

Supporter Newsletter

Call of the wild



Issue 51 - August 2026

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

Welcome to the latest edition of our bi-annual newsletter. Thank you, as always, for your support, which makes every part of our work possible.

The theme of this issue is motherhood, one of the most important and long-lasting relationships in an orangutan's life. For up to eight years, a young orangutan remains close to his or her mother, learning what to eat, where to travel, how to build a nest and how to survive in the rainforest. It is an extraordinary bond, and one that shapes an orangutan's future from the very beginning.

At Sepilok, wild and rehabilitated orangutans share the same reserve, creating a unique environment where generations overlap. Mothers continue to raise their babies, while orphaned youngsters have the opportunity to learn from older orangutans and their human caregivers.

The team's knowledge, patience and compassion play a pivotal role in helping orphaned orangutans learn the skills they would otherwise have been taught by their mothers, giving them the best possible chance of returning to life in the rainforest.



Celebrating 20 years



This year, our Supervisor, Lineker, celebrates 20 years with Orangutan Appeal UK.

This is a wonderful milestone within a team whose combined experience caring for orphaned, injured and displaced orangutans now exceeds 140 years.

Your support has also enabled us to strengthen many different areas of our work. At Sepilok, the team have continued delivering education and outreach activities, developing their skills through specialist training and helping with wider conservation efforts in the field. Beyond the centre, we are also helping to restore rainforest, contribute to fire prevention work and fund research that improves our understanding of orangutan health, behaviour and habitat recovery. Alongside this, we have provided essential equipment, including a second vehicle, surgery table and clinic supplies, helping the team respond quickly and provide the highest possible standard of care.

In this issue, you will read about orangutan mothers, both wild and rehabilitated, raising the next generation, as well as new research into the vital role mothers play in an infant's development.

Thank you again for making this work possible and helping us to protect orangutans and preserve the rainforest they depend on.

Adrienne

Adrienne Powell, Manager

Adie's next step

As a tiny infant, Adie needed urgent veterinary attention when it became clear she was not thriving in her mother's care. Every effort was made to keep them together but, after a prolonged period of treatment and careful monitoring, it was sadly not possible for mother and baby to be reunited.

Despite this traumatic start, Adie has flourished at the nursery alongside Agop and Napagang. She is now ready to join our adoption scheme, giving supporters the chance to follow her journey through rehabilitation and, one day, release.



Education and Outreach



Education Officer, Jonrey, has been out in schools and communities across Sabah, helping people of all ages learn more about orangutans. With food samples, models and other hands-on materials, each session becomes practical, memorable and easy to understand.

Over 100 pupils and 21 teachers from SK Lung Manis Primary School embraced the opportunity to learn about orangutans during their 'Back to School' event. Joined by other wildlife organisations, pupils were encouraged to think about the animals and forests around them and the valuable part communities can play in keeping them safe.

At SMK Trus Madi secondary school, 112 students attended a conservation awareness exhibition organised by the Sabah Forestry Department. Jonrey spoke with students about Borneo's forests, the wildlife they sustain and why protecting these habitats matter for the future.

Building skills for conservation

Conservation work in Sabah requires a wide range of skills, from caring for orangutans and their rehabilitation to working safely in rainforest conditions, responding to wildlife emergencies and helping protect the wider forest reserve.

Ongoing training helps staff continue developing this knowledge and adapt to the many different situations they face. In recent months, this has included Wilderness First Aid, the Asian Veterinary Nursing Conference and Honorary Wildlife Warden training, building expertise across animal care, field response and rainforest conservation.

Several members of the team joined a Sabah Wildlife Department wildlife expedition at Tabin Wildlife Reserve, organised in collaboration with WWF-Malaysia. This protected forest has a long connection to Sepilok's rehabilitation work. The expedition focused on wildlife monitoring, with camera traps used as a non-invasive way to survey elusive species and build a clearer picture of population numbers, distribution and activity. Staff also recorded wildlife sightings and supported wider survey work, with the findings helping to identify potential threats and contribute to future conservation planning for Tabin.

