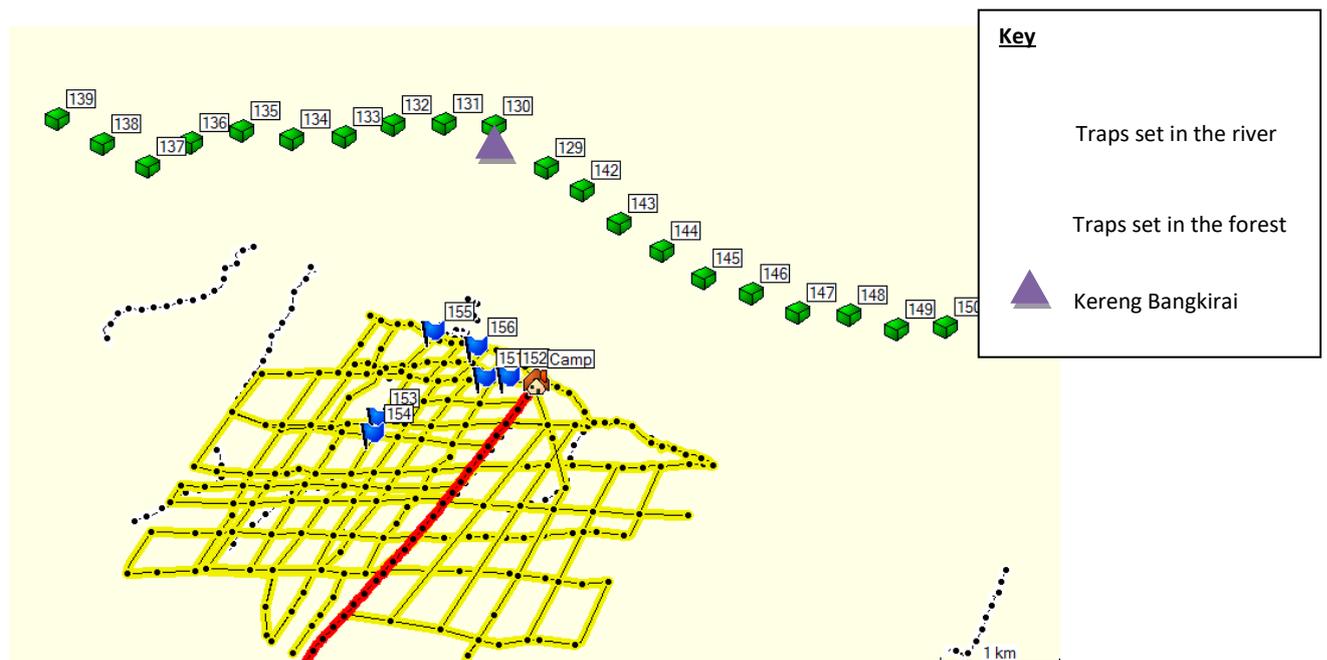


Project Update: October 2014

Arriving in July 2014, I spent the first month getting meetings arranged with the necessary people before sampling was able to start. This included researchers at the local university to build collaboration with the local university, as well as the local Community Patrol Team. The Patrol Team work fighting fires and with community conservation and socialisation work, and they are the main gatekeepers to the local communities for my project. Discussing my project with them, the CPT and local researchers expressed interest as well as support for the project, which then allowed me to start setting out the traps in September 2014. In the coming months I hope to strengthen my connection with the University of Palangka Raya and the researchers working there.

September 2014 was my first fish sampling month. The forest has been extremely dry, and so we started our sampling in the river with the hopes that rain would come soon. I have two research assistants for this project; Dudin and Unyil. Dudin is a fisherman and has worked with OuTrop mainly by ferrying researchers and research assistants across the Sabangau River between Kereng Bangkirai (the closest village) and the camp. Unyil has worked for OuTrop for some years now as a research assistant and is now helping out on this project as well. Before starting our sampling I went through all of the measurements we would be taking and explained in Indonesian how to use the equipment and what the numbers meant for the larger research objectives.

In the river, we set out 20 traps, approximately 3.6 km upstream from Kereng, and 3.6 km downstream from Kereng. Each trap was placed approximately 400 m from the previous, and the traps were alternated between the two banks of the river. The traps were set below the water, at about halfway the total depth of the water. They were baited with a mixture of fermented soya bean and rotten shrimp paste and left overnight. On the first day of trapping, trap number 13 was lost (possibly taken, according to Dudin). Therefore, 19 traps were used for 5 days, leading to a total of 95 trap nights.



When checking the traps on the first day, it was clear that a subsample would have to be taken for the weight and length measurements in some cases. This was due to the

unexpectedly high number of fish catches (one trap consistently trapping over 300 fish). This led to a slight change in methods, from measuring and weighing all fish trapped, to if there was an extremely high number of fish trapped (>100), then a minimum of five randomly chosen fish from each species would be measured and weighed. Please note that the five fish is a minimum number, and the actual number of fish measured and weighed for each species also depended on the number of species present (if there were only a couple of species in a trap, more than five individuals would be measured) and the time and number of traps that was left. In this way, it was often that more than five individuals were measured. This sub-sampling was necessary to be able to check all traps in one working day, as well as minimizing fish mortality and stress.

A total of 5,696 fish were trapped in the river, with 18 different species. Analysis of the data will begin in the coming months.

In the forest, six traps were placed out of the planned 20 due to a lack of sufficient water (10 cm depth minimum is needed). Two were placed in pools caused by tree-fall, two in Canal A, and two in Canal D. A total of 428 fish were caught in 5 days, with 16 different species. One trap on Canal A was lost in the last two days of trapping due to trampling from bearded pigs. This leads to a total of 28 trap nights.

This coming month it is expected that with the lack of rain, less traps will be able to be set. If no traps are set, then trapping will be done in a bigger canal for five days, 'Canal Bahkan'. Further months of sampling will allow us to see which species are probably specific to river and forest.

With regards to the structured interviews, I have completed the questions and given the interview to the Community Patrol Team to look over and change if necessary. It is unexpected for the interviews to take place this coming month as the Patrol Team are extremely busy with extinguishing the many fires that are burning at the moment (forest and land fires due to burning peatlands. This happens every year during the dry season). I hope to get this part of the project rolling next month!

Bejes

With the fish pond project, harvesting will not take place this year as it is believed that most of the fish escaped due to faults in the fences. Construction has been taking place this past month to fix these issues before the wet season starts again. This week I will be taking a look at the fish ponds to see where I can place some traps for a few days in order to sample the fish present. This will then be replicated every month. Then we can also get the harvesting data from next summer once the bejes are harvested.

Other project information

I have had an article published (pages 35-37 in the IUCN Freshwater Fish Specialist Group Newsletter, which explains the project and why it's important: <http://www.iucnffsg.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Sept.-FFSG-Newsletter.pdf>

Photos!



Above: My research assistant checking one of the traps in the river.

Left: Success! Fish caught in one of the traps in the forest.

Bottom: Some of the fish caught in the river and the forest, top left: *Belontia hasselti*, top right: *Cyclocheilichthys janthochir* and bottom left: *Eirmotus spp.*

