which are considered threatened under the International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species. Some of these species are endemic to Borneo.

A former field researcher with Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), John said the society initiated an exploratory research in Sela'an Linau between 2004 and 2009, adding that initial data collected showed the logging concession area was rich in fauna, particularly small carnivores.

"The Hose's Civet is endemic to Borneo and during WCS's research period, we recorded the highest encounter rate of the animal, between 20 and 25 images captured compared to other scientists in other parts of Borneo," he said.

John said Hoscapp decided to continue where WCS had left off with in-depth research in Sela'an Linau last year, focusing on Hose's Civet and small carnivores which were mainly shy, nocturnal and least known to science.

One of the significant images captured by Hoscapp so far was the Bornean Bay Cat last year, one of the



Adventurous: John (right) with two of his team members, Seth Wong (left) and Robert Lajo. — Photos courtesy of Hoscapp Borneo

rarest and most elusive cats in the world, he said.

The Bornean Bay Cat was not recorded in an initial exploratory study by WCS, John observed.

Other animals captured on camera included the banded civet, Malay civet, masked palm civet, pangolin, Bulwer's pheasant, short-tailed mon-

goose, Sunda clouded leopard, leopard cat, sun bear and yellow-throated marten.

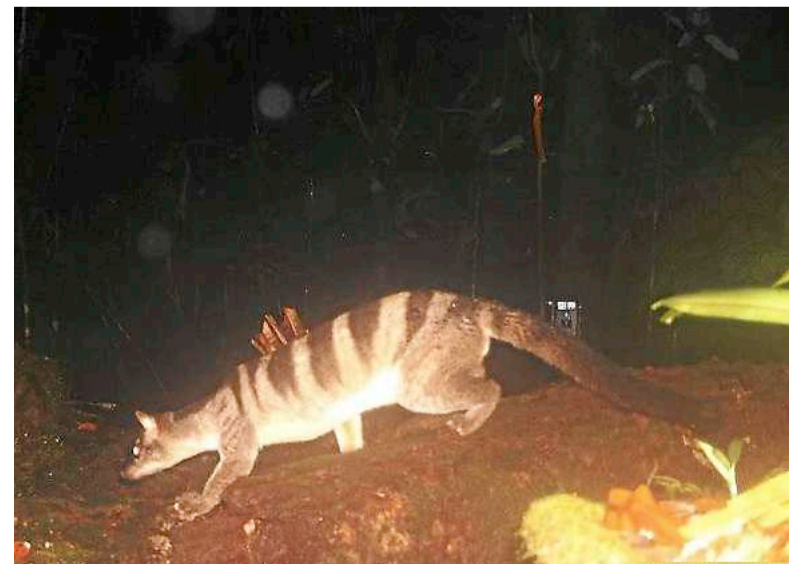
John highlighted that more researches needed to be carried out in the area to better determine the population, distribution and factors affecting the survival of the animals.

Hoscapp Borneo is a research-based

conservation project that studies small mammalian carnivores such as civets, mongooses, martens and wild cats in Sela'an Linau FMU.

It aims to recommend guidelines and management strategies that will ensure the conservation and long-term survival of small carnivores in logging concessions in Sarawak.

Rare: A short-tailed mongoose captured on camera.



Nocturnal: A banded civet caught on camera in Murud Kecil.