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Research Article

A brief review of Bornean banded langur *Presbytis* chrysomelas (Müller, 1838) of Sarawak

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Abstract

The critically endangered Bornean banded langur (*Presbytis chrysomelas*) is exclusively found in Borneo. This species is classified among the world's 25 most endangered primate species. The geographical locations and distribution patterns of *P. chrysomelas* remain inadequately understood, and their taxonomic classification remains unclear. Although it was once abundant in Sarawak, the distribution of *P. chrysomelas* has become one of the most restricted among all *Presbytis* species. Presently, documented sightings of *P. chrysomelas* span across five specific locations in Sarawak: Samunsam Wildlife Sanctuary, Tanjung Datu National Park, Gunung Pueh National Park, Similajau National Park, and Maludam National Park. Thus, the purpose of this review is to present previous studies conducted on *P. chrysomelas* in Sarawak, elucidating its taxonomy, characteristics, distributions, important sites, research gaps, threats, and recommendations for further studies. Immediate conservation efforts and attention from the primatologist, relevant authorities and stakeholders are needed to prevent the localized extinction of *P. chrysomelas*.

Keywords: Bornean banded langur, Presbytis chrysomelas, Sarawak

Introduction

Borneo is well renowned for being one of the world's primate hotspots (Meijaard & Nijman, 2003; Wolf & Ripple, 2022). Borneo inhabits 17 distinct species of non-human primates, spanning across six families and eight genera, including genus *Presbytis*. The genus *Presbytis* of the subfamily Colobinae is the most widely distributed group among the non-human primates in Borneo and widely studied in Malaysia; however, most investigations focused at species level on Presbytis frontata, Presbytis femoralis, Presbytis hosei, and Presbytis rubicunda (Abdul-Latiff et al., 2019; Duckworth et al., 2011; Smith, 2015; Meyer et al., 2011; Miller, 1934; Najmuddin et al., 2020; Najmuddin et al., 2021; Mohd-Hatta, 2013). Other studies focused more on resolving the taxonomic ambiguity of the genus (Aifat et al., 2016; Md-Zain, 2001; Md-Zain et al., 2008; Meyer et al., 2011; Meyer, 2012; Vun et al., 2011). Nevertheless, limited attention has been directed towards the study of *Presbytis chrysomelas*. Presbytis chrysomelas or Bornean banded langur is an understudied rare primate and endemic to Borneo. Currently, information on the sites and distribution of P. chrysomelas is still scarce, and its taxonomy is still disputed (Brandon-Jones et al., 2004; Meyer et al., 2011). Similar to other *Presbytis*, *P. chrysomelas* is also synonymously known locally as penatat or penyatat by Bidayuh, lutung by Malays, bijit by Iban, and berangad by Kenyah (Mohd-Hatta, 2013). It has the most restricted distribution of all *Presbytis* in Borneo. And globally, it has been categorized as a Critically Endangered species on the IUCN Red List (Nijman et al., 2020a) as it has a very high risk of extinction in the wild due to the continuously reduced populations and requires immediate conservation and proper study approaches. Approximately, the population has decreased by up to 80% during the last 30 years and is expected to do so at the same rate over the next 30 years (Nijman et al., 2020a). The distribution region is quite narrow in comparison with its historical range as it was once widely spread.

Hence, the objective of this current review is to compile the notable existing records concerning *P. chrysomelas* in Sarawak with the intention of enhancing scientific documentation. This comprehensive review covers aspects including taxonomy, characteristics, distributions, important sites, threats, recommendations for future research and the crucial need for prompt conservation initiatives.

Taxonomy of Presbytis chrysomelas

The Bornean banded langur has always been the subject of taxonomic confusion. Formerly, it was first described as *Semnopithecus femoralis* (Miller, 1934), *S. chrysomelas* (Kantha &

Suzuki, 2009), *P. melalophos* (Kantha & Suzuki, 2009), *P. melalophos chrysomelas* (Oates et al. 1994), and then as a distinct species of *P. femoralis chrysomelas* (Brandon-Jones et al., 2004). Currently, this species is referred to as *P. chrysomelas* based on updated DNA data (Meyer et al., 2011; Vun et al., 2011) and morphological characteristics (Groves, 2001). Two subspecies comprised under *P. chrysomelas* were found distinct based on the colour morphs variation: the black morph (*P. c. chrysomelas*) and the red morph (*P. c. cruciger*) (Phillipps & Phillipps, 2016).

