



# The Sumatran Ranger Project Quarterly Report 4

December 2020 Leuser Ecosystem, North Sumatra

# Note from program leader



## **Our Vision**

To provide long term protection of the forest edge and help conserve biodiversity within the Leuser Ecosystem in North Sumatra

## **Our Mission**

To halt activities that damage the forest edge environment and are a threat to wildlife, and to support forest edge communities living within the Leuser Ecosystem

Despite the enormous effects of Covid-19, Sumatran Ranger Project (SRP) has had a productive year and accomplished a number of objectives around community support and human-wildlife conflict mitigation and response. Other projects such as the Sumatran elephant population census have been delayed due to travel restrictions and National Park closures, but the team have continued to maintain a monitoring trail and data collection.

2020 has had a significant focus on human-tiger conflict and supporting communities to help reduce livestock loss. We constructed the first predator proof-corral and construction of a second is underway, with plans for more along multiple forest edge communities.

Our support of two communities that have previously dealt with substantial elephant conflict have begun to resolve conflict events themselves using non-lethal means, proving our presence has made a difference.

This year SRP has collaborated extensively with government environmental agencies and responded to conflict events, conducted patrols and coordinated a community meeting alongside them.

We are incredibly grateful to our supporters and donors throughout such a difficult year. We recognise that funding has been hard to come by in 2020 and are appreciative of continued support.

**Amy Robbins**



# Human-wildlife conflict



*Livestock predation by a Sumatran tiger*

Human-tiger conflict has increased drastically throughout 2020. This year SRP responded to eight separate livestock predation incidents from Sumatran tigers. All incidents resulted in the responding rangers driving the tiger back into the forest

using noise deterrents and disposing of the deceased livestock.



*Driving a tiger back into the forest*

At the time of writing this, the team is in the field as part of a response team dealing with an unprecedented livestock predation

incident where five cows were killed in one night by more than one tiger.

Due to the unfeasibility of compensating each cow owner, SRP has instead focused on providing a practical solution combined with education.

In August we constructed a 300m<sup>2</sup> predator-proof corral in the village of Batu Ronging, often afflicted with livestock loss. The corral holds 35-40 cows and is approximately 15km from the National Park, which exceeds the distance tigers are usually found within the community. In addition, our team advises forest edge communities to graze their livestock a minimum of 2km from the forest edge overnight. The corral has so far been a success and a second corral in a neighbouring community is under construction thanks to



support from Sumatra Community and Conservation Trust. We hope to secure funding to continue to be able to support communities in this way.



*Completed livestock corral*

In July the Sumatran Ranger Project team joined with government agencies Forest Management Unit KPH, National Park authority TNGL and Nature Conservation Agency BKSDA to conduct a joint patrol in the Bukit Lawang area in response to increased tiger sightings in and near the village. The collaboration

cemented our relationship with these government agencies and as a result we often jointly respond to conflict events. Another outcome was a community meeting coordinated by SRP, to discuss solutions with locals and alternatives to grazing livestock against the forest border at night.



*Collaborative human-wildlife conflict patrol*

The team responded to several incidents of Sumatran elephants entering community land and causing damage to plantations. Each event resulted in the rangers

driving the elephants back to the forest using noise deterrents at a safe distance.

In June the team helped locals drive Sumatran orangutans back to the forest away from Durian crops, and a Malayan sun bear from private land after damaging trees.



*Tree damage from a sun bear*

Flyers were distributed to several forest edge communities with a

human-wildlife conflict hotline number to contact the SRP team.

SRP also continues to support local farmers with noise deterrents to help drive away elephants.

## Snares

Just under 60 active snares were deactivated and removed on patrols in 2020. Although the presence of snares on patrols has drastically decreased over the past four years, it is still necessary for our team to continue their patrols and monitoring in these areas given the persistence of snare setting along the forest border where the National Park rangers do not patrol.



*Snare removal, July 2020*

## Elephant conflict

Due to the team's hard work and presence in two of the forest edge communities we work in (Sumber Waras and Pancasila), the incidents and severity of human-elephant conflict have reduced. Alongside this, due to lack of phone signal, poor roads and bad weather, the team are not always being contacted in times of conflict. Nonetheless, feedback from local farmers is that they are now more confident dealing with conflict events without assistance and SRP

will continue to support them by providing noise deterrents. In September the team were notified of an elephant herd leaving the forest and entering community land, to which they immediately responded and moved the elephants on safely from the recommended distance of >50m. The team stayed in the area for two days to ensure they did not return and the herd hasn't been seen in the area recently.



*Rubber tree damage by elephants*

# Sumatran elephants



Due to Covid-19, the Sumatran elephant population census SRP is assisting Sumatran Elephant Project (SEP) which has been on hold as international researchers are unable to enter the National Park until early 2021. Research permits are also delayed.



*Wild elephant near Sumber Waras*

A conflict monitoring team was established in July in collaboration with SEP in order to help improve

SRP's ability to assist in elephant conflict events and to begin data collection for the census. Community socialisation in the villages of Sumber Waras and Pancasila resulted in a 20km monitoring trail being cleared for the team to patrol and to enable them to quickly reach areas where elephants are known to pass from the forest into the community land therefore preventing and managing future conflict events more effectively. The trail traverses farmland and known elephant routes, and took 20 days to complete. To help create stronger community relations two community members were employed to help with trail construction. From September the team have been using this trail as their patrol route,

focussing on recording elephant data.



