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THE AVIFAUNA OF UPPER REJANG SARAWAK, MALAYSIA

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SUMMARY

The avifauna of Upper Rejang, Sarawak, Malaysia was surveyed in June and November/December 1994. The surveys were conducted by a team of workers from the Department of Wildlife and National Parks, Peninsular Malaysia (Perhilitan) and Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS). The purpose of the survey was to determine the distribution, species richness and density of the avifauna in the area. A total of 175 species representing 39 families were recorded. Of 175 species, 163 were recorded in secondary forest and 55 species in primary forest. The density of birds per hectare from line transects in the primary and secondary forests were estimated at 3 birds/ha and 4 birds/ha, respectively. The distribution and protection status of birds in the surveyed area are also reported.

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INTRODUCTION

The Upper Rejang catchment area is drained by four major tributaries. The longest among them is Batang Balui, joined by Sungai Bahau at the upper reaches, and by Sungai Linau and Sungai Murum downstream before entering Batang Rejang (Figure 1).

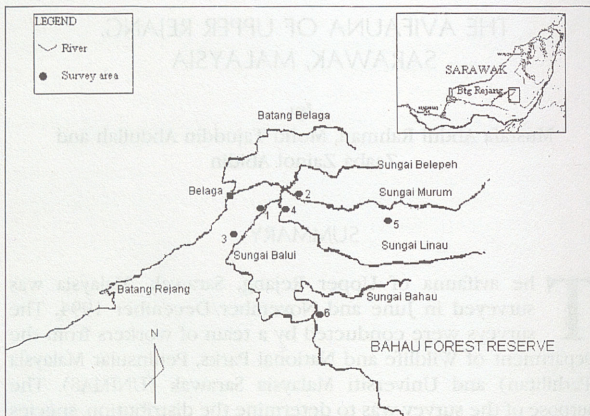


Fig. 1: Map showing the river system of Upper Rejang area where the surveys were conducted.

These rivers have been very important to the local people as a mean of communication and source of livelihood. The navigability of the river depends very much on rainfall. It becomes very dangerous to travel by boat along these rivers during the rainy season because of the presence of numerous rapids there. From our experience the water level of the rivers can rise or drop as much as five metres within 12 hours. During the dry season, the water level is too low for passage and a lot of pulling and pushing of the boat is needed to pass the rapids.

Bird sample collections and surveys in Sarawak started as early as in the 1800s. Wallace had been collecting samples of animals including birds in Sarawak and the rest of Southeast Asia in the middle of the 1800's (Wallace 1896). Sharpe (1877) has written some notes on the ornithology of Borneo on behalf of Mr Everett who explored in the area in the 1870's. Some of the places mentioned in the report were Tagora, Puak Hill, Sirimbau, Busan, Belidah, Gunong Trahn, Bintulu, Simunjan,