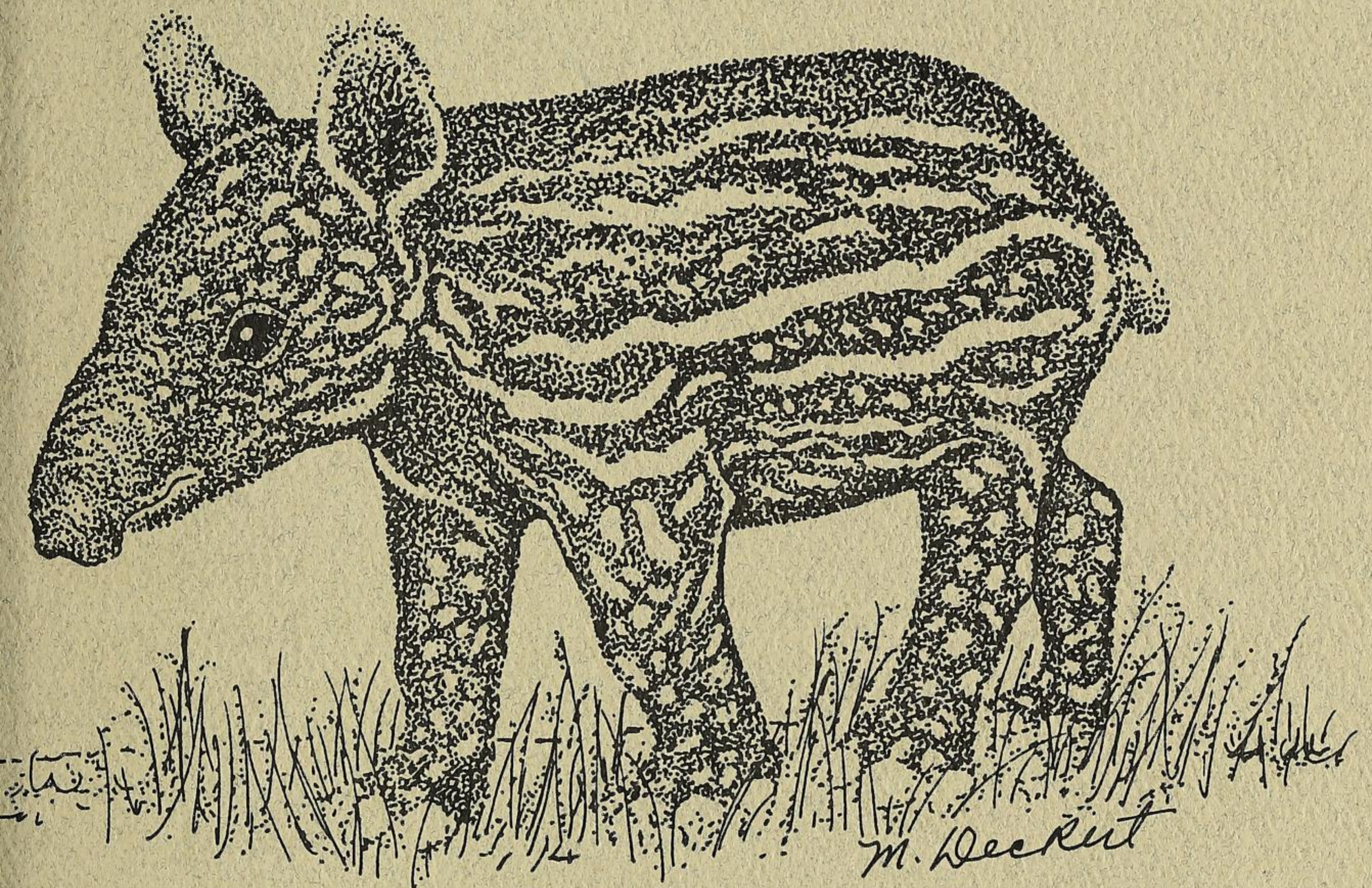


ANIMAL KEEPERS' FORUM



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Zoos, Aquariums, Reserves, and Other Natural Attractions in the Jakarta Region

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The Indonesian province of Western Java, along with its capital Jakarta, has a population of over 43 million people. With 910 persons per square kilometer, the region has one of the highest population densities in the world. In spite of the obvious pressure on natural habitats that such numbers of people produce, the region contains some exceptional natural areas. I have previously presented my impressions of the Ujung Kulon reserve, which is located in West Java, so this article will concentrate on other potential destinations that may interest the ecotourist.