As well as taking education into schools and communities, Sepilok also welcomes visiting students.

Regents International School Pattaya sent nine students as part of their Young Conservationist Programme to learn about orangutan conservation and wildlife protection. Throughout the day, the pupils attended talks, explored the centre and created enrichment activities for the orangutans and later watched them being enjoyed at the outdoor nursery.

Ape-mazing facts!

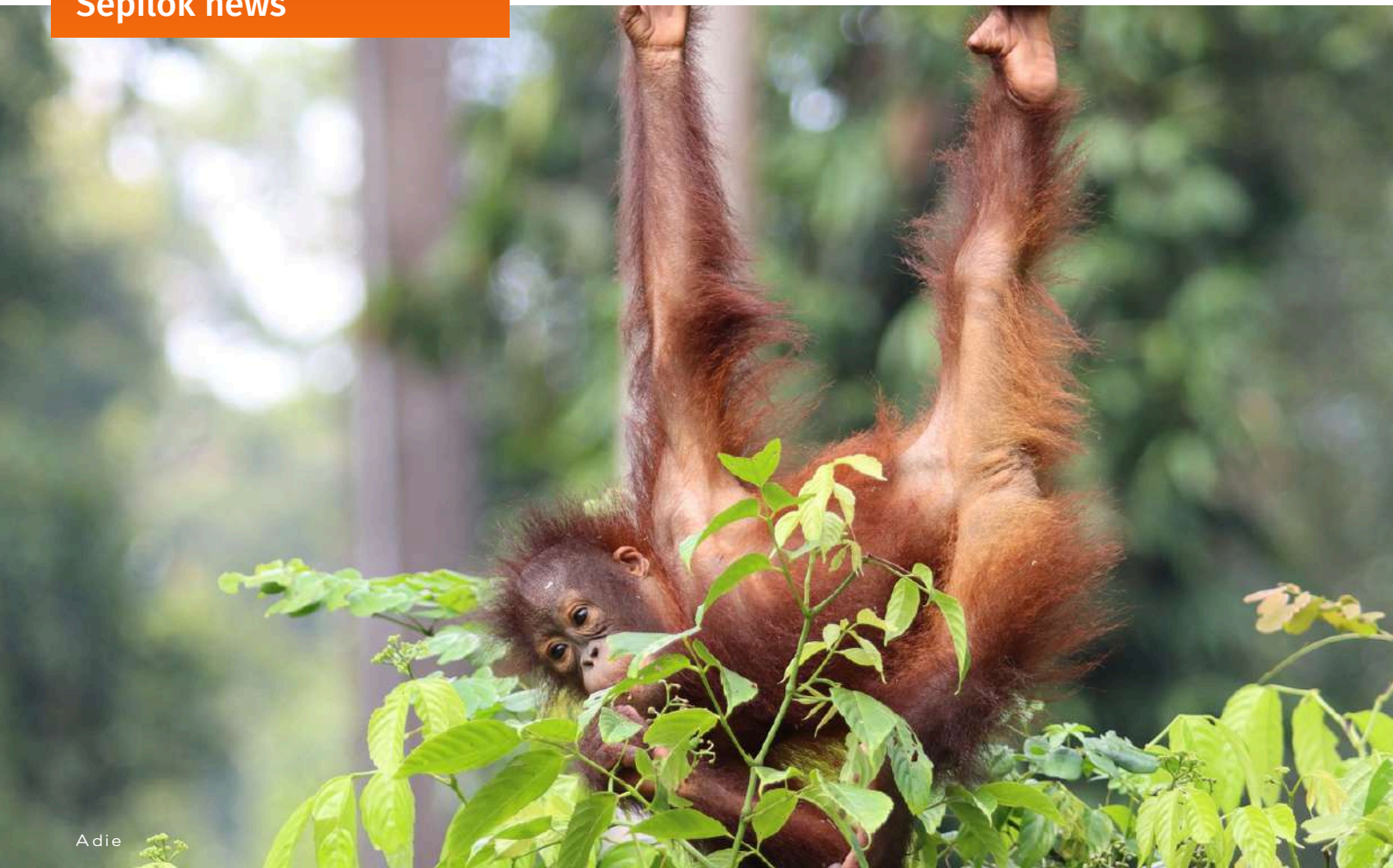
Like humans, female orangutans are pregnant for 9 months and usually only have one baby at a time with twins being very rare.

