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Mammals of Mt Dulit, Sarawak, an important type locality: with An Annotated List of Species Collected by Charles Hose, 1891, and the Oxford University Exploration Club Expedition, 1932, now Represented in the Natural History Museum, London, and the Sarawak Museum

Gathorne, Earl of Cranbrook MA, PhD, PNBS (K)

Technical Assistant to the Curator, Sarawak Museum, 1956-58.

lordcranbrook@greatglemhamfarms.co.uk

ABSTRACT

In 1932, Tom Harrisson, later Curator of the Sarawak Museums (1947-1966), first visited Sarawak as leader of the Oxford University Exploration Club, on an expedition targeting Mt Dulit, type locality of several endemic Borneo mammal species. Supported by Rajah C.V. Brooke, the expedition was initially led by E. Banks, current Curator of the Sarawak Museum. On 27th July, the party reached Base Camp, prepared by the Museum on the bank of the Tinjar river. A 'High Camp' was built on the Dulit ridge at 4000 ft (1219 m) and, in September, a subsidiary camp at 2500 ft (760 m) by the Koyan river on the southwest flank of the Dulit range. Banks, with A. W. Moore and two Museum collectors, made an excursion to Gn. Kalulong, 1573 m. The expedition closed in November. The subsequent output amounted to 29 publications, including a report by Harrisson and Hartley on 1050 bird skins presented to the British Museum (Natural History), 10 botanical papers and 15 on insects. Mammal skins were also deposited at the British Museum, but remained unrecorded until John Edwards Hill finally registered the collection. Hill's list is reproduced here with annotations. In recent years, the Dulit forest has been logged up to about 900 m. Access provided by logging trails has already benefited local naturalists, and is likely to encourage others to investigate this landmark mountain ridge. The mammal collection of the 1932 Sarawak Museum and Oxford University Exploration Club provides historic baseline data.

Keywords: Sarawak, Harrisson, Dulit, Mammals

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JABATAN MUZIUUM SARAWAK

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Gathorne, Earl of Cranbrook *MA, PhD*, PNBS (K)
Technical Assistant to the Curator, Sarawak Museum, 1956-58.
lordcranbrook@greatglemhamfarms.co.uk

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INTRODUCTION

Gunung (Mount) Dulit is a prominent escarpment of Lower Miocene sandstone extending NE-SW for some 50 km parallel to the course of the Tinjar river in its upper reaches. The summit forms a ridge varying from 1100 m elevation to just over 1400 m at its highest point. The slope facing the Tinjar is steep, and is drained by torrential streams; there are many cliffs, some ~60 m high, including spectacular waterfalls (Richards, 1936). The other flank of the mountain descends more gently to the valley of the Sg Koyan, a tributary of the Belaga river. At its eastern end, a saddle of some 600 m elevation links Dulit with the upland range that forms the international border between Malaysia (Sarawak) and Indonesia. The mountain has therefore long been recognised as a part of the 'highlands of Borneo' (Hose, 1893a).

As the largest tributary of the Baram river, the Tinjar was included in the region over which governance was ceded by the Sultan of Brunei Darussalam to Rajah Charles Brooke in 1882. To

administer his new Baram district, Brooke appointed Claude Champion de Crespigny as the first Resident. About the same time, the Anglican Bishop of Sarawak and Labuan, Rev. George Hose, recommended his adventurous young nephew Charles (born 1863) to the Rajah and, in 1884, Charles Hose was appointed a Cadet in the Sarawak service and assistant to Resident de Crespigny. A priority task for the administration based in the new fort at Claudetown (now Marudi) was to open the interior of the Baram district, and evaluate its resources.

Consequently, on 14th September 1891 Charles Hose set off by boat from Claudetown on a journey to explore the upper Tinjar and Mount Dulit. He was accompanied by Alfred Hart Everett, a naturalist-collector who soon afterwards published the first comprehensive list of Borneo mammals (Everett, 1893), and whose example inspired Hose to collect biological and ethnological objects. On 19th September they reached a point on the Tinjar at the foot of Mount Dulit, where they disembarked. Hose remained on the mountain until 27th October (Hose, 1893a). He later described the ‘conquest of Dulit’ as one of the highlights of his life in Sarawak (Hose, 1927, chapter 10). He died in 1929.

A few years later, in 1932, the Brooke government of Sarawak hosted eight members of the Oxford University Exploration Club (OUEC). The group was led by Tom H. Harrisson (1911-1976) who thus made his first trip to Sarawak, where he later served as Government Ethnologist and Curator of the Sarawak Museum from 1947 until 1966. His predecessor as Curator from 1924-1945 was E. ‘Bill’ Banks. In 1931-32, Banks was familiar with the story of Hose’s exploration and collections, and he set a return visit to Dulit as the OUEC’s principal objective. Rajah C. Vyner Brooke detailed Banks to lead the group, and also seconded D. S. McLeod, Assistant Curator of Forests, two native surveyors, named Junit and Taha according to Shackleton (1938), and two Museum collectors to accompany the expedition; Sarawak Oilfields Ltd loaned a dresser, and Singapore Botanical Gardens provided a collector; the expedition members also took on a clerk, three collectors, four servants, one outboard motor expert, two boatmen and 40-50 locally engaged labourers (‘coolies’) paid at an agreed rate of 40 cents per day (Banks, 1933). In May, 1932, Banks himself made a preparatory visit ‘to meet the Tinjar people’; the District Officer F. H. Pollard and Native Officer Wan Taha organised the construction of housing according to specification, ‘on top and at the foot of the mountain’, and arranged for the provision and prices of fresh foods (‘pigs, fowls, fish, vegetables’). Banks and the first contingent of OUEC members left Claudetown on 26th July 1932 and on 29th reached the prepared base camp on the left bank of the Tinjar at Long Lejok. After three months, the members scattered on different projects: with collectors and a surveyor, Harrisson followed the Belaga river to the Rejang, while Banks accompanied OUEC member Moore to make collections on Mt Kalulong. The party was reunited at Long Lejok for a ‘stupendous farewell’ on 29th November, after exactly four months (Banks, 1933).

In recent years, the lower slopes of Dulit have been logged up to about 900 m. At the same time, the logging trails have simplified access to the mountain. In August 2008, based at Long Aton, on the Tinjar, a group including Dow and Reels (2009) collected Odonata (dragonflies) on Mount Dulit. In 2018, two members of the Kuching Branch of the Malaysian Nature Society, Branch Chair Rose Au