Characteristics of Presbytis chrysomelas

The fur colouration of *P. chrysomelas* is quite variable between subspecies although it is normally jet black with a portion of brown hairs on the dorsum (Mohd-Hatta, 2013). For *P. c. chrysomelas*, the underside is fawn (pale whitish) up to the chin, wrists, and cheek, as well as down to the belly, inner leg, and ventral part of the tail (Rifqi et al., 2019) (Figure 1a). The chest hairs are dark in colour and curly. Small forehead whorls are observable, commonly in pairs, close to the brow, with a crest that is tall, upright, and narrow in between. Nevertheless, Duckworth et al. (2011) recognized the unusual morphological characteristics of *P. c. chrysomelas* in Similajau National Park. The facial skin is greyish to pinkish, with dark cheeks and lighter underparts. Additionally, the hair colour variation for subspecies *P. c. cruciger* is apparent, with red-orange, starting on the head, shoulders, sides of the belly, and toward the thigh and calf (Rifqi et al., 2019) (Figure 1b). The hands, arms, feet, and the rear line of its body, which extends to its tail, are covered in black. The juveniles of both subspecies are either grey/reddish/pale white in colour, with a black cross that runs down over their backs and arms and a pale belly (Phillipps & Phillipps, 2016).



Figure 1. The fur colouration between subspecies of *P. chrysomelas*. **a**) Black morph *P. c. chrysomelas* **b**) Red morph *P. c. cruciger* (source: <u>http://prcfindonesia.org/lutung-sentarum-hewan-langka-muncul-di-nanga-lauk/</u>).

Historical distributions

Presbytis chrysomelas is a diurnal and arboreal species that primarily inhabits lowland environments, specifically tropical rainforests, mangrove forests, and swamp forests. This species exhibits the most limited distribution among all members of the *Presbytis* genus, heavily relying on its specific habitat. Typically, *P. chrysomelas* is found in groups of around five to six individuals, consisting of one male, two to three females, and their offspring (Bennett, 1992; Payne et al., 1985). One distinguishing feature is the distinct calls of *P. chrysomelas*, which can be differentiated from those of *P. robinsoni*, *P. femoralis*, and *P. siamensis* through their unique sound "ke-ke-ke" (Phillipps & Phillipps, 2016).

Presbytis chrysomelas was once the most prevalent and widely dispersed species in Borneo (Phillipps & Phillipps, 2016) (Figure 2). The historical distribution of the Bornean banded langur as per the previous name *P. melalophos* recorded in the area extends to the Northwestern of Kalimantan down to Western Sarawak. In Sarawak, it was frequently seen northward extending to Central Sarawak where it meets *P. melalophos cruciger*. Nonetheless, this distribution was omitted by Payne et al. (1985) of the records of *P. c. chrysomelas* in Similajau National Park located northeast of Sarawak.



Figure 2. Map of Bornean Island, illustrating the historical distributions and modern distributions of *Presbytis chrysomelas* (Phillipps & Phillipps, 2016)

Modern distributions

Once considered common back in the early twentieth century, the current area of occupancy of *P. chrysomelas* is less than 5% of its historical range with an approximate population between 200 and 500 individuals (Smith, 2015; Nijman et al., 2020a). Five locations in Sarawak have reported recent sightings of *P. chrysomelas* based on direct observation and camera trapping, namely, Maludam National Park, Similajau National Park, Tanjung Datu National Park, Samunsam Wildlife Sanctuary, and Pueh National Park. Since many records are historical, the modern distribution requires further research to be done to depict the accuracy of the existence.

Important sites

With the recent sightings as shown in Table 1, these protected areas are considered important for the conservation of *P. chrysomelas* in Sarawak. The biggest known population was recorded in the Samunsam Wildlife Sanctuary. A total of 17 groups with 8 to 13 individuals of *P. c. chrysomelas* has been encountered via line transect survey between November 2004 and December 2005 (Ampeng and Md-Zain, 2012).

Meanwhile, the Tanjung Datu National Park is one of Sarawak's smallest national parks in Sarawak and is situated at the southwestern point of Borneo. In 2018, eight distinct photos of the *P. c. chrysomelas* were captured during the course of 28 months of camera trapping (Mohd-Azlan et al., 2018). All of the sightings were detected in the beach forest and none in the mixed-dipterocarp forest.

