

Supporter Newsletter

Call of the wild



*Orangutan
Appeal UK*

Issue 45 - August 2023

Hello from Orangutan Appeal UK

L-R Hannah W (Fundraising), Adrienne (Manager), Jacha (Chairperson), Hannah DB (Communications), Hugh (Trustee), Saph (Trustee), John (Finance)



The last 6 months have brought about a series of encouraging developments as we continue to work closely with Sepilok Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre and provide assistance to other organisations in Borneo dedicated to securing a brighter future for orangutans.

In this issue of our bi-annual newsletter, I am delighted to share some of our progress with you, along with updates on our ongoing projects and notable achievements. During a recent visit to Sabah, Jacha and I had the privilege of attending various meetings that have enabled the charity to move forward with the funding of enclosure improvements, upgrades to the indoor and outdoor nurseries and the re-introduction of our Liaison Officer volunteer program (see page 6).

One of our most significant engagements was with Datuk Christina Liew the Minister of Education, Conservation and Environment, who shares our passion for wildlife and environmental conservation. She expressed great enthusiasm in staying updated on our progress, gaining insight into our future plans, and even expressed an interest in attending the Orangutan Caring Week event at Sepilok in November. Being able to foster good working relationships with the Malaysian government is crucial as it allows us to amplify our positive influence and make a greater impact.



Paul & Archie

Whilst at Sepilok, we also visited the refurbished Visitor Information Centre. This revitalised space provides visitors with an opportunity to learn even more about the crucial work being undertaken at the Centre (more on page 2).

On our return to the UK, the charity's summer meeting took place, during which we shared some new opportunities and progress with the trustees.

On page 5, you can read about our brand refresh which includes a new logo and website for the charity. We are incredibly grateful for the grant we received which has made these changes possible. We hope to bring the face of Orangutan Appeal UK into the 21st century whilst keeping our core values and goals in line with our current work. I sincerely hope that our supporters will embrace these changes, just as we have, and join us as we endeavour to implement more accessible and user-friendly features.

I give my heartfelt thanks, as always, to our exceptional teams in the UK and Borneo, as well as to our incredible supporters. It is because of you that we are able to implement such positive changes to help conserve the critically endangered Bornean orangutan.

Adrienne
Adrienne Powell, Manager

Remembering Paul O'Grady

It is with great sadness that we reflect on the loss of our beloved patron, Paul O'Grady, who passed away suddenly in March.

Known to many for his genuine and warm personality he was also a devoted animal lover, passionate about their welfare and conservation. Ever since a filming trip to Sepilok, when Paul met and fell in love with our very own Archie in 2015, he wholeheartedly embraced and supported our work.

Paul truly was a very special man, and his support was, and will always be, deeply appreciated. His love for orangutans and unwavering commitment helped to raise awareness and inspire others to take action.

His kindness over the years will always be remembered, and his absence deeply felt.

Wildlife Rescue Unit (WRU)

We are pleased to continue our support of the vital work of the WRU in Sabah. Here are some of their latest updates from the field.

The team were involved in the rescue of a critically endangered hawksbill turtle. These creatures are named for their distinctive beak-like jaws, which are adapted for eating sponges off coral reefs, sea anemones and jellyfish.

The turtle was caught in a fisherman's trap and required urgent treatment for the injuries it had sustained. Fortunately, he was found in time and reported to the WRU who took him to Sepilok where he was cared for by our wildlife vet, Dr Yohind.

Following a successful recovery the turtle was returned to its natural habitat in the ocean with help from our ranger, Bonny.



A concerned homeowner reported a very small and scared slow loris to the WRU, that had taken up residence in his garage. Renowned for their slow and deliberate movements it is thought that this nocturnal primate may have lost his way in the forest and therefore sought refuge in the warm, dark safety of the garage. He was taken to the Wildlife Rescue Centre for a health check prior to being returned to his forest home.

A curious pangolin was found by a concerned local in Kolopis village in Penampang. She found the scaly anteater rummaging through a bin in their home! Upon arriving at the scene, the WRU examined the critically endangered pangolin to ensure he was in good health before taking him back to his natural habitat and far from any other human settlements.

The team were pleased to see him back in his rightful place as he took in his surroundings and happily sloped off into the rainforest.

Borneo Nature Foundation (BNF)

Over the past six months, much of our efforts have been focused on the impending dry season and fire prevention strategies. Due to wetter-than-average conditions and the success of our long-term hydrological restoration programme, no major fires have occurred in our working area for the last two years. However, with a significant El Niño virtually guaranteed in the coming months, weather conditions are likely to be much drier than usual, greatly increasing the risk of fires during this year's dry season and the next.

