



Forest Chatter



Issue 23 | March 2018

BOS Australia | + 61 2 9011 5455 | PO Box 3916 Mosman NSW 2088

From the President...

Happy New Year!

It's already been a good start to the year with more orangutans released. Since 2012 we have released over 330 orangutans back to the wild.

The momentum continues this year with ambitious projects in Salat Island and Samboja Lestari to allow at least 100 more orangutans to be sent to pre-release islands.

Alba, the albino orangutan, captured our hearts in 2017 and I'm sure you will all be very excited to read the update on page 4 on her impending move.

Whilst it is upsetting to hear of the awful slaughter of another orangutan on page 3, save some of your disdain for our local politicians and bureaucrats. Their decision to delay a decision on palm oil labelling for a sixth year is a contributing factor

to these deaths. I just want to take them up to Borneo and show them some of the suffering. I am sure they are not bad people, but I can only imagine they are falling for the spin being fed to them by the consumer goods companies.

I hope you enjoy the news and thanks for your support. It is only with your help that we can continue.

Tony Gilding, President

Starting 2018 right

Continuing its tireless work, the BOS Foundation started 2018 with the release of another four orangutans into the Bukit Baka Bukit Raya National Park, in Central Kalimantan.

In early January, the four candidates at Nyaru Menteng (Pong, Rutan, Agis, and Jaka) were sedated and examined by the medical team. Once asleep, the four were moved into separate transport cages, then loaded onto the back of the utility vehicles that would take them directly to Tumbang Tundu, the last village accessible by car.

The rain was heavy and extra special care was needed on the wet and slippery roads. After four hours, the team arrived at the ferry crossing in

Tumbang Manggu village. Torrential rain had caused the river to rise, bringing bundles of potentially dangerous drift logs downstream. The team sensibly decided to stay overnight at Tumbang Manggu and continue the trip the next morning.

Once the team reached Tumbang Tundu they transferred the transport cages to the small motorized 'klotok' boats for the five-hour trip upstream. The team then carried the transport cages from the river bank to predetermined release points.

All four orangutans gained their freedom that evening and headed straight for the trees.

After the last cage was opened, the Post-Release Monitoring (PRM)

team quickly began working in pairs to observe and gather data on the released orangutans. They will follow and take notes on the released orangutans for 30 days, through nest-to-nest observations, from dawn till dusk. The data provides valuable information on how orangutans adapt to life in a natural habitat.

This release brings the number of rehabilitated orangutans released to the Bukit Baka Bukit Raya National Park since 2016 to 75. Since 2012, the BOS Foundation has released 330 orangutans from the Nyaru Menteng and Samboja Lestari rehabilitation centres to sites located in East and Central Kalimantan.

Source: BOS Foundation Communications Team





Is there a doctor in the house?

It's undeniable the similarities between humans and great apes. We share an huge 97% of our DNA with orangutans, the only great ape found in Asia.

Anyone who is interested in great apes will already know just how smart they are. Orangutans, like other great apes are highly intelligent creatures with advanced problem-solving skills. They display cultural behaviours, with different populations tackling the same problem in different ways. Additionally, they learn from other orangutans and pass on their own skills when they meet.

It's not news that they are able to make and use tools, but what you may not have heard about is that they have also been observed using things in their environment for medicine.

Scientists from the Borneo Nature Foundation have been observing wild Bornean orangutans in the

Sabangau Forest (in Central Kalimantan, Borneo) since 2003 and have collected over 20,000 hours of observational data.

Through their research, the use of leaf extracts from *Dracaena cantleyi* by orangutan has been observed on several occasions. In each case, parts of the leaves were bitten off and chewed into a pulp, producing a white soapy lather. This bitter lather was then rubbed onto either the upper arms or upper legs for a length of time between 15 and 45 minutes. The researchers note that this action was methodical and purposeful. Additionally, none of the bitter leaf was swallowed and the remaining chewed pulp was always spat out.

Interestingly, the local indigenous human population also use a poultice of these leaves for the relief of body pains, providing a plausible, if not probably function for its use by orangutans.

Indeed pharmacological laboratory analyses has proved that leaf extracts of *Dracaena cantleyi* have anti-inflammatory properties.

The research team observed that it was primarily adult female orangutans performing this behaviour. One possible explanation for this was that females may be using this plant to soothe sore muscles and joints from the extra weight of carrying their infants while climbing through the forest canopy. Whatever its actual use, the researchers believe that this is the first evidence for deliberate external self-medication in orangutans.

The question remains though, did the orangutans learn from the indigenous people or did the people learn from the orangutans.