The Ragunan Zoo is located in the southern suburbs of Jakarta. Supported by the local provincial government, the facility opened in 1966 and covers 135 hectares (.52 square miles). The collection numbers over 4000 individuals (about 2000 of which are birds), with 400 different species represented. Nearly all of the reptiles, birds, and most of the mammals are indigenous to Indonesia. There are, however, some notable exceptions. Animals such as white rhinos, Arabian oryx, addax, giraffe, zebra, camels, chimpanzees, lemurs, lion, cheetah, white tiger, and hippopotamus are present in the collection.

A foreign visitor might find the Indonesian fauna at the zoo to be of most interest. These include breeding Komodo dragons, a large group of babirusa (including nearly 20 of both sexes and all ages in one paddock), anoa, banteng, sun bear, cassowary, rusa deer, thirty plus orangutans (mostly Bornean), gibbons, siamang, langurs, macaques, tapir, Sumatran elephant, tiger, and rhino among others.

The animal exhibits in Ragunan range from good (for example the original older moated cat exhibits), to adequate (the public ape grottos), to the pitiful small carnivore and primate cages. What intrigued me the most about Ragunan were the numerous small wild animals and birds I saw on the grounds. These included lizards, geckos, toads, snakes, plantain squirrel, spotted dove, Javan myna, Eurasian tree sparrow, magpie robin, red-breasted parakeet, and yellow-crested cockatoo.

The zoo has a new director, Dr. Atje D. Salfifi, who is a landscape architect by profession. The zoo has always been underfunded, so he has a difficult job ahead trying to convert the older rundown exhibits into more naturalistic displays. He also has plans to convert part of the zoo grounds into a combination nature trail and botanical garden. This would serve a valuable purpose since little natural habitat remains within the city limits. Over two million visitors come to the Ragunan every year, so the zoo has a great opportunity to act as an urban environmental center. The zoo's admission fee is deliberately kept low so

the average Jakarta resident can afford a visit. A volunteer organization, "Sahabat Satwa" (Friends of the Zoo), has provided much needed assistance to help upgrade the facility.

The Taman Safari is a privately run park located an hour south of the city in Cisarua. It consists of a large drive-through safari, some large primate and reptile enclosures, a large walk-through aviary, and smaller but adequate cages for cats and small mammals.

The safari park has some of the more common denizens of similar institutions found in North America, Europe, and Australia. These include lions, brown bear, camel, zebra, giraffe, nilgai, and other assorted antelopes and deer. There are some notable local touches too; instead of ostriches, there are cassowaries; and the tigers and elephants are of the Sumatran subspecies. There is also a Sumatran rhino paddock that is part of the auto route. I am certain Taman Safari has the world's only representative of that critically endangered species that can be viewed via the comfort of your car.

There are also large groups of Komodo dragons and estuarian crocodiles on exhibit. Much to my surprise, the major animal attraction of the park seems to be a polar bear that had been presented to Taman Safari by the Adelaide Zoo. The walk-through aviary had an excellent collection of rare Indonesian bird life such as great hornbill, green peafowl, crested fire-back pheasant, red lory, rainbow lorikeet, palm cockatoo, Victoria crowned pigeon, and lesser bird of paradise.

Taman Safari is a combination zoo, circus, and amusement park. Along with the animal acts and rides, there is also serious conservation work being done here. The safari is an important part of the Sumatran tiger and rhino Species Survival Plans.

There is also an aquarium, Sea World Lippo, and a crocodile park located within the city limits of Jakarta. I did not visit either. However, I was told that the Sea World facility is well run and educational, while the crocodile park is rather depressing.

I also visited three wildlife reserves that are located within a half day's drive of the city. The first was Pulau Dua, located west of Jakarta near Banten. We had a bit of trouble finding the reserve, as there are no signs for the park and most of the local people are unsure of its exact location. The best way to see Pulau Dua would be by an organized tour from Jakarta. The reserve is a major rookery for wading birds and it is also an important stop for migrant birds during the months of March and July. Even though I visited in October, I saw some interesting birds. These included little cormorants, grey heron, great egret, little egret, cattle egret, green imperial pigeon, collared kingfisher, pied fantail, and black-winged starling. The latter looks very much like a dark-winged version of the highly endangered Bali starling, minus the blue face; a sort of poor man's Rothschild's myna. I also got an excellent look and photo of a water monitor

from the windows of the park's office. The ranger informed us that the building is visited nightly by fishing cats. The best time of day to visit Pulau Dau is at dusk when the birds return to spend the night at their roosts.