We are also gearing up for another big re-planting drive as part of our commitment to plant 1 Million Trees by 2025. Earlier this year, we purchased 120,000 seedlings from our 15 supported community nurseries, which will be planted in one of the Sebangau National Park's designated reforestation zones as soon as conditions allow. Many of these reforestation zones were damaged during the 2015 and 2019 wildfires, including areas of critical orangutan habitat. By planting native trees, we hope to speed up the forest's natural regeneration process, restoring wildlife habitat, preventing soil erosion, and further reducing the risk of fires.

Samantha Salt

Partnerships Development Officer at BNF





There has been a lot of work going on behind-the-scenes at Sepilok and we are thrilled to be able to share some exclusive images with you of the fantastic changes that have been made by our team.

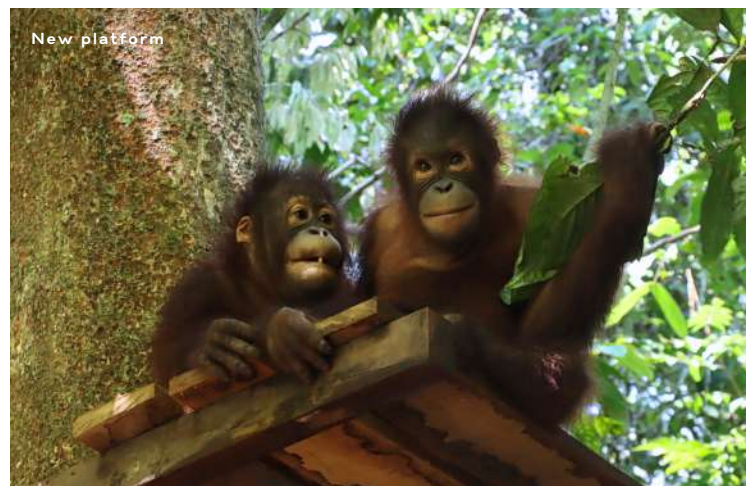
Despite its name, the indoor nursery is an outdoor area where the youngest and most vulnerable orangutans start their rehabilitation. Here they are taught all the skills they would normally have learnt from their mothers, including climbing, nest-building and foraging.

The training area has a jungle gym designed to help encourage these behaviours and now they also have additional platforms for resting and ropes leading into the forest so that the opportunity to climb higher in the trees is available.

Providing animals with choice in this kind of environment is crucial and is known to improve their welfare, so the more options the infants have to explore and practice their new skills, the better for them. The carers provide the orangutans with outside access all day, so for this reason a shelter for their protection has also been built – after all, without our fantastic staff there would be no one to care for the orangutans!

The outdoor nursery is home to some of the more advanced learners at the Centre who have completed their initial training and are ready to become more independent. This area can be viewed by visitors to Sepilok via a purpose-built building with large glass windows. This makes it possible for people to observe the orangutans without disrupting them, which in enhances the visitor experience but also respects the wild nature of the orangutans.

An additional feeding platform further into the reserve has also been built and will help the orangutans explore further afield within the Kabili Reserve, which surrounds the nursery.



An important part of the visitor journey at Sepilok involves education and to help with this there is a Visitor Education Centre. This has recently undergone full modernisation and refurbishment, which has created a more engaging space for all. We are excited to utilise this space in the future for our Liaison Officer and adoptions desk.

A further development, arising from our visit, has meant we have engaged a local contractor to carry out upgrades to some of the enclosures, with work now well underway. We also initiated some new signage for visitors which will provide valuable information about our charity and the centre's educational facilities. This will help to convey the important conservation message that Sepilok strives to impart.



Nami



Hujan

Hujan is a big fan of sweet potato and guava at the feeding platform but is also getting skilled at foraging for her own tasty snacks in the forest. She particularly enjoys kedondong leaves. The Kedondong tree can grow as tall as 60 feet so they are great for Hujan to practice climbing in as well! Whenever Hujan is being guided by a member of the team for any reason, they will hold one of her little hands whilst she happily waves the other one around above her head.

Nami on the other hand prefers to be alone these days. She is excellent at finding her own food in the forest and rarely visits the feeding platform anymore. This is a fantastic sign that she is sustaining herself without depending on the care team. We hope that soon Nami will be spending full nights in the reserve where she will have to make her own nest and fend for herself – something she seems more than ready to try.



Agop

Agop is a very confident climber. She is one of the smallest orangutans at the indoor nursery but that doesn't stop her going much higher than the others. She is persistent when nest-building and really focusses her efforts on the task at hand, but she still needs a little more practice before her nests are good enough for sleeping in. She is one of the least fussy orangutans when it comes to eating and seems to enjoy everything. As well as the food she is given, Agop is good at foraging in the forest and is always seen trying new things like ginger roots, tree bark and young leaves.

