

Supporter Newsletter



Call of the wild

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS
OF CONSERVATION



Issue 49 - August 2025

Hello from Orangutan Appeal UK

Our mission is to **protect** and **preserve** the critically endangered **orangutan** and their **rainforest home** by funding projects that aim to:

Rescue & rehabilitate orphaned, injured and displaced orangutans

Educate to raise global awareness of the orangutans' plight

Conserve and protect their natural habitat in Borneo

25th anniversary celebrations

This year, Orangutan Appeal UK celebrates 25 years of unwavering commitment to protecting the critically endangered Bornean orangutan. As one of our valued supporters, you have played a vital part in this journey, and we are so grateful for everything your support has helped to make possible.

Over the past quarter-century, we have come a long way. From modest beginnings, we've grown into a trusted and respected charity, working in close partnership with conservation organisations, wildlife authorities and dedicated teams on the ground. Together, we have supported the rescue, care, rehabilitation and reintroduction of orangutans in need, contributed to essential infrastructure and veterinary support, and delivered outreach and education activities to promote the long-term protection of orangutans and their rainforest home.

Our symbolic adoption scheme continues to be a vital part of this work. We have directly supported the rehabilitation of 23 orangutans at Sepilok Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre. Also helping to raise awareness and build a worldwide community of people who are passionate about orangutan conservation.

To mark our anniversary, we held a celebration at Sepilok, attended by over 150 guests, including our team and their families, members of the local and conservation community, as well as many of the other dedicated staff who work at the centre. It was a chance to reflect on all that has been achieved together, and to express our appreciation to those who have supported us in Sabah and beyond. Every guest received a reusable jute bag, a small but thoughtful gesture in support of local efforts to reduce single-use plastic and protect the environment orangutans depend on.

Inside this special edition of our newsletter, you will find updates from Sepilok, news from our Education & Outreach Programme, and the latest stories from the orangutans you have come to know and love.

With fewer than 105,000 Bornean orangutans remaining in the wild, the need for continued support is greater than ever. Thank you for standing with us, your compassion makes a lasting difference.

Adrienne

Adrienne Powell, Manager



Education and Outreach



Over the last 6 months, the team has taken part in more than 20 community events, school visits and outreach activities, sharing knowledge and raising awareness about orangutan conservation.

One such event was Tawau Green Guardians, organised by the Ministry of Youth and Sports. This youth empowerment programme focused on raising awareness about climate change and orangutan conservation among young people living near orangutan habitats. The day was filled with engaging activities, the participants, who clearly enjoyed the experience, left with a deeper understanding of environmental issues. We also formed a valuable new relationship with a government division we hadn't worked with before, further helping to strengthen conservation efforts in Sabah.

Connecting people with the wildlife they share their forests with, is a vital part of our work in Sabah. These exchanges help build confidence and community pride in caring for the rainforest and its wildlife.

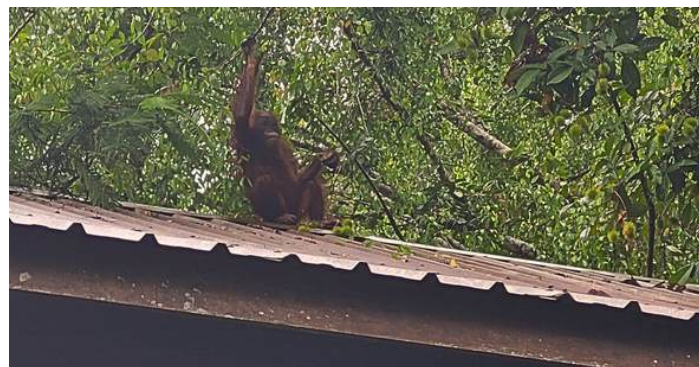
The team also attended the Wildlife Conservation and Public Awareness Programme held at the Palm Oil Industrial Cluster (POIC) in Lahad Datu. The event brought together representatives from industry, government and conservation to discuss the environmental impact of development and to promote shared responsibility for protecting local wildlife.

Exchanging insights, challenges and best practices helps reduce human-wildlife conflict and supports coexistence between industry and orangutans.

Ape-mazing facts!

Orangutans use camouflage to blend into their forest habitat. Their reddish-brown fur mimics the dappled sunlight filtering through the canopy, helping them stay hidden from predators and humans below.

