



The proboscis monkey (left) is named for its unusually long nose, which can be seen clearly in profile (facing page)

Nosy Parker in the jungle

After years of successfully shooting wildlife (on film) in Indonesia, **Steve Teo** went for a big one—shoot the rare and endangered proboscis monkey at home in the Kalimantan jungle

As our plane skimmed over the fringes of the vast equatorial rainforest, I had a glimpse of the mangrove swamps of the Sekonyer River which meanders through the Tanjung Puting Reserve in the south-eastern corner of Kalimantan (Indonesian Borneo).

It was to be my "hunting ground" for a week while I stalked the intelligent, elusive proboscis monkey (*Nasalis larvatus*).

The male of the species is famed for its pendulous nose, which can be 15cm long and serves to attract the opposite sex.

Soon we touched down on the tiny airstrip at Pangkalanbun, a sleepy town in Central Kalimantan province. The taxi took me to a modest, air-conditioned guest-house, the Blue Kecubung (Amethyst), where I was warmly welcomed by the proprietor,

Mrs Chandra, and her assistant. It was perfect for an overnight stay.

Next day, an exciting trip up the Sekonyer River took about two hours. The water—rich in tannins and organic acids and poor in oxygen—reflects its surroundings like a mirror.

My plan was to start with a visit to one of the two rehabilitation centres for orang utans in the 3500-hectare Tanjung Puting Reserve. We camped at the Jungle Lodge beside the river. After an early dinner we all retired to the incessant screeching of the forest.

At dawn, the glimmering sunrise and the tranquillity of the environment gave me a great sense of bliss. On the cool breeze wafted the aromas of the rainforest, providing a harmonious chord to the cacophony of nature awakening.

The banks of the river were alive with the sounds of rustling leaves, songbirds, insects buzzing in endless crescendos and the slow-moving currents of the river, punctuated by the intermittent splashes of aquatic life.

After a light breakfast of fish porridge, we set off in our canoe, with the engine cut back to low revs so the sound did not overly disturb the wildlife. Even then the noise made many birds and primates shy away.

The silvery light lent enchantment to the atmosphere as we spotted a group of brownish monkeys frolicking in the tree-tops. Proboscis monkeys have reddish backs and cream-white bellies, and light-brown faces and buttocks.

We stopped the engine and, using a long pole, dragged along as closely and as stealthily as we could. But as soon as we were seen the foliage erupted with boisterous acrobatics and

the whole troop vanished into the deep forest.

Stalking wild animals, especially these shy monkeys, is almost impossible. In each troop there is always a leader, invariably an old male, who is constantly monitoring the activities of his charges.

In any emergency the alert leader immediately signals retreat or attack. This lovable and curious primate can be extremely hostile when provoked. Due to its great intelligence and agility, the proboscis monkey is able to defend itself against its enemies with strategic skill. The warning calls from the leader are carried out to the letter, as in a human army. And a troop of these primates can easily tear an intending predator to shreds with fantastic speed.

When aggravated, the proboscis monkey at once assumes an attacking stance, hunching its body, ready to spring at its enemy, eyes dilated, snarling like a cat. It emits a hoarse bark-

ing—that fleshy, drooping nose makes the voice deeper and more resonant.

When frightened or excited, they have been observed to fling out their arms and leap from considerable heights into mud or water. Unlike most primates, they are able to swim well. The nose, while it can interfere with drinking, does prevent water entering the nostrils during swimming.

These admirable creatures, which have a life span of 15 to 20 years, are normally harmless. Fully-grown they measure about a metre in length, plus a long tail used for balancing while moving

through the canopy of the forest. They can weigh as much as 20kg and have a keen sense of smell.

Their habitat is the mangrove swamps of the equatorial forest where they feed almost exclusively on the young leaves and shoots of the mangrove trees.

Another feature that helps to make the proboscis monkey so endearing is

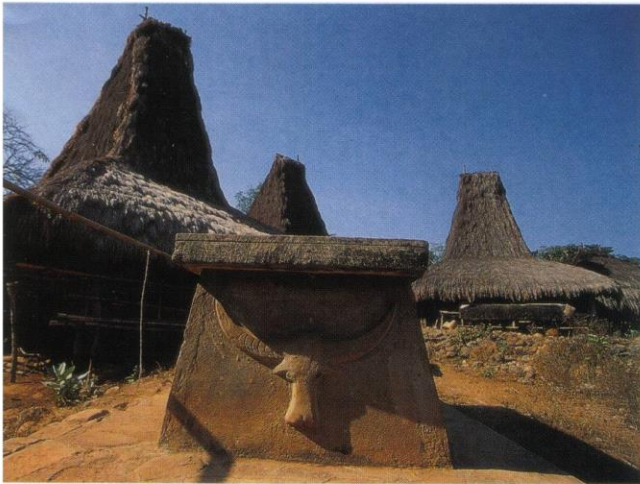
The male of the species is famed for its pendulous nose, which can be 15cm long and serves to attract the opposite sex



the cap of hair that seems to cover its skull, with a tip just over the forehead.

The Dayak people of Kalimantan have great respect for the proboscis monkey and its image still fascinates explorers and naturalists. G

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Sumbawa has a greater land mass than Lombok and Bali combined which supports a population of mainly farmers and fishermen. The island is far less developed for tourism than its westerly neighbours, which provides a great environment for discovery travel. Sumbawa's waves regularly attract surfers from around the world, determined to find the perfect uncrowded break but the majority of the interior is untouched by foreign influences.

East of Sumbawa is the small island of Komodo, a natural park famous for its wild-life and 'dragons,' giant monitor lizards whose amazing speed and carnivorous behaviour attract nature lovers from all over the globe. Named 'ora' by the local population, these lizards are a not so distant relative to the dinosaurs which roamed the earth millions of years ago.

To the east is the beautiful island of Flores (Portugese for flower), an elongated landmass featuring spectacular volcanoes, mountains and valleys. The largest of the Eastern Nusa Tenggara chain of islands, Flores was an important trading link in the region for centuries and its many well positioned ports were visited by many foreign powers. The result is an island with an amazingly varied culture and one of the most fascinating destinations in South East Asia. Although the majority of the population are Catholic, traditional beliefs are still very strong and visitors can experience a variety of ancient rituals and festivals.

South of Flores is the island of Sumba, famous for its beautiful traditional Ikat weaving and the exciting Pasola festival. This annual ritual is held during February and March in West Sumba and coincides with the arrival on the coast of thousands of colourful sea worms. A mock battle is held and hundreds of combatants on

horseback hurl spears at each other as they charge around the battleground. Although the government has decreed that the weapons must not be sharp, serious injuries are commonplace and reveal the strong warrior culture that still exists. Ikat weaving is centred in East Sumba, a tradition that has survived for hundreds of years. These colourful cloths are created by a long and painstaking method using natural fibres and dyes, a process that can take months to complete.

West Timor is the most highly populated area in the Nusa Tenggara province and benefits from a better infrastructure than nearby islands. The region's provincial capital Kupang is situated here, which is easily reached from Darwin or Jakarta by plane. Timor island has a turbulent history but to the adventurous traveller offers a wealth of natural beauty and varied culture

West and East Nusa Tenggara are the undiscovered jewels of Indonesia. An area rich in culture, tradition and magnificent scenery which puts the adventure back into travel and offers a rewarding experience never to be forgotten.