Tombilina loves spending time up high in the trees or on the climbing frame at the outdoor nursery, where she can observe all the goings-on of the other orangutans below.

Bakut and **Joss** were recently seen tussling over bananas at the outdoor nursery. In the end it was Bakut who gave up first but still managed to get a good mouth full before he did! Joss admires **Beryl**, an older female orangutan who sometimes visits the outdoor nursery from the reserve. Having a more mature orangutan to look up to can help younger orangutans to learn new skills. As a result of Joss and Beryl's friendship, he has been brave enough to venture further into the reserve and spend more time there too. This is good progress for Joss and will encourage him to be more independent.



Luffy and Zorro

Little **Luffy** and **Zorro** are the greatest of friends and are rarely seen apart. Their favourite thing is to play with a pile of leaves by throwing them high into the air and watching them fall. The reason they have the leaves in the first place is to encourage them to practice making nests, but this boisterous pair would rather play. They are both weary of the macaques that live in the forest surrounding the indoor nursery, so when they are close the two will hug each other tightly and hide if they become afraid.



Betty



Archie

Archie & Betty were spotted by Ann, our Liaison Officer, playing a game of (what appeared to be) hide and seek. Betty covered her face for a while and Archie hid behind a wall until Betty moved her hands. Archie then rolled out to surprise her!

It's important for young orangutans to play as they can learn many social skills this way. It also brings joy to visitors and staff at Sepilok who delight in watching them interact in this way.



We've been supporting this remarkable reforestation initiative in the Lower Kinabatangan in Sabah since 2020. The project combines scientific expertise and local knowledge to restore degraded areas of rainforest and establish crucial wildlife corridors.

These corridors reconnect areas of forest that have been fragmented owing to human habitation and agricultural activities. They allow safe passage and habitat to wildlife, as well as enhancing biodiversity and strengthening the resilience of the ecosystem.

One of the most important parts of Regrow Borneo's work is caring for and monitoring the trees they plant, which are all grown initially in community nurseries. Without regular care, natural challenges like flooding and predation can hinder their growth. So, for

this reason all the trees are nurtured for at least three years, ensuring they have the best chance to thrive and help restore the ecosystem.

To understand the impact of their efforts, the Regrow Borneo team use modern techniques like drone-based surveys, as well as traditional methods. By closely monitoring the progress of each hectare of forest, they can make informed decisions for future restoration work.

Monitoring biodiversity at different stages of restoration is also crucial to understanding how animal populations are changing as the forests come back to life.

The team conduct surveys for amphibians, small mammals, dung beetles, and birds to learn about the variety of species, their presence, and how abundant they are.

Despite facing challenges, such as a long rainy season, Regrow Borneo has achieved significant progress in the past year. They have prepared and planted 20 different tree species over 8.5 hectares of forest, and even opened a new restoration site. Each of the five sites has its own unique characteristics, requiring tailored approaches to match the specific habitats.

The results have been fantastic. In just two sites alone, over 7 tonnes of carbon per hectare have been sequestered. Additionally, the restored sites have become havens for wildlife once again, with sightings of sun bears, elephants and to our great delight most recently - orangutans!

If you want to learn more about Regrow Borneo's inspiring work, please visit our website or regrowborneo.org.

Education & Outreach

Education and community outreach are instrumental to orangutan conservation in Borneo. Over the past 6 months our team have continued to be actively engaged in raising awareness and imparting invaluable knowledge to children across Sabah.

Alongside other local wildlife conservation organisations, including Sabah Wildlife Department, the team have visited twelve schools and attended local awareness events, reaching out to hundreds of children who are now empowered to take action for wildlife conservation.

We are proud to have supported Danau Girang Field Centre's education and awareness outreach programme called HONOR, involving children in rural schools.

HONOR's aim is to build positive attitudes, empathy towards wildlife, and increase awareness and understanding of nature conservation among communities near wildlife habitats. It also inspires children to learn science and ecology, and to become future leaders in wildlife conservation in Sabah. The programme aligns with UNESCO's efforts to make education a vital part of the international response to climate change.





We invite you to join us as we unveil our new logo and website. Our decision to embark on this brand refresh was driven by our commitment to increase awareness and reach out to new supporters who share our passion for orangutan conservation.

This newsletter is the first look at everything we will be revamping with our updated image. The name 'Call of the Wild' is symbolic of the journey rescued orangutans embark upon at Sepilok and echoes our primary goal - to return them to where they belong, the wild.

