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'Camera Trap' Photographs Unknown Animal

Slightly larger than a domestic cat, with dark red fur and a long, bushy tail

A World Wildlife Foundation "camera trap" in Borneo has photographed an animal that scientists have not been able to identify. Slightly larger than a domestic cat, with dark red fur and a long, bushy tail, the animal was photographed twice at night in the dense forests of this tropical island that is home to one of the most diverse collections of species in the world. A camera trap is an everyday camera armed with infrared sensors that take pictures whenever it senses movement in the forest. The creature could be an entirely new species or a new species of marten or civet cat, which looks like a cross between a cat and a fox. The researchers will set cage traps in the coming months in the hope of finding more about this creature. It is extremely rare to discover a new mammal species of this size. "We showed the photos of the animal to locals who know the wildlife of the area, but nobody had ever seen this creature before," said Stephan Wulffraat, a biologist who is coordinating WWF's research on this species. "We also consulted several Bornean wildlife experts and most were convinced it was a new species." This strange animal might remain a mystery for ever if its habitat is not adequately protected, WWF representatives announced in the press release. Kayan Mentarang National Park in Kalimantan, Indonesia, where the carnivore was photographed, is located in the "Heart of Borneo," a mountainous region covered with vast tracks of rainforest that is threatened by a proposed oil plantation that would be the world's largest. "This discovery highlights the urgent need to conserve the unique forests in the Heart of Borneo. This creature hasn't been seen since the pictures were taken so it likely occurs in very low numbers," said Ginette Hemley, Vice president for Species Conservation. *Photo credit: WWF via U.S. Newswire*