The Similajau National Park is a 90 km² forest consisting of mixed-dipterocarp forest that alternates with kerangas woodland. The Bornean banded langur is considered the most common colobine species found in the park. The first recorded sighting of the Bornean banded langur based on direct observation was back in 1986 in which numerous groups were observed (Duckworth & Kelsh, 1988).

The Gunung Pueh National Park located at the northwestern tip of Borneo. Given its location near the Samunsam and Tanjung Datu National Park, it is realistic to anticipate sightings of Bornean banded langur there. A solitary record of the *P. c. chrysomelas* based on motion-sensor camera trappings of 3,109 trap nights was documented at the lowland forest of Gunung Pueh (Mohd-Azlan, 2022).

Finally, the Maludam peat swamp forest was declared a national park in 2000 by the state government of Sarawak due to the documented presence of the proboscis monkey (*Nasalis larvatus*). Out of the five locations listed, only Maludam reported by Nijman et al. (2020b) has a viable population size of *P. c. cruciger*, but no exact amount has been recorded. The other three exhibit dispersed populations of *P. c. chrysomelas*, despite being protected in the wildlife refuges and national parks.

#	Location	Records	Reference
1.	Samunsam Wildlife Sanctuary	17 groups of 8 to 13 individuals were observed via line transect. (December 2004 to December 2005)	(Ampeng & Md-Zain, 2012)
2.	Tanjung Datu National Park	8 individuals based on camera trap images independent detections. (July 2013 to October 2015)	(Mohd-Azlan et al., 2018)
3.	Similajau National Park	milajau National Park Several groups at two sites in 1986, at least five groups at three sites in 1995, and four times in 2005 with other colobines were observed.	
4.	Maludam National Park	No exact recorded sighting but the population was reported to be viable.	(Nijman et al., 2020b)
5.	Gunung Pueh National Park	Solitary image from camera trap recorded in lowland forests of lower than 1,100 m asl. (June 2016 to March 2017)	(Mohd-Azlan, 2022)
6.	The northern part of Borneo (No clear geographical barrier)	26 localities data in the habitat of tropical wet evergreen forest. (1991 to 2001)	(Meijaard & Nijman, 2003)

Table 1. Recorded sightings of *Presbytis chrysomelas* in Sarawak based on the published papers of previous years.

Comparison with other endangered primates in Sarawak based on research attention

In Sarawak, two endemic species of primates have been classed as Critically Endangered by the IUCN Red List (IUCN, 2022) and listed as Totally Protected under the Wild Life Protection Ordinance (1998): orangutan and Bornean banded langur. Nonetheless, high conservation attention has been given to the orangutan and the endangered proboscis monkey, in comparison with the Bornean banded langur, even though all species are in a dire need of conservation action.

The Bornean orangutan, the charismatic ape species, has drawn significant conservation attention ever since 1958, as a Totally Protected species under the Wild Life Protection Ordinance. The state government of Sarawak had formulated action plans with the relevant Malaysian government stakeholders and agencies to save orangutans from extinction. The latest is the pledge of the Sarawak government on the policy of zero-loss orangutans and their habitat by 2015 (Ji, 2015). Studies on orangutans also have been done holistically by many researchers. In addition, the proboscis monkey has received extensive conservation and study action in Sarawak as well (Table 2). The recent one is the collaboration between the Sarawak Forestry Corporation and Universiti Malaysia Sarawak for Sarawak Proboscis Monkey Action Plan 2021–2025 (Khan et al., 2021). Moreover, several areas in Sarawak with viable populations of proboscis monkeys had been gazetted as Totally Protected areas, namely, Samunsam Wildlife Sanctuary, Bako National Park, and Kuching Wetland National Park (Kombi & Abdullah, 2016).

On the other hand, the ecology of the *P. chrysomelas*, particularly based on population estimates, is yet unknown. Four studies on the behavior and ecology of *P. chrysomelas* have been conducted, four on genetic studies and two on the threats and conservation. The studies on population, distribution, and abundance are limited on the assessment from the IUCN Red List. The study gap between the Bornean banded langur, Bornean orangutan, and proboscis monkey in Sarawak is depicted in Table 2, while the comparison of the number of studies by species over a decade is illustrated in Figure 3.

