

Project Update: April 2010

My team currently consists of five local Indonesian field guides who have extensive knowledge Kerinci Seblat National Park, myself and university students from the National University of Indonesia (UNAS). I also have counterparts with the local government - Tamen Nasional Kerinci Seblat (TNKS) - who have given me permission to work in the national park and occasionally supply field rangers when needed. We train university students in field techniques such as camera-trap set-up, GPS as well as analytical skills such as GIS (Geographical Informational System).

We are currently halfway through fieldwork; we have completed one study site and are 6 weeks into another. Our first study site was an area called Sipurak, a primary hill/submontane forest adjacent to a logging concession. Twenty-one camera-traps were set up along animal and ridge trails over an area of 100 km². Data has been collected over the period of 3 months and is ready for analysis. The second study site called Bungo is a primary/secondary lowland/hill forests with a few sites in and out of the national park. Similarly, 21 camera traps have been set up over an area of the same size and will be placed for a period of 3 months. Cameras are checked every 2 weeks for maintenance purposes. We use a mixture of digital and film cameras so therefore film and batteries have to be replaced on each check. The third study site, RKE, will be visited in July 2010 with plans to set up 26 camera-traps over an area of approximately 110km².

In addition to these camera-trap surveys inside the national park, the team and I have been conducting studies on human-sun bear conflicts in the neighbouring farmlands, with the addition of another site that has been classified by the local government as a high conflict area. Here, we have been determining farmers' and the local community's attitudes, perceptions and tolerance towards sun bears and other wildlife species by using structured interviews, informal discussions and focus groups. Within each village we have interviewed 30 farm households with the intent to monitor these farmlands for the rest of the year to monitor crop raiding/livestock depredation and develop a reporting system for conflicts. Human-sun bear conflict is a very poorly documented occurrence. Therefore I have been working closely with the IUCN/SSC Human-Bear Conflicts Group and have developed a standardised reporting form that can be used for all sun bear conflicts across their natural range. In each village, we have trained a number of local people to act as enumerators to collect information on sun bear crop damage/livestock depredation and report back to the team and myself. Every 2 weeks we visit the villages to make sure the assessments made by the enumerators are accurate.

