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# Benoit Goossens' visit to Wyoming



Benoit and Wes Martel at the Wind River Indian Reservation.



Workshop participants in Laramie.



Wild Bisons at the Wind River Indian Reservation

Last September, Benoit Goossens spent 10 days in Wyoming to take part in an International Wildlife Policy Conference Planning Workshop, the conference will be held in Jackson Hole in 2025. Prior to the planning workshop, Benoit had the privilege to visit the Grand Teton National Park, the National Elk Refuge and the Yellowstone National Park, as well as the Wind River Indian Reservation where he felt deeply inspired by Wes Martel, a Senior Wind River Conservation Associate. During his trip he met with dedicated conservationists managing the parks in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. Recently, Cardiff University (CU) and the University of Wyoming (UW) entered into a 5-year partnership agreement. As part of this agreement, Danau Girang Field Centre (CU's field centre) and the AMK Ranch (UW's field centre located in Grand Teton NP) will collaborate, exchanging and training students, engaging in some exciting projects on climate change and landscape ecology.

## Meet the PTY's



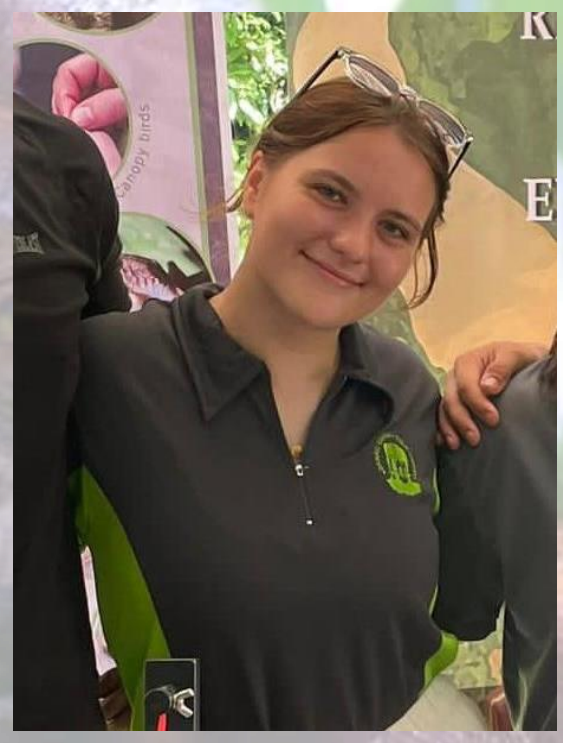
Hi, my name is Alyssa and I'm a biological sciences student at Cardiff University. I was so excited to come to DGFC as it is a once in a lifetime type of opportunity that I couldn't miss, plus the chance to experience new cultures and work with some amazing professionals. I have already seen some amazing animal species and met some fantastic scientists and travellers and can't wait to see what's next. I'm really enjoying the excitement of each day not knowing what we might be able to see out in the field, as well as enjoying how kind and family like everyone is, almost feels like a second home already. The gain of research experience will help immensely when it comes to completing university as well as future employment! I get very excited looking for species like frogs when it has rained, as well as going through camera trap footage and seeing what has been wondering around the forests. I'm looking forward to starting my project, hopefully on nocturnal mammals and red light, such as Tarsier and Slow loris! So far, my favourite thing will have to be getting to see rare species such as pangolins, orangutans, elephants and pythons! Also, one of my favourite things has to be the people especially when playing music in the evenings.

Hey I'm Harry! I chose to come to DG for my PTY because I wanted to commit to valuable research in an area heavily impacted by human expansion, and work in an area of such high diversity. I hope to come out of the year more confident in what I want to work as a career, I feel I've become all round a more positive and enthusiastic person who is engaging with field biology more! It will be helpful in the future as I've got so much more field experience now and feel more confident in planning and leading, and have got to know this area of the world far better. I'm very interested in bird diversity as well as soundscapes and so I hope to conduct research looking at estimating bird diversity between secondary forest and regrown sites and plantations by using audio moths and mist netting, this may change but so far, I think it's a solid idea foundation that I plan on working out properly soon. My favourite things in the first two months at DG have been helping to tag a pangolin, seeing an orangutan on the first day, watching hornbills on the tree outside the studio, talking with everyone whilst soil sampling and using this opportunity to get into photography and create a portfolio. This has also been a chance to commit to more creative things e.g drawing, guitar and reading.





