

Today I was working on the gibbon project. We got up early, before dawn, and headed out in pairs to our listening posts. The gibbons were brilliant this morning, and we could hear several distinct groups singing between 4.30am till 10 am! We had all synchronised our watches before leaving base camp, so from 4.30am sitting at our listening posts, we were writing down details about the calls we could hear every three minutes – including which direction the call was coming from, using a compass for bearings, and estimating how far away we thought each group was. By 10 am the sun was over head and the forest was hot and humid, we waited for a while after the gibbons had stopped singing, just in case, and then packed up our things to head back.

As we were about to leave, we heard low hootings coming from along the transect. We radioed the other teams, and went to investigate. As we approached, we realised the hoots were escalating into alarm calls – we were between two groups disputing a boundary! From the calls, it sounded like the group to our left had an adult couple and a sub-adult female, although we only saw the trees moving as the gibbons were swinging along the branches. The group to our right had an adult couple and a juvenile male, who we saw swinging through the trees about 20 metres from the transect we were on! Eventually each group moved away, and we decided to go back to camp.

When we got back to camp, we were all very hot and sweaty, so had a mandi (shower)! Some of the guys were playing badminton so I watched them for a bit (highly entertaining!), then spent an hour or so relaxing in one of the hammocks, reading my book. Because the calls this morning were so clear, we got some fairly accurate bearings; over lunch, we quickly compared the data from the different listening posts to gauge approximately where the other groups were. After lunch we went on transect walks as near as possible to these predicted areas. Although we heard some movement in the trees, we didn't actually get another sighting today.

I was on sweeping duty today after I'd finished some of the other volunteers and I went to the kitchen to help the people who were preparing supper. We put some music on while we were cooking, and ended up making bolognese with noodles, stir-fried vegetables and fried rice. While we were in the kitchen, there was a tropical downpour, so heavy that one of the girls who had been in the field all day managed to grab her wash kit have her mandi in the rain and wash her hair!

After we had all eaten, we had a meeting to discuss how the different projects are going and organise what we will each be doing tomorrow. The mammal survey project got some good results today, as one team saw a pair of sun-bears and the other came across one of the orang-utans that the behavioural team were observing! Tomorrow, I'm going to be helping with the seed dispersal project I can't wait!