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Participants of Miami University field course admiring the slow loris.

Krik after being fitted with a collar and released in the forest, at the exact place where he was caught.

First radio-collaring of Bornean slow loris in wildlife sanctuary

KINABATANGAN: The Sabah Wildlife Department (SWD) and Danau Girang Field Centre (DGFC) recently fit a radio-collar on a Bornean slow loris in the forest of the Lower Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary.

"The Bornean slow loris is one of the two cryptic nocturnal primates, with the Western tarsier, which lives in Borneo. It is the only species equipped with a toxic defence and hunting mechanism, producing a toxin or poison by combining its saliva with secretions from its upper arms,"

explained Danica Stark, a primatologist based at DGFC and involved in the project.

"Although slow lorises are protected by law from international and commercial trade, the greatest growing threat to slow lorises is the illegal pet trade, being the second most common primate species owned as pets in Asia, next to macaques," explained Dr Laurentius Ambu, director of the Sabah Wildlife Department.

"They have also become an important species for medicinal and ornamental

trade. Lorises face extremely high mortality rates in markets and transport of them, due to starvation, dehydration and infections from dental health injuries, as their teeth are removed to increase their sales," added Ambu.

"As part of our ongoing Nocturnal Primate Project funded by Columbus Zoo and Cleveland Zoological Society in the US, the slow loris was caught by DGFC staff and brought into our lab where he was weighed and body measurements taken," said Dr Benoit Goossens,

director of Danau Girang Field Centre.

"A first for the Bornean species, the slow loris was fitted with a VHF radio-collar that will allow DGFC research assistant Baharudin Resake who is in charge of the project, to find him more easily throughout the forest.

The collar weighs less than three per cent of his body weight, so will not hinder the animal as he moves around the forest searching for insects, lizards and other prey," added Goossens.

"As little is known about the Bornean slow loris, particularly in Sabah, any information collected by Baharudin through tracking through the forest will be important in understanding the species, from sleeping site locations and preferences, to ranging behaviour. With this study, we also hope to raise the awareness in Sabah on the importance of protecting nocturnal primates as much as protecting orangutans, proboscis monkeys, sun bears and elephants," concluded Goossens.