Our mission to create a sustainable future for the critically endangered orangutan remains, but we couldn't achieve this without your support.

We want to express our sincere gratitude to everyone who has donated over the years and we hope that you will continue with us in this new and exciting phase.

Liaison Officer

Every 3 months we send one fortunate applicant to Borneo to represent us at Sepilok Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre.

The main role of our Liaison Officer is to engage with visitors and raise awareness, as well as promoting our adoption scheme.

If you have a passion for wildlife and an active interest in conservation click or scan the QR code to find out how you can apply.



N.B. open to UK residents only

Dominance in male orangutans

Orangutans are sexually dimorphic, meaning there are distinct differences in the size and appearance of males and females. This is relatively common in the animal kingdom and many species, including humans, share this trait.

Orangutans are unusual as there can also be noticeable physical differences between adult males. This is due to a rare phenomenon called 'bimaturism', which only a few other species experience. Put simply, this means that male orangutans can keep some of their adolescent physical characteristics, or, transform into dominant males by developing increased muscle mass, long hair, and iconic facial features such as cheek pads (called flanges) and large throat sacs that enable their calls to be heard for miles around. These deep, bellowing sounds are called 'long calls' and serve two purposes: first, to attract females and second, to deter any competition from other males.

Both dominant and unflanged males have the ability to reproduce. Flanged males have higher levels of the hormone testosterone, and are much larger and stronger compared to unflanged males. Ultimately, these traits make dominant males more desirable to females and are therefore more likely to reproduce successfully.



Malim, 2019 Unflanged



Malim, 2022 Fully flanged

Flanges can take between 1-3 years to develop fully. This dominant transition can happen to a male orangutan any time once they reach around 10 years old.

In the absence of a dominant male, male orangutans within the same territory will start to show these secondary characteristics and develop flanges. This continues until one male becomes dominant. When this happens, the other males go through flange suppression, meaning the development of cheek pads stops and reverses, returning them to an unflanged status once again.

There is scientific reasoning behind this unusual and rare life strategy. The main reason is believed to be the absence of competition. When there is no other dominant male to compete with, the only male in a territory naturally assumes dominance. That's why in captivity, you only see dominant males.

Research has found that highly stressful experiences in their youth can also impact whether a male orangutan will become dominant. This includes orangutans becoming orphaned or displaced. Potentially leading to an increase in dominant males and a decrease in unflanged males.

Thank you!

Thank you to all who have generously donated, organised fundraising efforts, or motivated others to help protect the orangutan and its rainforest home.

Joanna Smart represented us in the 2023 London Marathon in April and raised an incredible £2,326. To help her fundraising efforts, she organised bake sales and walked dogs, all whilst training for the big day!

Naomi Bierman is a vet who kindly provided medical supplies for the orangutans. She also donated funds so we could purchase a replacement monitor for the x-ray developer.

Students at **Saint Exupéry International School** in Mauritius were taught about the issue of deforestation in Borneo and crafted artworks featuring orangutans, which they then sold to raise funds and to teach their parents about the plight of orangutans.

Vision Primary School in Malaysia also fundraised for the orangutans at Sepilok Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre. Jacha and Adrienne were delighted to present them with a special certificate of thanks during their visit to Borneo.



Saint Exupéry International School



Vision School



Joanna Smart



Naomi Bierman

Special thanks go to **Hampton School** and **Lady Eleanor Holles School** who have fundraised an impressive £2,129 and donated an additional £1,000. Some of the students made a special trip to Sepilok in July, where they learnt more about our work, as well as enjoying a guided night walk through the Kabili Reserve and orangutan spotting at the Centre.

This year marks the 10-year anniversary of restaurant chain **Banana Tree's** support for Orangutan Appeal UK, which is a remarkable milestone and reflection of their loyalty to our cause. In that time they have raised and donated over £80,000 for which we are truly grateful.

We also extend our appreciation to the other businesses that have supported us, including - **Alpine Coffee Shop**, **Platform Galeri** and **Hangin' Pizzeria**, **N'eat**, **Extincts**, **Strip Distribution**, **Centaur Foods**, **SYTO International**, **SCDX Ltd**, and **Animal Friends Insurance**.

We would also like to remember and give thanks to those who kindly left us a gift in their will. Their legacy will help to make a lasting impact on the survival of orangutans in Borneo.

A new way to help the orangutans - you can now purchase items for Sepilok from our Amazon Wishlist: <https://54dv.short.gy/Amazon.wish.list> or scan the QR code.



Orangutan Appeal UK

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Get in Touch

Please contact us with any feedback, or to share your Sepilok stories or photos. Whether you're planning a fundraising event or seeking information, we welcome all enquiries.



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