#	Species	IUCN Red List	Behaviour and ecology	Population, habitat, distribution, and abundance	Genetic	Parasite and health	Threats and conservation
1.	Pongo pygmaeus	Critically endangered	Ampeng et al. (2016); Husen (2001); Mohd-Hatta (2005); Mohd- Rahmantullah, (2001); Salina et al. (2004); Wesley (2001)	Ampeng et al. (2016); Ampeng et al. (2021); Blouch (1997); Gurmaya & Silang (2002); Gumal et al. (2021); Pandong et al. (2018); Pandong et al. (2022); Schaller, (1961). Silang et al. (2006)	Kanthaswamy & Smith (2002); Mattle-Greminger et al. (2018); Warren et al., (2001); Zhi et al., (1996)	Teo et al. (2019); Thayaparan et al. (2014)	Pandong & Anak (2019); Gumal (2022); Gumal & (Tisen, 2010); Jonas et al. (2017); Medway (1976); Pandong et al. (2019); Tisen & Silang (2016); Zander et al. (2014)
2.	Presbytis chrysomelas	Critically endangered	Ampeng (2003); Ampeng (2006); Ampeng & Md-Zain (2007); Ampeng & Md- Zain (2012)	Nijman et al. (2020a; 2020b; 2020c)	Abdul-Latiff et al. (2019); Aifat et al (2016); Md-Zain (2001); Vun et al. (2011)		Ampeng (2006); Smith (2015)
3.	Nasalis larvatus	Endangered	Bennett (1986); Bennett (1988); Bennet & Sebastian, (1988); Budeng, (2011); Kombi & Abdullah (2016); Onuma (2002); Salter et al. (1985); Wan- Azman et al. (2022)	Aziz et al. (2015); Azman (2005); Kombi & Abdullah, (2013); Kombi & Abdullah (2016); Laman & Aziz (2019); Tuen & Pandong (2007)	Mazlan et al. (2019)	Adrus et al. (2019); Hasegawa et al. (2003); Khairi (2012); Julian (2015); Lim et al. (2019); Thayaparan et al. (2013); Thayaparan et al. (2014)	Bennett (1986); Kamaruzzaman et al. (2017); Khan et al. (2021)

Table 2. Comparison of study conducted on Presbytis chrysomelas, Pongo pygmaeus and Nasalis larvatus in Sarawak.



Figure 3. Studies on Bornean orangutan, Bornean banded langur and Proboscis monkey of Sarawak per decade.

Conservation threats

The primary threats to the *P. chrysomelas* in Sarawak include habitat loss and fragmentation and poaching (Ampeng, 2006). As the *P. chrysomelas* is highly dependent on habitat by being arboreal, the conversion of forests into agricultural land, mainly for oil palm cultivation, as well as residential and commercial development has threatened their sustainability. The monoculture farms of oil palms and the construction of the Pan-Borneo Highway-Sarawak further fractured the forest (Alamgir et al., 2020). The severe forest fragmentation heightens the possibility of extinction due to the continuous loss of habitat connectivity and the increment risk of hunting and predation. However, the impact of declining habitat quality on the long-term persistence of species is still unclear.

Previous ecological studies on Presbytis chrysomelas

The ecological study of *P. chrysomelas* is limited to the research on ranging behavior done by Ampeng and Md-Zain (2012). They discovered the ranging patterns employed by 17 groups of *P. c. chrysomelas* in Samunsam Wildlife Sanctuary encompass vertical, cross-horizontal, and straight horizontal movements. They have a short daily movement distance (31.8 to 54.3 m). The abundance and distribution of food resources influence the ranging pattern and ranging distance of *P. c. chrysomelas*.

Several samples of *P. c. chrysomelas* were used in the genetic study to reclarify the taxonomic classification of the genus *Presbytis*. Vun et al. (2011) discovered that *P. chrysomelas* is genetically distinct from *P. femoralis* and *P. siamensis*, separating *chrysomelas* at the species level, while the cytochrome b gene revealed that *P. chrysomelas* is the most primitive among *Presbytis*. In contrast, the subspecies *P. c. cruciger* in Kalimantan has received much attention from researchers in recent years. Notable research attention was given to the study of ecology on the *P. c. cruciger* in Taman Danau Sentarum. However, similar to *P. c. chrysomelas* in Malaysia, *P. c. cruciger* in Indonesia is also in need of immediate attention in genetic study.