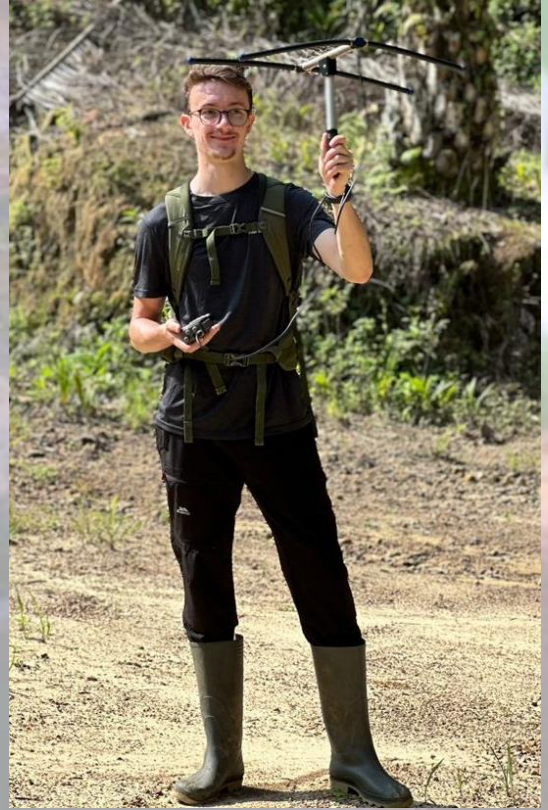
Hi! My name is Sabah and as part of my Zoology degree at Cardiff university I was lucky enough to have the choice of doing a placement year here at DGFC. I came here because to be able to do something this special at this age is something I couldn't miss! In the future I would like to have a career as a field biologist working with different cat species, so from this year I hope to gain field skills I wouldn't be able to practice in most other places, such as the chance to work with and see pangolins and leopard cats would be amazing. I'm loving DGFC so far, especially helping in the cat tracking. For my project I'm really interested in conducting predator and prey analysis in mammals, using small mammal traps and camera trapping. I hope to conduct analysis on the abundance and density of mammalian carnivores and their prey in plantations and our Regrow Borneo restored forests. My favourite thing so far has been seeing an elephant bull on the main path, watching a juvenile orangutan on the trees outside the studio and just the overall DGFC community.



Hi! I'm Tom, I'm an Earth sciences student at Cardiff University. I saw the placement advertised on my university website and was intrigued about the prospect of staying in the Bornean rainforest and working in the Kinabatangan wildlife sanctuary for a year. After looking into what DGFC is and seeing work that is done here, it was too good an opportunity to miss. Truly a once in a lifetime experience! During my time here so far, I have been able to gain some hands-on research experience, such as measuring soil samples, root samples and leaf litter, tracking pangolins and leopard cats, and calculating the carbon sequestered by the botanical plots. It was pretty tough but I feel like I'm settling in and I'm loving it. Every day we see something cool whether it's an orangutan, hornbill or crocodile. I know I would like to work in the conservation/climate change field in the future and so undertaking this placement would help me get a better idea and understanding of my future. For my project I'm interested in analysing the geography of the riverbank, and possibly using a drone to map the riparian forests along the riverbank and study the erosion. The best thing so far has been seeing a pygmy elephant in the wild so close to the centre, it was definitely a surreal experience!



Hi! I'm Will, I'm a Zoology student at Cardiff University, I chose to come to DGFC for my placement year because being able to see endangered species and hopefully make a difference in their recovery is an amazing opportunity and a goal of mine. So far in the first 2 months I've managed to become a lot more confident in conducting research, especially independently, it's been great! I hope this placement will be useful in understanding how to plan research for future projects and writing future proposals and be really useful in helping be more employable among other scientists due to this unique opportunity. I am passionate about helping species recover in their populations and creating ideas to help them recover. I have some project ideas involving pangolin sleeping sites and their diet. So far, the best thing for me has been expanding my skills as a wildlife photographer and photographing the amazing species we have seen so far, such as yellow-throated martens and hornbills! as well as really enjoying the pangolin tracking.



Hey, I'm James, I study Zoology at Aberystwyth University, I wanted a placement year outside the UK, searched a lot of places, and DGFC was the first to get back to me! It was such an interesting opportunity I had to take it. I think the main thing that I wish to gain this year is mainly personal growth, both as a person, such as learning and experiencing a different culture, and professional, such as the skills and experiences to further my future career. I feel like I've become slightly more confident in who I am, I'm fitting in with the local staff and enjoy spending time with them! I'm loving my time here so far, seeing all the wildlife and immersing myself with the culture. It can be hard here both mentally and physically, but I can definitely look past it. Honestly, I'm really enjoying learning more about the local flora which I didn't expect, as well as the fauna. Project wise, I'm hoping to conduct my research on butterfly diversity, and moths and how the Lunar cycle impacts them by looking at diversity and species richness. My favourite thing here so far, is probably getting to know the staff here and talking to them about their experience, and learning from them, it feels like a home away from home!