Source: Morrogh-Bernard, H.C., Foitová, I., Yeen, Z., Wilkin, P., de Martin, R., Rárová, L., Doležal, K., Nurcahyo, W., & Olšanský, M., 2017, 'Self-medication by orang-utans (*Pongo pygmaeus*) using bioactive properties of *Dracaena cantleyi*', Scientific Reports, vol 7, art. 16653, viewed 1 February 2018, <<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-017-16621-w>>

New species, but just as endangered

A third species of orangutan has been discovered.

The new species, called the Tapanuli orangutan (*Pongo tapanuliensis*), has a smaller skull than the existing Bornean and Sumatran orangutans, but has larger canines.

On the basis of genetic evidence, researchers have concluded that these animals are indeed distinct from both the other two known species of orangutan, but an interesting combination of both.

Mature males have cheek flanges similar to those of Bornean orangutans, but their slender build is more alike to Sumatran orangutans. Their hair is more cinnamon in colour than the Bornean species, and the Batang Toru population also makes longer calls than other orangutans.

Strangely, the Batang Toru animals are more closely related to the Bornean orangutan, from across the South China Sea, than to the Sumatran orangutans living on the

same island. This new species is found only in an isolated pocket of northern Sumatra, at Batang Toru.

As with both other species, the *Pongo tapanuliensis* is critically endangered, represented by fewer than 800 individuals. Its remaining habit is split into three fragmented areas where reportedly future development has been planned; and a worrying 15% of the habitat has non-protected forest status.

Babies flourish with your help

Just before Christmas last year, two baby orangutans were rescued by our team and admitted to our Nyaru Menteng centre. We're pleased to report that both babies are doing well.

Alejandra

Tiny Alejandra is now approximately 4–5 months old. She was rescued on December 22, and came to our centre a little weak; however, thankfully, medical examinations determined she was actually in good health. She was unable to sit up by herself, but is now learning to sit properly with the help and guidance of one of our amazing babysitters. Alejandra's carers report that she looks happier, and has begun to adjust to her new surroundings and to her babysitters. Now weighing 2.5 kg, Alejandra loves drinking milk, and has started eating soft fruits which will help to increase her nutritional intake.

Rachel

Baby Rachel is one of the other tiny orangutans to arrive at our centre for care. She was handed over in a small wooden box by a local villager on 23 December.

Rachel is a bit older than Alejandra, estimated to be about 12–18

months. She weighs 8.3kg and loves fruit and milk. After an initial adjustment period, where she was somewhat intimidated by all the new faces, Rachel is doing very well and is now interacting positively with her substitute mother, one of our dedicated babysitters. She is exploring some of the enrichment on offer in the baby house and enjoys climbing some of the smaller trees.

Alejandra and Rachel are the 23rd and 24th babies currently being cared for at the BOSF Nyaru Menteng baby house. Both babies will join the nursery group once they pass the mandatory two-month quarantine period, and then face many more years in Forest School before being able to be released.

Thanks to the dedication and loving care provided by the Nyaru Menteng team, Alejandra and Rachel are now starting to build confidence, learning how to be an orangutan, and are most certainly on the road to recovery and freedom.

Adopt today

You can adopt a beautiful baby orangutan today, and make a real difference in the lives of these rescued orangutans.

orangutans.com.au/meet-our-family



Threats on all sides

The year started with a disturbing news story out of Central Kalimantan.

The headless corpse of an orangutan, which appeared to have been brutally tortured and killed, was found in a river in central Borneo, Indonesia, prompting an investigation by authorities.

A necropsy was conducted in mid-January and the findings reveal without a doubt that the orangutan died due to humans. Apart from the multiple other grisly revelations, the animal had 17 air rifle bullet injuries.

The animal's body was found in an area close to five plantations.

Orangutans are often seen as pests by palm oil plantation owners because they sometimes eat palm fruit. These farms have encroached

on much of the orangutan's habitat. As a result, orangutans are often killed in human-animal conflicts, and wildlife activists have slammed the authorities for not doing enough to prosecute such cases, despite these endangered animals being protected by law. The Ministry of Environment and Forestry has promised to deploy a team to join the investigation and get in touch with the plantation firms.

Two plantation workers have since been arrested in connection with the killing. If convicted, the suspects could face up to five-years in jail under Indonesia's conservation law.

What's happening with palm oil?

BOS Australia supports the use of identity preserved and segregated certified sustainable palm oil. We believe its adoption

is achievable in the Australian market if sufficient consumer pressure is brought to bear.

