



*Wildlife Guide*  
**MALAYSIA**



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## Introduction

### Some Reptiles Found in Malaysian Borneo

Oriental whipsnake  
 Marble cat snake  
 Red-headed krait  
 Striped bridal snake  
 King cobra  
 Borneo forest dragon  
 Rough neck monitor  
 Painted terrapin (Critical)  
 Estuarine crocodile (Lower Risk)  
 Asian leaf turtle

markings on its legs. These rare and shy creatures live in habitats near Taman Negara and forested areas in Pahang and Kelantan, but are seldom spotted. The *banteng* are just as rare and have occasionally been sighted in the lowland areas of eastern Sabah. Both species visit natural mineral sources and graze on grasslands cleared by people for planting rice.

### Rhinoceros

Malaysia is also home to the smallest rhinoceros in the world. Usually referred to as the Sumatran or Asian Two-horned rhinoceros or even hairy rhinos, these animals are so rare that at one time they were feared to be extinct. The government has started a programme to capture rhinos in unprotected areas and to hold them in captivity in the hope of establishing a breeding programme. Sadly, the horns of the rhinos carry a death sentence for the species as they are hunted for use in Chinese medicine. Despite the fact that there is no scientific proof at all that rhino horns have any medicinal value, their demand from traditional Chinese herbalists has not decreased. The hairy rhino is a solitary animal though groups of two or three, possibly a family unit, have been seen. The tell-tale sign of the presence of a rhino is found in mud wallows that have been dug and marked by its distinctive footprint of three large toenails on each foot, one in front and one on each side. Rhinos can be found in the Endau Rompin area and in Tabin Wildlife Reserve and Danum Valley in Sabah, albeit rarely.

### Tapirs

Another fascinating and rare creature is the Malay tapir. Related to the rhinoceros family, it is smaller than a rhino but larger than a wild pig. It has smooth, black and white markings on its body with a long head tapering into a flexible mini-trunk. Tapirs are found in and around Taman Negara and have even been spotted near forested areas in Kuala Lumpur. They are more common than the rhinoceros.

### Big Cats (Tiger, Leopard and Clouded Leopard)

Tigers, leopards and clouded leopards are highly endangered and to see one in the wild is like striking gold. As their natural habitat has shrunk through deforestation for logging and plantations,

## The Animal Kingdom

these big cats have been spotted in oil palm and fruit plantations and the conflicts between humans and animals sometimes end up in tragedy on both sides. They are very secretive animals and the dense forest provides an excellent camouflage for them. They are found mostly in Taman Negara and Endau Rompin national parks area. Although there are no tigers in Sabah and Sarawak, leopards and clouded leopards are found deep in the jungle of these two Bornean states. In March 2007, scientists discovered that the clouded leopard in Borneo is an entirely new species of cat from its west Malaysian cousins. The Bornean clouded leopard has small cloud markings, greyer fur and double dorsal stripes while the west Malaysian clouded leopard has large cloud marking with fewer spots within the cloud markings. The big cats are magnificent creatures of great beauty.

Their much smaller cousin, the leopard cat, is the size of a domestic cat. With its beautiful marking of honey-coloured fur peppered with black spots, they are sometimes seen along remote tracks near a plantation. The leopard cat looks like a miniature leopard but meows like a domestic cat.

*Below: The Sumatran rhino, the smallest rhinoceros in the world, is highly endangered and is rarely seen in the wild as its numbers have dwindled drastically due to loss of habitat and poaching.*

