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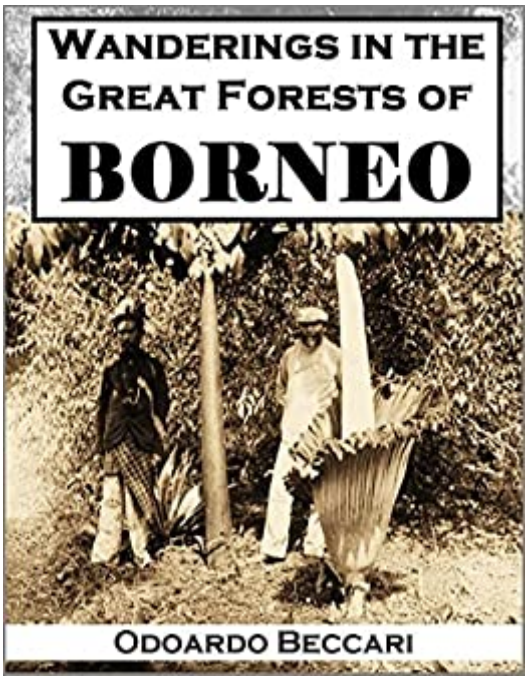

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Synopsis

The author Odoardo Beccari (1843 Ã¢â ¬â œ 1920) was an Italian adventurer naturalist and acquaintance of Darwin. The translator for this English version was Enrico Hillyer Giglioli (1845 Ã¢â ¬â œ 1909) was an Italian zoologist and anthropologist.Dr. Beccari spent 13 years from 1865 to 1878 undertaking research in Sarawak, Brunei and other islands off present-day Indonesia, Malaysia, and Papua New Guinea. He spent most of his time in Indonesia (then Dutch East Indies) and believed to be able to speak Malay, Javanese, and Sundanese fairly fluently. During his career he discovered many new species of plants, mainly palms (family Arecaceae).Dr Beccari is a naturalist, thoroughly trained in all branches of the science, but his first love is clearly for the plants. He gives, as few others have ever given us, a masterly picture of the vegetation of that island continent. But the book is by no means confined to Botany. There are admirable word pictures of the natives and their habits and customs ; graphic pictures of animal life. As an example one may mention Chapter X[., which is devoted to the Orang-utan, and lightened by a full account of the ’itan-sumpit,Ã¢â ¬â„¢ or blow-pipe fish, which brings down its insect prey with an unerringly ejected drop of water. A couple of years or so were profitably spent in Sarawak in exploring the rivers Bintulu, the Rejang, and the Batang Lupar, and very interesting collections of animals, birds, insects, and plants were obtained.Dr. Beccari’s success as a collector is widely known, and perhaps no one has done more in this way since Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace visited the Malay Archipelago, including Borneo, now many years ago.Throughout the book there are numerous references and observations on the natives and their customs and beliefs, as also anent the timber and fruit-yielding trees, the Palms, Ferns, Orchids, Nepenthes, and other rare and beautiful or economic types of vegetation with which Borneo abounds. The capital city of Brunei, the Island of Labuan, and other places were visited. This book originally published in 1904 has been reformatted for the Kindle and may contain an occasional defect from the original publication or from the reformatting.

Book Information

File Size: 8880 KB
Print Length: 484 pages
Simultaneous Device Usage: Unlimited
Publication Date: October 10, 2015
Sold by:Ã Â Digital Services LLC
Language: English
ASIN: B016GXMMSM

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #1,429,802 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #24 inÃ Â Books > Travel > Asia > Indonesia > Borneo #280 inÃ Â Books > Travel > Asia > Indonesia > General #308 inÃ Â Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Biographies & Memoirs > Professionals & Academics > Environmentalists & Naturalists

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