Orangutans have the slowest breeding rate of all mammals and only give birth approximately every 6 years.



Following their Honorary Wildlife Warden training, Victor, Pamik, Jergen and Jonrey are now able to assist with patrols and recognise and report suspected wildlife crime, including poaching, illegal capture and trade in protected species. For orangutans, this is especially important because infants may be taken for the illegal pet trade, often leaving very little visible evidence of the crime. This additional capacity will help strengthen the long-term protection of one of Sabah's most important habitats and safeguard the future of Bornean orangutans.





Adie

Napagang and **Agop** have reached an exciting stage in their rehabilitation - nest-building! The pair now spend much of their day challenging one another to climb higher and higher in the towering dipterocarp trees surrounding the jungle gym. Once in the canopy, they fold branches and collect leaves as they practise building nests, growing more confident with each attempt. It is a wonderful milestone and an important skill they will need for the future.



Agop



Napagang

Adie is happiest when other young orangutans visit the nursery. She especially enjoys playing with **Titi** and **Cerah**, who are much closer to her in age and size. Gentle by nature, Adie has a good ability to read social cues from the other youngsters. She knows when playtime is over and happily lets them return to the comfort of their mothers.

When the trees at Sepilok burst into bloom, their flowers attract a wide range of wildlife, including swarms of pollen-seeking bees.

During these periods, youngsters such as **Hujan**, **Oyo** and **Luffy** spend more time at the outdoor nursery rather than training deeper in the forest. This still gives them space to climb, forage, observe and socialise with more experienced orangutans, while allowing a more controlled introduction to the bees.

Wild male **Nasabak**, **Bakut** and **Joss** are often among the first of the older orangutans to initiate games with Luffy and he rarely turns down the chance to have fun. During one training session, Luffy found two pieces of wood and began, very proudly and enthusiastically, banging them together. His impromptu concert was short-lived, however, when rehabilitated orangutan **Beryl** came over and took one of them for herself.



Oyo



Hujan

Now that they are a little more mature, Oyo and Hujan seem just as content spending quieter moments alongside older females **Koko** and **Ospie**, taking in their surroundings at their own pace.

Unlike adult male orangutans who occupy large home ranges and travel vast distances through the rainforest, females live much closer to the area where they were born and raised. For this reason many rehabilitated females continue to visit the centre long after they have become independent. They share the Sepilok-Kabili Reserve with wild orangutans and, as they reach maturity and begin raising infants of their own, we are able to observe them together.



Cinta & Saranghae



Syang & baby

Cinta (featured on the front cover), was rescued as a one-year-old orphan and completed her rehabilitation in 2015. Now, more than a decade later, she is raising her own daughter, **Saranghae**, alongside wild mothers such as **Syang**.

It is normal for more than one young orangutan to remain dependent on its mother at the same time. After about six years, once an older infant is becoming more confident, a female may be ready to have another baby.

The arrival of a younger sibling often encourages the older one to spend increasing amounts of time exploring the rainforest on their own, gradually returning to their mother less often until they eventually live on their own.



Purnama, Bintang & baby



Kacy, Didi & baby

Wild mother **Purnama** and her two children occasionally visit the feeding platform together. Older brother **Bintang** is wonderfully patient with his younger sibling and enjoys sharing food and playing together. For **Kacy's** eldest daughter, **Didi**, watching her mother care for a new infant provides early experience of the behaviours she may one day need herself when raising an infant of her own.