## A Yellow-throated Marten on the main path!

A rare and lucky sighting for our Professional Training Year students (PTYs) on their way to morning fieldwork! They spotted two yellow-throated martens hopping down the main path together. These elusive creatures are found in Borneo's forests and mostly arboreal and omnivorous, feeding on fruit, birds and squirrels. *Martes flavigula*, is a medium-sized mustelid with a distinctive yellowish throat patch, inhabiting a wide range of habitats from tropical rainforests to subtropical and temperate forests across Asia. Listed as 'Least concern' by the IUCN, it is one of the most common diurnal carnivores. One of our PTY's William Evans managed to capture the amazing photograph shown, before the martens hopped away into the forest.



## Borneo Bird Festival.

This year DGFC was invited to take part in the 2023 Borneo Bird Festival. One of our PhD students Maz, a research assistant Ray, and two of our PTYs Harry and Sabah, went to the Sepilok Rainforest Discover Centre to run a stall for two days, raising awareness for Regrow Borneo, showcasing DGFC and all of the work that is done here. Such as our 'Leopard cat project' run by our PhD student Amanda Wilson, and our 'Pangolin project' collaboration with Hong Kong University. We also had a spinning wheel game where people could match the bird species name with its picture, the aim of this was to get people to engage with the stall and to help educate both children and adults on the bird species of Borneo, it was a big hit! The staff and students thoroughly enjoyed interacting with the visitors and exploring the festival themselves. Picture 1: Harry, Sabah, Maz and Ray at the DGFC booth. Picture 2: Ray and Maz interacting with the visitors.



# September Long Stay Arrivals



I am Viktor, a second-year master's student at the University of Antwerp in Belgium, pursuing a degree in Biodiversity, Conservation & Restoration. Additionally, I would say I am an energetic and enthusiastic lady, that is amazed by literally every little thing happening here in the jungle. To graduate, I have to undertake an internship at a conservation-oriented organization. As I had already, quite impulsively, booked a flight to Malaysia, I thought why not ask ChatGTP to recommend me some organizations. One of the suggestions was Danau Girang Field Center, which really impressed me due to its explicit ethical considerations and ongoing projects. I was very excited when they approved my internship. My primary interest lies in animal behavior and its alteration due to human disturbance. Furthermore, I would love to work in collaboration with local communities. Therefore, Regrow Borneo is a project that aligns with my aspirations as an ecologist. It has given me numerous ideas for potential PhD topics. Additionally, the leopard cat and pangolin projects, with stronger emphasis on behavioural aspects, have been a great source of inspiration. The thing I enjoyed most about being here is the fact that you are surrounded by your study topic every single day. It serves as a daily and motivational reminder of the purpose behind my work, especially when RStudio is giving me a hard time. Overall, it is incredible to witness how wildlife still finds a way to persist and adapt, despite the significant disturbance in this area.

Hi ! I'm Kim, a veterinarian pursuing a PhD in disease ecology, with a focus on parasite transmission between domestic and wild African ungulates. I discovered DGFC online while searching for an organisation to do my PhD placement. My primary interest was to find a place that integrates wildlife research and veterinary medicine, and DGFC stood out as one of the few collaborative institutions with projects not only covering ecology, but also One Health from a wildlife perspective. I am very passionate about the banteng project I am involved with! Banteng are often overlooked due to their cow-like appearance and elusive nature, but they are critically endangered in Sabah. Additionally, I am also interested in the pangolin research, as it is another great example of One Health research with the aim to also save an iconic wildlife species. My primary objectives coming here, were to 1. apply the skills acquired during my PhD to contribute to practical conservation outcomes and 2. gain experience in wildlife research in a different part of the world. Additionally, being involved in other projects has been a bonus, not to mention the rewarding experience of encountering proboscis monkeys and orangutans in the wild! My favourite thing so far has been the belly laughter that comes with falling, sliding and getting stuck in the mud in order to get camera traps/track pangolins. And seeing macaques fly off the trees into the river. And maybe also listening to the 'jungle soundtrack' whilst falling asleep. There are too many things to name!