They also move slowly and quietly through the trees, allowing them to remain unnoticed in the rainforest.



New rangers



We are delighted to introduce two new rangers to our team at Sepilok: Sylvitus (left) and Julian (right).

These positions have been made possible through the generous legacy of our former patron, the late Paul O'Grady. As a beloved TV presenter, comedian and animal welfare advocate, Paul was known for his deep compassion and commitment to causes close to his heart. His support extended to our organisation, championing our efforts to protect and rehabilitate orangutans in Borneo.

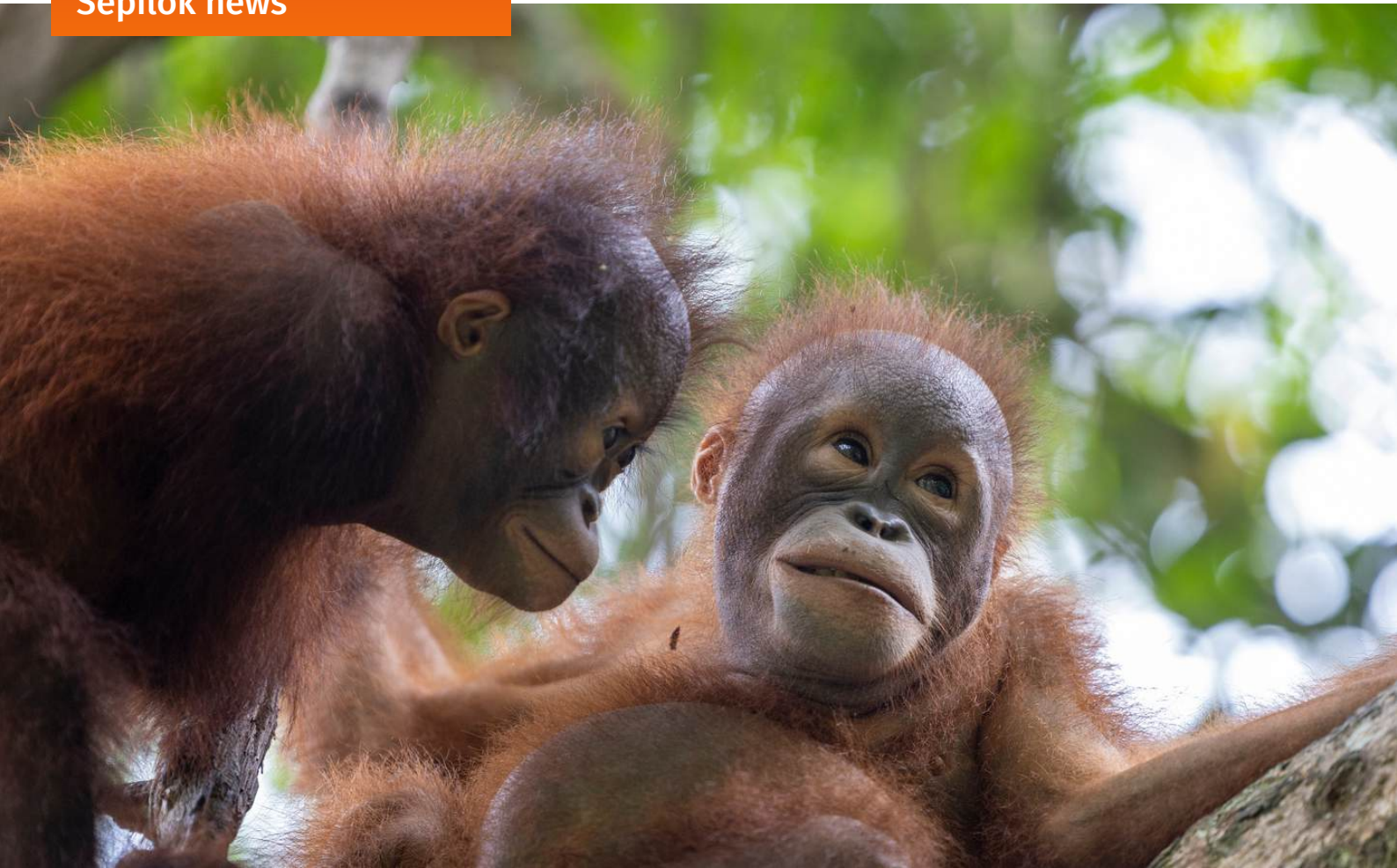
Paul's passing in March 2023 was a profound loss, but his spirit continues to inspire our work. His legacy has enabled us to fund Sylvitus and Julian's roles for the next three years! We are deeply grateful for the unwavering support Paul gave, which has left an indelible mark on our mission.