Research recommendations

It is important to realize that there is a notable gap in the study with a focus on the ecological and genetic studies of *P. chrysomelas* at the species level. Hence, future research should focus on the studies listed in Table 3.

 Table 3. Recommended potential future study in resolving the research gap for P. chrysomelas in Sarawak.

#	Aspect	Recommendation
1.	Population size	The population size and density of <i>P. chrysomelas</i> are still in oblivion. The
	and distribution	previous study merely documented the frequency and precise distribution
		(Ampeng & Md-Zain, 2012; Duckworth et al., 2011; Mohd-Azlan, 2022;
		Mohd-Azlan et al., 2018; Meijaard & Nijman, 2003; Nijman et al., 2020b).
		Extensive research is required to determine the population size, distribution,
		and density of both subspecies in Sarawak. Extensive ground sampling
-		should be conducted by returning to the area within its historical distribution.
2.	Daily activity	The study is limited to the subspecies P. c. cruciger in Indonesia (Musyaffa
	budget	& Santoso, 2020). No previous research was done on the daily activity budget
		of <i>P. chrysomelas</i> in Sarawak. Baseline daily behavioral data of <i>P.</i>
		chrysomelas in Sarawak is needed to develop a strategic conservation action.
3.	Feeding ecology	Dietary information is still quite limited. Dietary research is necessary to
		evaluate dietary flexibility and to comprehend the coexistence with other
		primate species in reducing intraspecific competition through dietary overlap
	D 1.4	as shown in long-tailed macaque and dusky langur (Ruslin et al., 2019).
4.	Population	Population genetic diversity concentrating on each subspecies in Sarawak is
	genetics	sun fate as much focus is on the genus <i>Presbylls</i> (Anat et al., 2010; Mu-Zani, 2001; Md Zain et al. 2009; Mayor et al. 2011; Mayor 2012; Mun et al.
		2001; Md-Zall et al., 2006; Meyer et al., 2011; Meyer, 2012; Vull et al., 2011) Bessereh en nonvlation geneties using a melacular technique is
		essential to determine the genetic diversity of <i>P</i> chrysomalas in Sarawak
		Indeed the genetic data of both <i>P</i> chrysomelas subspecies is critical for
		resolving its taxonomic classification
5.	Positional	Data on positional behavior is needed to specify the locomotors and postures
	behavior	used in response to habitat structure. It is also essential to acquire a thorough
		understanding of the mechanisms that link ecology, morphology, and
		behavior (Saunders et al., 2018).
6.	Metagenomic	Metagenomic studies of P. chrysomelas in Sarawak have not been done
	-	before. Metagenomic study based on fecal samples permits the assessment of
		gut microbial species (Srivathsan et al., 2016) and the identification of the

		species of plant diet consumed via the DNA metabarcoding method (Osman
		et al., 2020).
7.	Mitogenomic	P. chrysomelas has never been the focus subject of mitogenomic research.
		Genomic data collected from noninvasive fecal samples is a tool for
		conservation genomics (Taylor et al., 2021). This information can settle the
		taxonomic disputes between subspecies of P. chrysomelas, which may be
		different species due to their diverse fur colourations.
8.	Conservation	Effective conservation management focusing on P. chrysomelas species is
	management	needed. A continuous monitoring program emphasizing ecological criteria
		may be used during the conservation planning. This action could be a
		collaboration between local researchers with local authorities (Sarawak
		Forestry Corporation and Forest Department Sarawak) and international
		authorities (Brunei and Indonesia) to conserve this neglected transboundary
		species.
9.	Threats	The threat to this species is limited to the study conducted by Ampeng (2006)
		and Smith (2015). Hence, in-depth research on the threats is crucial in the
		work of revising the Wild Life Protection Ordinance (WPO) 1998.

Conclusion

This study contributes to the current knowledge of *P. chrysomelas* in Sarawak. Despite being listed as Totally Protected by Sarawak's Wildlife Protection Ordinance (WPO) and Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List, this species remains underappreciated. Substantial research efforts are required to enable the implementation of timely and comprehensive conservation actions aimed at preventing the extinction of this species.

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