

# Expedition to search for hybrid gibbons

April 21 2011, By Pete Wilton

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Bornean southern gibbon (*Hylobates albibarbis*).

This July an expedition will set out for the central highlands of Indonesian Borneo to sample the biodiversity of uncharted areas, track ape populations and find out how remote communities interact with their environment.

Among the 20-strong BRINCC [Expedition](#) team of conservation biologists will be Susan Cheyne of Oxford University's WildCRU, one of the leaders of the OuTrop Project.

The team will follow the route of the Murung River, a major tributary of the Barito River, surveying the sort of wildlife – apes, birds, insects, reptiles and amphibians – essential to the health of a tropical forest ecosystem. The researchers are particularly keen to find out more about nocturnal species.

Susan is one of the team with a special interest in the area's hybrid [gibbons](#): a hybrid of the Bornean agile gibbon (*Hylobates albibarbis*) and Müller's Bornean gibbon (*Hylobates muelleri*) about which little is known. These apes currently have no status on IUCN, Susan explains, despite being a naturally occurring, viable and thriving population.

"We don't know whether orang-utans are also present," Susan told us. "This will be the first comprehensive ape survey in this area and will be combined with collecting data on the other primates throughout the course of the expedition."

As with the OuTrop Project, involving local people in the work will be a vital part of the new mission. At several villages along the Murung the team will train people from the indigenous Dayak community how to use GPS to help accurately identify and map areas they use. It is hoped that the maps will help in both conservation and any future debates about land rights.

Susan adds: "The BRINCC expedition team has extensive experience working in conservation activities in Indonesia and we hope to take this knowledge and know-how into the uncharted centre of Borneo, an area which has received relatively little conservation attention compared to lowland forests."

Provided by Oxford University

Citation: Expedition to search for hybrid gibbons (2011, April 21) retrieved 2 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-04-hybrid-gibbons.html>

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