Sylvitus and Julian are part of our dedicated team of 13 care staff and rangers. They are responsible for supporting the orangutans through their final stages of rehabilitation. Focusing on further developing essential survival skills and helping to prepare the orangutans for eventual reintroduction back to the wild.

They also collect vital data on the orangutans' behaviour, diet and health. This not only allows us to tailor the programme to meet each individual's needs, but also deepens our understanding of their progress and adaptation. These insights help us refine our methods and contribute to wider conservation efforts.

Paul's legacy continues to make a meaningful difference in the lives of the orangutans. We are honoured to carry forward his memory through our work and look forward to the positive contributions Sylvitus and Julian will bring to our conservation efforts in Borneo.





Napagang and **Adie** (above) remain close friends, sharing their days at the indoor nursery with **Agop**. This area is designed to help the youngest orangutans at Sepilok develop essential skills like climbing. A network of ropes lead into the forest and the three race across them to see who can reach the trees first. Adie, being the smallest, is often last and hates to be left behind. When this happens she will stop swinging and cry until Napagang and Agop slow down or wait for her to catch up!

When they get a little older, Napagang, Adie and Agop will spend more time deeper within the forest joining orangutans including **Hujan**, **Luffy**, **Oyo**, and **Tombilina**. Here, the skills they have learned will be put to the test in much taller trees, where they will discover new foods as they explore the reserve further. Spending time in their natural environment will gradually help these young orangutans develop a greater level of independence.



Hujan



Luffy

Moda (right) was rescued from a plantation in Sukau, where he was found on the ground, weak and alone.

During a health assessment he suffered a seizure, which was later diagnosed as epilepsy.

Aged around 10 years old, he requires lifelong medication and will remain at Sepilok, where he can receive the specialist care he needs.



Many orangutans in rescue centres in Borneo and Sumatra have conditions or disabilities that mean they could never survive on their own in the wild. Injuries, illnesses or extreme trauma can leave them with lasting physical or developmental challenges.

While Sepilok's aim is always to return orangutans to their natural habitat, it also provides a lifelong sanctuary for those who are sadly unable to be reintroduced. These orangutans receive ongoing veterinary support, daily care and enriched environments suited to their abilities.

Adopt an orangutan

If you'd like to learn more about Napagang, Agop or Hujan, you can adopt them. Scan the QR code or visit: orangutan-appeal.org.uk/adopt



Bakut and **Joss** are seen heading deep into the reserve most days, a sign of their growing independence. Now in their adolescence, they are beginning to show the adventurous behaviour typical of young males starting to mature. Venturing further afield may be their way of testing boundaries and seeking a space of their own beyond the centre. Until then, they can be found in their favourite place - the swings at the outdoor nursery!



Bakut



Joss

At the outdoor nursery, free-ranging adult females **Canyon** and **Beryl** often pay a visit, venturing in from the forest just before feeding time, patiently waiting to take advantage of the selection of fruits and vegetables on offer.



Canyon



Beryl

Baby **Gwyn**, was born to 11 year old **Ospie** (below) last October, who is proving to be a wonderful mum. We were worried if having a baby would change Ospie's relationship with best friend Koko, but she is a great support to mum and baby. Gwyn is growing in confidence every day. She is starting to explore a little but still keeps close to Ospie. It will be many years before she becomes fully independent. For now she is enjoying a safe and steady start to life at Sepilok.



Stranded wild orangutan rescue

Orangutan Appeal UK in conjunction with Sabah Wildlife Department, were dispatched to monitor an orangutan that had become stranded in a fruit orchard in Lahad Datu. It was reported the orangutan had been there for nearly three weeks.

The team surveyed the area and found multiple nests, some freshly built and others at least two weeks old, confirming that the orangutan had been present for an extended period. The orchard was surrounded by palm oil plantations, with the nearest forest a significant distance away. Given the length of time the orangutan had been there and the lack of a clear route back to suitable habitat, it was evident that he had become disoriented and stranded, with little chance of finding his way back to the forest unaided.