A new generation in the wild

Fourteen years ago **Eyos** and **Otan** were among a group of rehabilitated orangutans selected for reintroduction into the Tabin Wildlife Reserve. The release was part of our Post Release Monitoring Project which followed orangutans from Sepilok as they adapted to life in a larger protected forest.

Both females settled successfully and each later raised a wild-born infant.



Eyos & baby, 2026

During a recent visit to Tabin, Lineker encountered them again, both healthy, independent and each caring for another young infant - the second generation born in the wild since their mothers left Sepilok.

For those who knew Eyos and Otan during their rehabilitation, it was a truly special moment. To see them thriving more than a decade later, nurturing the next generation, is a wonderful reminder of just how far they have come.



Otan & baby, 2026

It is also an important reminder that the impact of rehabilitation does not end at reintroduction - it continues years later, in the lives of orangutans who survive, adapt and raise families of their own in the wild.

The success of the rehabilitation programme at Sepilok is demonstrated through wonderful stories like this which give us hope for the future of this critically endangered species.

Borneo Nature Foundation (BNF)

P5

As forecasts predict hotter and drier conditions across Southeast Asia, our continued support for BNF's fire prevention work in Indonesian Borneo remains vital. Their community firefighting teams help protect one of the world's most important orangutan habitats from the increased threat of peat fires.

Update from Lauren Vyvyan, Partnerships & Philanthropy Lead, BNF

With El Niño conditions now established across the tropical Pacific, another challenging dry season is expected in Borneo. Peat swamp forests, which are naturally waterlogged, become highly flammable when drained and dried. Once alight, peat fires can smoulder underground for weeks, destroying rainforest habitat and releasing huge amounts of stored carbon into the atmosphere.



Wild orangutan, Romeo

Preparation is therefore key. Through an Integrated Fire Management approach, BNF focuses on preventing fires before they start while ensuring communities are ready to respond quickly when they do occur.

Throughout the first half of 2026 BNF has continued working with nine community firefighting teams. Their year-round patrols, now aided by new drone technology, play a vital role in detecting and tackling fires before they become major emergencies.

Alongside this practical work BNF continues to work closely with local communities, schools and government agencies to promote fire prevention and build long-term resilience, helping to safeguard Borneo's rainforests for people, orangutans and countless other species that depend on them.



Firefighting on the frontline

Regrow Borneo

Planting trees is only the beginning of restoring a rainforest. Helping it recover into a healthy ecosystem takes years of care and monitoring. That's why we're proud to continue supporting Regrow Borneo, whose long-term approach is helping to restore Borneo's rainforest for the benefit of wildlife and the environment.

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

As Regrow Borneo continues to grow, so too does our understanding of what successful restoration involves. Together with our community partner, KOPEL, the team continues to care for restoration sites while monitoring their development into healthy ecosystems.

Since the project began, over 50,000 native trees, representing 26 floodplain species, have been planted across more than 50 hectares of degraded forest in the Lower Kinabatangan. As these young forests mature, our measure of success is no longer simply the number of trees planted, but how well they continue to grow, store carbon and provide habitat for wildlife.

One of the most valuable lessons from our monitoring is that there is no single pathway to restoration. Every site develops differently depending on flooding, habitat conditions and restoration age.

The drone images below show this recovery in action, with once degraded land gradually developing into healthier rainforest that will support wildlife and communities for generations to come.



Degraded forest area in the Kinabatangan, 2021



Same area after planting, 2025

Centre for Orangutan Protection (COP)

In East Kalimantan, Indonesian Borneo, orangutans face intense pressure as forests are fragmented by plantations, mining, infrastructure and other forms of development. When habitat is lost or broken apart, orangutans can become stranded in unsafe areas, come into conflict with people or need urgent rescue and relocation.

