

Exploring Distances Between Gibbons and Batek Hunter-Gatherers in Malaysia

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No
Reservation
required



Abstract

This presentation examines interactions between gibbons and the Batek of Pahang, Malaysia. Gibbons (or small apes) are a primate species found mostly in Southeast Asia whose calls—their songs—have been described as “among the most spectacular calls of all mammals”. Like other primates in the country, they are classed as endangered, mostly due to habitat loss. Between them and the Batek is a relationship founded on distancing. That is, the Batek don’t go looking for gibbons to hunt. Nor do gibbons seek out humans. What links them are the songs of the gibbons, which are well-loved by the Batek. What does this relationship tell us about living with endangered species? In this presentation, I will describe the relationship and connect it to the Batek’s hunting-and-gathering way of life.

Lye Tuck-Po

Lye Tuck-Po is an environmental anthropologist at the School of Social Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia, where she teaches courses on environmental anthropology, Southeast Asian cultures, and ethnography. Her main ethnographic work is with the Batek of Pahang, which now spans 30 years. She has also worked with the Penan of Sarawak, Kuay and Khmer peoples in Cambodia, and various groups in Sabah. Her current research interests include human-animal relations, and she is focusing on the Batek’s acoustic knowledge of gibbons.