*Clearing the 20km trail*

Community meetings were held in villages adjacent to the buffer zone from Tangkahan to Pancasila to allow the communities to learn the team's main objectives, voice any concerns or opinions and become

involved with the safeguarding of both the communities and the wildlife.



*Patrol trail with elephant footprints*

As we (SRP and SEP) await the reopening of the National Park and permission to continue research, there is still much work to do to contribute to the population census. GPS locations of dung and footprints collected over the past four years will be mapped and compared, recording elephant locations and movements. This will provide vital data for the population study once

research can resume. The team continue to record evidence of elephants and activity in community farmland. Importantly, the team are continuing with dung surveys using the MIKE S system for dung pile classification.



*Dung surveys*



## Community Support

In May we helped a kindergarten in the village of Porli to repair their crumbling playground and classroom in order to continue to provide education to around 50 locals children. Materials and labour were sourced locally, and the community is very grateful for the improvements. We were able to renovate the classroom and provide new tables and chairs and repair and paint all the dilapidated playground equipment. Conservation activities in forest edge communities such as this cannot be successful without ensuring basic needs are supported and communities feel engaged and



informed. When we can, we will endeavour to assist in meeting these needs.



*Before renovation*



*After renovation*

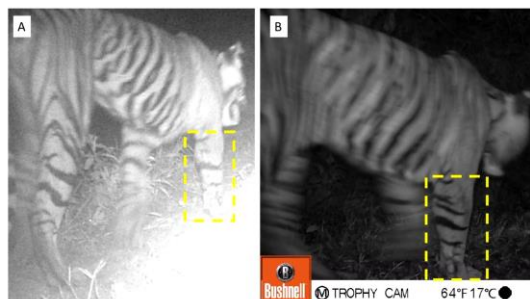
## Camera Traps

During 2020 our eight camera traps have been placed in a privately owned oil palm plantation adjacent to the Gunung Leuser National Park. Here, we capture significantly higher biodiversity than our previous site, as the plantation occupies an area of land in between pockets of forest, and wildlife use this to travel between them. Most months we are capturing images of Sumatran tigers and Malayan sun bears as well as smaller species.



*Sumatran tiger*

Recently we have started to collaborate with Environment Conservation Consultancy (ECC) who analyse the images and provide an estimate of species density and occupancy within the area. They have begun to identify individual tigers within the area using stripe patterns.



*Courtesy of ECC*

Our camera traps are positioned opportunistically to investigate the diversity of species within the plantation. Over time this will build an understanding of the importance of the area to wildlife and provide evidence that this area should be converted back to forest.

From January to September 2020, 18 vertebrate species were captured on camera (see table).



Species name	Common name	IUCN status
<i>Tragulus kanchil</i>	Lesser mouse-deer	LC
<i>Panthera tigris sumatrae</i>	Sumatran tiger	CR
<i>Pardofelis marmorata</i>	Marbled cat	V
<i>Prionailurus bengalensis</i>	Leopard cat	LC
<i>Helarctos malayanus</i>	Malayan sun bear	V
<i>Herpestes javanicus</i>	Javan mongoose	LC
<i>Aonyx cinereus</i>	Asian short clawed otter	V
<i>Paradoxurus hermaphroditus</i>	Palm civet	LC
<i>Macaca nemestrina</i>	Southern pig-tailed macaque	V
<i>Macaca fascicularis</i>	Long-tailed macaque	LC
<i>Presbytis thomasi</i>	Thomas's langur	V
<i>Sus scrofa</i>	Wild boar	LC
<i>Hystrix brachyura</i>	Malayan porcupine	LC
<i>Varanus salvator</i>	Asian water monitor	LC



<i>Chalcophaps indica</i>	Common emerald dove	LC
<i>Nisaetus cirrhatus</i>	Changeable hawk eagle	LC
<i>Martes flavigula</i>	Yellow throated marten	LC
<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	Western marsh harrier	LC



*Southern pig-tailed macaque and infant*

The Sumatran environment is harsh on camera traps and we will be seeking support in 2021 to increase our pool to 12 cameras.



## Into 2021...

The coming 12 months will see SRP building community support for human-wildlife conflict events, particularly with predator proof livestock corrals and awareness raising. We hope to continue to build on the emerging work around identifying individual tigers and collaborating with governmental agencies to ensure communities feel supported and heard.

In the interests of professional development, SRP aims to be able to facilitate upskilling and skill sharing with other ranger teams in Indonesia. Cross fostering skills and knowledge is crucial to the ongoing development of our team through increasing motivation and output, and the potential impact they can have.

We are looking forward to further contributing to the Sumatran elephant population census and understanding more about the patterns and behaviour of the herd we are monitoring. This relic breeding herd is important to the population and our ongoing monitoring and data collection will help depict where and how they live their lives, and ultimately, how to keep them and the communities living alongside them safe.

We are heading into 2021 optimistic but realistic and thankful for those who got us through a very challenging year. We look forward to your continued support to enable us to help keep this iconic ecosystem safe.



# Contact

[sumatranrangers@gmail.com](mailto:sumatranrangers@gmail.com)

[www.sumatranrangerproject.com](http://www.sumatranrangerproject.com)

@sumatranrangerproject

## THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS & SUPPORTERS