Shown above is a water monitor (*Varanus salvator*) in the Pulau Dua Reserve located west of Jakarta. (Photo by Robert Berghaier)

Gede Pangrango National Park is located two hours southeast of Jakarta. The most accessible areas of the park, near the Cibodas entrance, are often crowded with Indonesian visitors on weekends and during most days between 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. I would recommend staying overnight close to the park entrance so as to arrive at dawn at the Cibodas Botanical Garden. The garden's open vistas make it an excellent birding site.

The morning I was there, I was very lucky and saw a group of black leaf monkeys, a pair of Javan grey leaf monkeys, and a black-striped squirrel. After leaving Cibodas, I walked along a crowded trail to the Cibeureum Waterfalls. I saw the following birds: Javan hawk-eagle, collared kingfisher, little pied flycatcher, rufus-tailed fantail, and what I believe was a Sunda blue robin. I was also told by my guide that a late afternoon visit to Cibodas or along the trails in the park produces some good birding opportunities. Gede Pangrango is large enough for more extensive overnight hiking. Leopards, gibbons, wild pigs, and barking and mouse deer are found within the reserve. All of which, except for the leopards, are frequently seen. Gede Pangrango appears to be well-patrolled and effectively managed.

The third reserve I visited was Rawa (Lake) Danau. This park is located half a day's drive west of Jakarta. To adequately see the reserve, an overnight stay on the coast or in the nearby town of Serang is necessary. My guide, Mr. Gatot,

had a difficult time finding the exact location of Rawa Danu. We eventually got within ten kilometers of the reserve by car and had to arrange for motor bikes to carry us up to its boundaries. Mr. Gatot arrived ahead of me and got a brief glimpse of a fishing cat which ran off quickly. This was a real pity since it would have been one of the highlights of my trip to have seen it myself. There are no trails into Rawa Danau, so the only way to explore the area is by boat. As a result, Mr. Gatot negotiated the rent of a local fisherman's boat and we were able to see a small part of the park.

The reserve is supposed to contain viable populations of both the black and grey leaf monkey. Our local escorts told us they often hear Javan gibbons in the morning. We did not see any of these, but I did spot a group of five long-tailed macaques. The bird life was very interesting, and we saw several that are difficult to find elsewhere in Java. They included lesser adjutant stork, black eagle, oriental darter, purple heron, three species of kingfishers: stork-billed, blue-eared, and white-throated, and rufus piculet. We also saw cattle egret, spotted dove, tree sparrow, and barn swallow which are birds more commonly found on the island.

While the previously visited reserve, Gede Pangrango, appeared to be well taken care of, it was obvious that Rawa Danau was not. While we were waiting for our boat, I observed a raft of freshly cut logs floating by. Throughout our visit, I heard chain saws and saw smoke from a fire in the protected forest that surrounded the lake. There were over a dozen men fishing along the reserve's waterways. It is reportedly illegal to log, start a fire, or fish in an Indonesian protected area. The local men told us that twelve rangers are stationed at Rawa Danau, but despite being in the reserve for four hours we never saw them. This area appears to be under very heavy encroachment pressures.

There are two other protected areas near Jakarta that I did not visit. Pulau Rambut is a bird and marine sanctuary located off shore from Jakarta, an hour away by boat. The best way to visit this reserve, according to Mr. Gatot, is to rent a boat and stay off the island overnight. At dawn the birds leave from their rookeries en mass for their daytime foraging areas.

Gunung (Mount) Halimun has recently been granted national park status. The reserve is located two hours south of Jakarta. I can personally attest to the poor condition of the roads leading into the area. They can only be traversed by land rover or jeep. There are no facilities in the park, so visitors must bring all provisions with them. A visit must be arranged from the park headquarters of the Cibodas station of Gede Pangrango. The reserve contains the best primary forest that remains in western Java and as a result is an extremely critical area for the long-term future of the Javan gibbon, endemic grey, and black leaf monkeys. The Wildlife Preservation Trust of Philadelphia has joined with several Indonesian conservation organizations to help manage this important park.