Reliable transport is therefore essential. We have funded a new operational rescue vehicle for the Centre for Orangutan Protection, helping their frontline teams reach remote forest and plantation landscapes quickly and carry out their work more effectively. The vehicle will support rescue response, rehabilitation, release, post-release monitoring and habitat protection.

For COP this is not simply a practical purchase. It strengthens the link between their field bases, reduces reliance on vehicle hire and helps to ensure more resources can be directed towards orangutan protection where they are needed most.



Overlooking a vast plantation

Research roundup



Nursing in nature - why orangutans breastfeed for over 6 years

Orangutan mothers are already known to nurse their young for many years. New research has now provided scientific confirmation of just how long this care can continue. By analysing naturally occurring proteins found in the faeces of wild Bornean orangutans, scientists confirmed that mothers breastfeed for at least 6½ years - one of the longest breastfeeding periods recorded in mammals. The study also suggests this prolonged nursing supports healthy gut bacteria and immune development, giving young orangutans a stronger start in life. This level of maternal care helps infants survive, though it also means females reproduce very slowly, making every birth especially significant for the species.

Research published in *Communications Biology*: 'Continuous and prolonged breastfeeding in wild Bornean orangutans verified with fecal proteomics' by Nur Syamimi Makbul et al., 2026



Orangutan mums facilitate 'playdates' for their babies

Although orangutans are the most solitary of the great apes, a remarkable 15-year study suggests mothers may go out of their way to help their youngsters socialise. Researchers found that females with similarly aged infants spent more time in overlapping areas of their home ranges, increasing the chances of the youngsters meeting and playing together. Some mothers travelled for several days towards a neighbouring female suggesting the playdates were far from accidental. On these days, the mothers also travelled further and spent less time foraging and eating, highlighting the additional effort and sacrifice involved in helping their young learn and develop through play.

Pre-print for: 'Maternal ranging strategies facilitate offspring social play at energetic cost in the most solitary ape' by Jacobson et al., 2026



Thank you!



We're extremely lucky to have such wonderful fundraisers and it's a real pleasure to be able to thank everyone for their hard work and dedication to orangutan conservation in our newsletter:

St. Raphael's Catholic Primary School hosted an 'Orangutan Day'. Pupils embraced the opportunity to dress up, learn about critically endangered rainforest species and raised over £200!

Liam Whittaker ran the Edinburgh Marathon in May and raised an impressive £400. He is now the proud supporter of orangutan Agop and describes the adoption as having *'really helped solidify the bond between myself and your wonderful organisation'*.

Mum and daughter duo, Liz and Jen, embarked on a 10-day journey navigating their way through Nicaragua in a three-wheeled tuk tuk called Wheels of Chaos. Fully funding the trip themselves, they embraced every challenge that came their way, all while raising funds and awareness. Thanks to their determination and generosity, they raised an amazing £705.



Following a visit to Sepilok, 11-year old Izzy Donaldson asked for cash donations instead of presents for her birthday, raising a fantastic £64. Beverley Harris, another familiar face to the charity, hiked Hadrian's Wall at the end of May with good friend Diana. The pair have raised an incredible £1,310 between them so far.

The Merdeka Minds Team, a dedicated group of Malaysian fundraisers and wildlife supporters visited Sepilok to learn more about orangutan conservation. Following their visit, they made a very generous donation of £925.



Special thanks to Oriel Ospie, Hangin' Pizzeria and Alpine Coffee Shop, whose annual fundraising raised an incredible £87,500 for Orangutan Appeal UK and Ape Action Africa.

We also extend our sincere thanks to the businesses, schools and organisations that have supported us, including Jenks Brands / N'eat, Strip Distribution, Centaur Foods, J Leon Group, Humphreys Law Ltd, Brick Owl, Teach Rex, Journaway, Annie's Natural Soaps, Folkestone St Mary's School and the Big Give Earth Raise campaign. From all of us at Orangutan Appeal UK, thank you.



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

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