

RECORDINGS IN NATURAL CAVES

MALAYSIA – SARAWAK

Niah Great Cave

Gunong Subis, Batu Niah, Sarawak



RIC-MY1 France 1992

Dans les grottes *

RIC – Cave Swiftlets

Prod. Co: Pithys International; Meylan

Rec. Eng: Jean-Pierre Picot

Rec. Date: 1992

Liner Notes: (16 pages in French) Jean-Pierre Picot

Time: 1:53

1. **CD:** BORNEO – VOYAGE AU COEUR DES JUNGLES
Pithys 10092 (Tk 4)

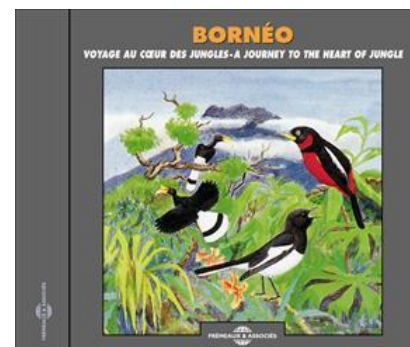
2. Reissue on **CD:** BORNEO – VOYAGE AU COEUR DES
JUNGLES (2006)

Fremaux FA 668 (Tk 4)

Notes: The huge west entrance of the Niah Great Cave measures 250 meters (820 feet) across and 60 meters (197 ft.) high. Multiple entrances lead to huge passages with several skylight pit openings.

We are supposed to be hearing – “Chauves-souris et salanganes se déplacent dans l’obscurité des cavernes par un système d’écholocation, donnant lieu à ces cris très aigus dont l’oreille humaine ne perçoit qu’une faible part (l’essentiel de leurs émissions sonores se situe dans la gamme des ultra-sons).” (Picot 1992) [Bats and swiftlets move in the darkness of caves by an echolocation system, giving rise to the high-pitched cries which the human ear detects but a small part (the essential of their sound emissions are in the ultrasonic range.)]

“Les voix d’hommes qui résonnent dans cette curieuse atmosphère rappelle (sic) que ceux-ci exploitent depuis fort longtemps deux richesses de ces grottes: le guano d’une part dont ils peuvent récolter jusqu’à



plus d'une tonne par jour (accumulation des fientes de chauves-souris et de salanganes), et les fameux 'nids d'hirondelles' d'autre part. Friandises très prisées de la cuisine chinoise où ils sont intégrés à des potages, les nids des salanganes sont presque exclusivement constitués de salive pure. Les minuscules coupes sont accrochées dans les fentes élevées de la voûte des plus grandes grottes, aussi les ramasseurs locaux ont-ils parfois construit des échafaudages de bambous pouvant atteindre 100m de haut !" (Picot 1992)

[The men's voices that resonate in this strange atmosphere remind us that for a very long time they exploited these caves for two rich resources: on the one hand guano where they can harvest more than one ton per day (the accumulation of droppings of bats and swiftlets), and on the other hand the famous 'bird's nests'. Swiftlet nests are almost exclusively made of pure bird saliva and are very popular in Chinese cuisine, where they are incorporated into soups. The tiny cuplike nests are attached in high slots in the vault of the largest caves and the local nest collectors have sometimes built bamboo scaffolding up to 100m high!]

We hear the almost continual chatter and banter of the birds-nest gatherers echoing in the entrance area. Barely audible in the foreground can be heard the short, high-pitched, scolding cries of the cave swiftlets. One wonders why the nature sound recorder didn't make his recording when the men were absent from the cave.

See also under Recordings of Bats & Cave-dwelling Birds – Malaysia - Sarawak

Ref: Anon. 2012, Swiftlet Numbers Dwindling in Niah Caves, Borneo Post Online, Mar. &7, 2012, [theborneopost](http://theborneopost.com)

Barton, Huw 2001, History of the Great Cave of Niah, abc.net.au

Borneo – Voyage au coeur des jungles CD, [Amazon](http://Amazon.com) (◀AUDIO SAMPLE)

Borneo – Voyage au coeur des jungles CD, [fremeaux](http://fremeaux.com)

Duheck, Jochen 2011, Niah Great Cave, [showcaves](http://showcaves.com)

Geological Tours – Niah, [ecomedia](http://ecomedia.com)

Harrisson, Tom 1957, The Great Cave of Niah, *Man*, Nov; 1957, p. 161-166, [rhinoresourcecenter](http://rhinoresourcecenter.com)

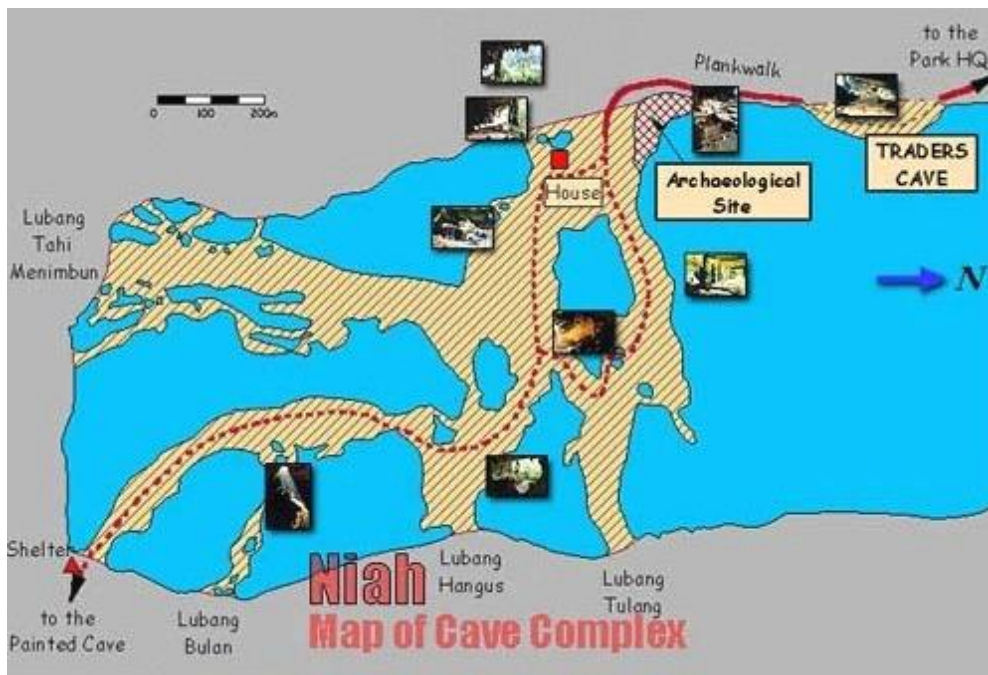
Harrisson, Tom 1958, The Caves of Niah: A History of Prehistory, *The Sarawak Museum Journal*, v. 8, n. 12, Dec.

1958, Kuching, p. 549-595

Lord Medway, 300,000 Bats, *The Sarawak Museum Journal*, v. 8, n. 12, Dec. 1958, Kuching, p. 667- 679

Niah Cave Gecko (*Cyrtodactylus cavernicolus*), Data, [iucnredlist](http://iucnredlist.org)

Niah National Park, Data, [Wikipedia](http://Wikipedia.com)



Based on map with Tom Harrisson's 1958 article