

Project Update: April 2008

The first sampling season was carried out between the months of October 2007 to March 2008. Over 560 faecal samples were collected from lots 1-4, assisted by Mr Rosman Sakong from Red Ape Encounters (community based ecotours), and Dr. Benoit Goossens from Cardiff University. Boat surveys were carried out during late evening and early morning to spot groups and collect samples, respectively. New fixation techniques for parasite screening were learnt and applied by Mr. Sakong and MSL. Additionally, sucrose flotation techniques were used to separate parasite eggs from faecal material and so far the presence of *Trichuris* spp. is evident in almost all the groups; hookworms are also quite conspicuous even though some data was lost during the optimisation of the technique, we are confident to have more consistent results during the next sampling season. Samples were stored for posterior genetic studies and nearly 240 were subjected to DNA extraction. At the time being, amplification of microsatellites in proboscis monkey samples is being optimised.

Personally, I would like to say that the degradation of the habitat is quite shocking. Most of the floodplain is covered by oil palm plantations in such a way that until a few kilometres from the river one thinks it's the only type of vegetation. Hopefully, our results will be added to the conservation management plan and to the list of arguments to be used by the Malaysian government to buy the land back for the restoration of the Kinabatangan habitat.



Left: Milena registering GPS coordinates from collected samples. ©Benoît Goossens. Right: Rosman fixing samples for parasite screening.