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First flat-headed cat photo from Sabangau peat-swamp forest, Indonesian Borneo

As part of an ongoing project to identify and assess the distribution and population status of Bornean felids in the Sabangau Peat-swamp forest, Central Kalimantan, Indonesia, a flat-headed cat *Prionailurus planiceps* has been photographed for the first time. The flat-headed cat is classified as Endangered on the IUCN Red List 2008.

The Sabangau Forest is a lowland tropical deep peat-swamp forest encompassing 5,300 km². It is the largest area of contiguous lowland rainforest remaining in Kalimantan and three-quarters of the forest has been protected as a National Park. It is recognised as one of the most important conservation areas in Borneo for a variety of reasons including carbon storage, regulation of water supplies and conservation of flora and fauna. The area has been subjected to long-term legal logging, illegal logging, fire and drainage from logging canals, but is now the focus of concerted protection and restoration efforts.

The IUCN Clouded Leopard and Small Felid Summit in Thailand (Povey et al. 2009) identified only four known locations in Malaysian Borneo and five locations in Indonesian Borneo as being home to the flat-headed cat, including Sabangau.

The Sabangau Felid Project was established in 2008 and through camera-trapping photographs has confirmed the area as home to Sunda clouded leopards *Neofelis diardi* and leopard cats *Prionailurus bengalensis*. Presence of the flat-headed cat and marbled cat

Pardofelis marmorata were through observation only, with the flat-headed cat having been spotted by HMB in 2004 and the marbled cat sighting dating back to 1993 and yet to be confirmed. The fifth Bornean felid, the bay cat *Pardofelis badia*, has never been seen or photographed in the Sabangau.

Cameras are set up in pairs using Cuddeback Expert units. The cameras cover 15km² in the core study area. Cameras are placed on man-made trails and around old logging canals i.e. where there is a more accessible route for the cats. Since May 2008 there have been 15 photos of a leopard cat, 14 photos of clouded leopards (four males) and three photos of a flat-headed cat. The first photograph of a flat-headed was taken in the Natural Laboratory for the Study of Peat-Swamp Forest, a 50,000 ha site in the northern Sabangau operated by The Centre for International Cooperation in the Management of Tropical Peatland (CIMTROP). The photograph was taken on 14 March 2009, by cameras set approx. 1.2 km south of the Setia Alam base camp (2° 31' S and 113° 90' E) and approx. 2.5 km south of the Sabangau River. Another photograph was

taken on 1 April 2009 on cameras set 1.1 km south-east of the first photo and on 6 June 2009 another photo and short video were taken at yet another location north and east of the first two. The cameras on which this cat was photographed have been in location since July 2008, thus 622 trap nights were required to photograph the flat-headed cat, compared with 62 for the clouded leopard and 15 for the leopard cat.

The cats' diet is thought to contain fish, frogs and crustaceans, all of which would be available in the seasonally-flooded Sabangau. Problems are likely to arise during the dry season (June-September) when the forest is un-naturally dry due to drainage via the logging extraction canals and the standing water (and canals) dry out.

Very little is known about this cat across its range, other than that its distribution is patchy and restricted to wetlands. The destruction and degradation and drying out of wetlands is likely to be the biggest threat to this little-known felid (Povey et al. 2009).

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References

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Fig. 1. Flat-headed cat picture taken at 05.35 h on 14 March 2009 (Photo S. M. Cheyne).