# An Anthropologist at DGFC



## **So, what do you study and how did it bring you to DG?**

Hi, my name is Kawthar and I'm studying anthropology, part of social sciences. Historically or traditionally, anthropology is used to study traditional societies e.g. tribes, whereas sociology is more focused on modern societies. Now, more and more anthropologists and sociologists can study in any country, place or social group. I found DG on google, I researched NGOs institution in Borneo and Malaysia which worked with nature and local community and I saw an article about Benoit on a Belgian media. I then contacted DG and explained how it is important to include an anthropological approach in conservation and research. I wanted to highlight the importance of having an interdisciplinary approach, and it seems like biologists don't enjoy dealing with the human side! Conservation always involves a human side, whether it's hunters, wildlife trafficking and a lot of other human interference.



## **That's a really good point! I haven't really considered that before, because when you come here the focus is on the environment, conservation and the animals.**

Exactly, now there is factors to consider like the expansion of the oil palm plantations, or the development of ecotourism in the Kinabatangan area. Humans interacting more and more with wildlife.

## **What brought you to the conclusion that you wanted to study people in Borneo because I imagine anthropology can take you anywhere?**

The world getting more and more "modern", it's hard to find traditional communities and authentic tribes. I find it interesting to reverse it, and study modern people, what is more modern than a research center? Every colleague in my university is going to study a tribe in somewhere like Africa, and I wanted to do something different. It was important for me to understand what DG does here as a workplace, what place do the local community have? Benoit was very open-minded in letting me research his institution.

## **Sometimes it's good to treat DG as an environment where people interact with people first and where people interact with nature first because one can directly influence the other.**

### **So what are your main aims? And do you feel like you've completed them?**

My main aim was, first to prove to myself that I can do something new and do it independently. As a researcher it was to conduct good research and to be ethical in my research. I hope I've completed this, I've certainly made mistakes, but I hope I've made a positive impact. Another purpose was to try and understand the people here and learn from their life experience.

### **What have you learned from this experience?**

Personally, I have learned so much about wildlife, because obviously it's not my discipline. I've discovered a new world of conservation because in Belgium I wasn't very aware of conservation actions. Learning Malay, discovering new people and a new culture. I've never learned so much in such a limited period before.

**I think that giving yourself the chance to work, independently, with the freedom to make your own mistakes, in an environment that's different from anything you've experienced, is tough, not just with your research but also your role as a volunteer and helping everyone else around the centre! So doing all of this whilst having to observe the people here and all interactions is impressive, and very important to growth.**

Yeah, I mean sometimes it was exhausting with going to the field and socialising all the time but in the end I'm so grateful to be here, because I'm not even a biologist so being able to have this kind of experience, like tracking the cats, the pangolins and contributing to Regrow Borneo.

I think living in the centre with the conditions we have has given me more patience and allowed me to be more grateful



# Photo and Camera Trap Highlights



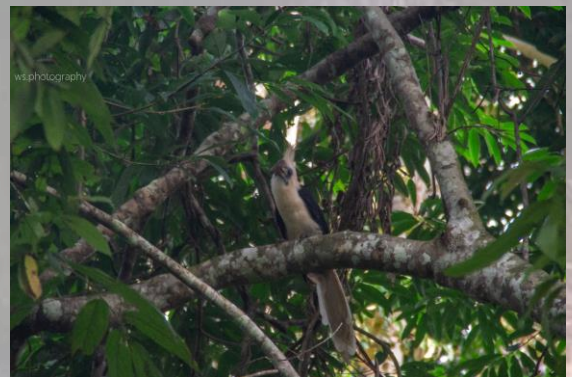
**A Malaysian blue Flycatcher**  
Photographed by: Harry Cholerton



**A female proboscis monkey**  
Photographed by: Harry Cholerton



**A saltwater crocodile on the banks of the Kinabatangan**  
Photographed by: William Evans (ws.photography)



**A male white crowned hornbill**  
Photographed by: William Evans (ws.photography)



**A yellow-throated marten**  
Photographed by: William Evans (ws.photography)



A camera trap picture from one of our traps along the Wildlife north corridor caught this silver langur with its baby, showing the golden morph of the juveniles.



*Danau Girang Field Centre*

*Danau Girang Field Centre was opened in July 2008. It is located in the Lower Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary, Sabah, Malaysia.*

*Danau Girang is owned by the Sabah Wildlife Department and supported by Cardiff University. Its purpose is to further scientific research with the aim of contributing to long-term conservation projects in the area, and develop a better understanding of our environment and the living things we share it with.*

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