Moving an orangutan from one location to another is only ever done as a last resort and when their safety is at risk. Prolonged proximity to humans often increases the likelihood of conflict. Without intervention, the orangutan would have struggled to find enough food once the fruiting trees were depleted.

After careful consideration, the decision was made to translocate the orangutan to a more suitable forested area, where he would have access to natural food sources and a safe environment.



Reintroduction



Back in the forest

Cases like this highlight the growing challenges orangutans face as their natural habitats continue to shrink. While translocations can help individual orangutans in the short term, the ultimate goal is to protect their habitat and promote coexistence between orangutans and local communities, ensuring a future where both can thrive.

We have been supporting the Regrow Borneo project since 2020. This vital reforestation and biodiversity initiative is based in the Lower Kinabatangan, Sabah – a critical stronghold for wild orangutans. Led by Danau Girang Field Centre, the project combines scientific research, community involvement and active tree planting to restore degraded rainforest, reconnect fragmented habitats, and help safeguard the long-term survival of orangutans and other wildlife.

Update from Prof. Benoit Goossens, Director Danau Girang Field Centre

A season of challenges and resilience

After several months of intense and prolonged flooding across the Lower Kinabatangan, we're relieved to report that water levels have finally receded. All our restoration sites were fully inundated earlier this year, temporarily bringing planting and fieldwork to a halt.

But with conditions now improving, we are doing our best to catch up while the ground is still accessible. Field monitoring has resumed, and our planting team is gradually returning to work. While not yet at full capacity, their commitment and resilience have been incredible.

Signs of recovery in forest and wildlife

During the downtime, the team at Danau Girang Field Centre focused on data entry and analysis. Early results from our biodiversity monitoring show encouraging shifts in community composition. Sungai Pin and Laab Swamp have seen an increase in species richness and the return of several forest specialists, suggesting that restoration is beginning to support more complex habitats, even after just one year of planting. We are closely monitoring sapling survival. Some flood-tolerant species like *Nauclea* and *Mallotus* are holding up well, while others will be replanted soon.



Aerial view of peak flooding



Borneo Nature Foundation (BNF)

Update from Lauren Vyvyan, Partnerships and Philanthropy Lead at BNF

Fires are one of the biggest dangers facing the forests of Borneo, especially in places like Sebangau National Park, Indonesia, where years of illegal logging and drainage have left the peat soil extremely dry and flammable. When fires start here they can burn both above and below the ground, making them very hard to stop and causing serious damage to forests, wildlife and nearby communities.

To tackle this we support nine local firefighting teams who patrol the forest all year round. These patrols are key to fire prevention, helping spot and stop small fires before they grow out of control. As the dry season approaches, patrols have been increased to nearly one a day.

In February, we provided extra training to one of the teams, focusing on a tool called SMART. This simple mapping and data software helps teams record where they've patrolled and what they've found. With better information they can plan smarter fire prevention strategies and respond faster to threats.

We also co-launched a new Disaster Risk Reduction Forum with the local disaster management agency, bringing together 61 people from 13 organisations to improve coordination during fire season.

As a result of these actions, over 1,000 dams have now been built to re-wet drained peat and prevent it from catching fire. Nearly 21,000 seedlings have been planted to restore lost forest. And a new orangutan health monitoring programme is underway, helping safeguard this critically endangered species, which depends on healthy peatland forest to survive.

These efforts are vital for stopping fires before they start, and protecting one of Borneo's most important and threatened homes for wildlife and people alike.





Ospie and Gwyn

One of our objectives is to raise awareness of the orangutans' plight. This involves staying up to date with the latest research and ongoing efforts in Borneo to protect and preserve the orangutan and its rainforest home. This not only helps us to allocate funding where it is most needed, but also serves as an educational tool that we can share with you. Below are a couple of recent publications we found particularly interesting and hope you do too. To learn more, please visit the [Educational Resources page on our website](#).



Orangutans: Their History, Natural History and Conservation

This beautifully illustrated book takes readers on a journey through the world of orangutans - from their ancient origins and cultural importance to their complex behaviour and the conservation challenges they face today. Ronald Orenstein weaves together science and history to offer a deeper understanding of these remarkable great apes and the threats to their survival.

Published by Firefly Books.



Orangutans take 'power naps' to make up for lost sleep

A 14-year study has found that orangutans take naps to catch up on disrupted sleep. When conditions such as cooler temperatures, rain, long-distance travel or social interactions interfere with their rest at night, they make up for it with extra naps during the day. Just like humans, taking a short rest helps them stay alert for foraging, climbing and even using tools. Orangutans often build simple day-nests to snooze in, highlighting how important rest is to their well-being. By understanding these natural habits, we can better protect their health and the forest homes they rely on.

Research published in *Current Biology*: *'Wild orangutans maintain sleep homeostasis through napping, counterbalancing socio-ecological factors that interfere with their sleep'* by Ashbury et al., 2025

Phenology

Phenology is the study of seasonal changes in nature, especially in plants. In Borneo's tropical rainforest, it helps us understand the subtle rhythms of the ecosystem – what is flowering, what is fruiting and when.

Why does this matter for orangutans? These intelligent apes depend heavily on fruit, leaves, bark and other forest foods to survive. By tracking phenological patterns, our team can anticipate food availability, understand orangutan movement and support healthier outcomes for both wild and rehabilitated individuals. This data is especially important when orangutans are being reintroduced to the forest. Releasing them at times when natural food is abundant increases their chance of thriving. It also helps us monitor how well they are adapting and responding to changes in their environment.

At Sepilok, our rangers carry out this work year-round, often visiting specific trees on regular routes to document what is happening in the forest. It is patient, precise work that gives us an invaluable window into the orangutans forest home. This ongoing research helps ensure that our conservation decisions are informed, adaptive and rooted in science. Together, we are helping safeguard a forest that orangutans can depend on now and for generations to come.



Thank you!

We are incredibly grateful to everyone who has gone the extra mile (sometimes literally!) to support our work over the past six months. Huge thanks to **David Darling** who completed the Edinburgh Marathon in May and to **Helen Lenox-Smith** who took on an impressive 52k ultramarathon before a trip to Sepilok in July.



David Darling

Other fundraisers include 10-year-old **Frank Rorke** who completed a 20 mile cycle over two days, complete with orangutan toy taken along for the ride. 5-year-old **Benji Watson** hosted a successful bake sale. **Mikael** took on a skipping rope challenge as part of his preparation to climb Mount Kinabalu later this year. A big thank you as well to the **Capital Whisky Club** and **Jason** from **Whisky Wise** for raising funds through a whisky auction.



Frank Rorke



The Bishops C of E Learning Academy

Special thanks also go to our inspiring school supporters including Keely Sunderland and her class at **The Bishops C of E Learning Academy** for raising awareness by making posters about the importance of orangutans and the impact of deforestation. **Hampton School** and **Lady Eleanor Holles School** for their fundraising efforts, including a 15k Tough Mudder challenge, helping to raise an amazing £2,360.

Kelly Branton and Robin Class at **Bildeston Primary School** organised a fantastic palm oil-free bake sale, while Izzy and her classmates from **St Mary and St John Primary School** sold cakes after school to raise funds to adopt Archie. After learning about plastic pollution and fast fashion, Year 5 at **St Mary's Church of England Primary Academy** organised their own clothes swap. With the help of their orangutan mascot, the event raised awareness about how to be a more responsible consumer.



Izzy and friends



St Mary's clothes swap

We also extend our sincere thanks to the businesses that have supported us including **Alpine Coffee Shop, Hangin' Pizzeria, Platform Galeri, SYTO International, Jenks Brands / N'eat, Strip Distribution, Centaur Food, J Leon Group, SCDX, Odyssey World, Regent Holidays, Humphreys Law Ltd, Camps International** and **Brick Owl**.

Are you a teacher or group leader?

Raising awareness is as important as raising funds so we have created an educational video full of fascinating facts about orangutans, their habitat, diet and the threats they face.

It highlights ways you can help contribute towards their conservation. Perfect for anyone keen to inspire others about orangutan conservation.

We'd love to share it with you!

To request a link to the video please phone or email us.



orangutan-appeal.org.uk



info@orangutan-appeal.org.uk



+44 (0) 1590 623443



Orangutan Appeal UK
New Forest Estate Offices
Lyndhurst Road
Brockenhurst
Hampshire
SO42 7RL
United Kingdom

Get in touch

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