On 24 November 2017 a decision to label palm oil by law was again delayed by health ministers – that's six years of delays. To date, only Victoria has pledged support.

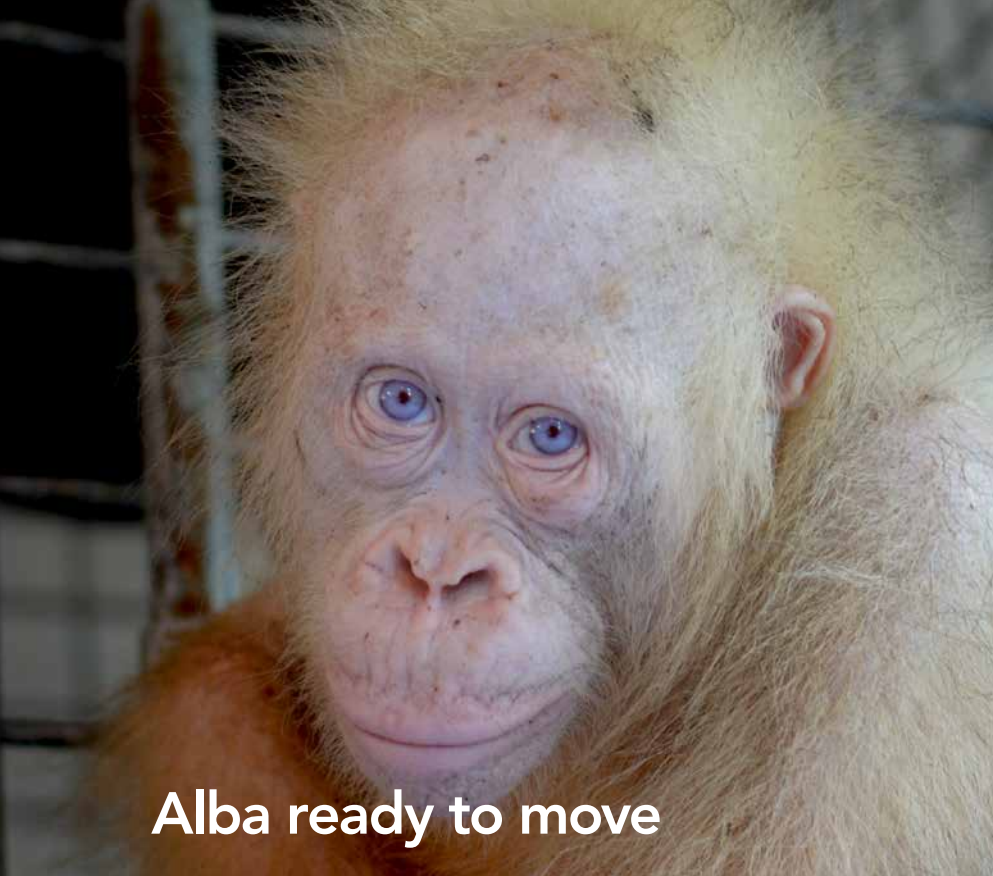
Enough is enough.

So what can you do?

Contact your State government now and voice your support for clear labelling of palm oil laws so you can make an informed choice when you shop.

<http://bit.ly/2ca55Cw>

Together we can make a difference, before it's too late.



Alba ready to move

2018 is set to be a landmark year in the life of Alba, the world's only known albino orangutan.

Five-year-old Alba came to world attention and won all our hearts in April 2017 when she was successfully rescued from Tanggirang village, Central Kalimantan. When rescued, Alba was dehydrated, weak and suffering from a parasitic infection. After months of specialist care, provided by BOS and funded by you, her appetite has improved and her weight has increased.

Even though Alba has good experience living in the wild (which

would normally mean that she could be translocated quickly without a lengthy rehabilitation process) her albinism makes her a very special case, requiring a bespoke rehabilitation strategy.

The symptoms of albinism – lack of the pigment, melanin, in her hair and skin – have been associated with health complications such as poor eyesight, poor hearing, and skin cancer, and make her more vulnerable to hunting or predation.

Now, Alba is ready to be moved to a special man-made island that encompasses 10 hectares of natural habitat, where she will be able to

live a life of freedom, while at the same time remain protected from human threats.

Construction works on the island are at full speed and we're very happy to report are mostly complete.

The canal that serves as a natural border was finished near the end of 2017. Construction of security and monitoring infrastructure is also underway; we hope to complete this by the end of February.

Alba will share her new forest island home with three other orangutans – Radmala (a four-year old female), Kika (a six-year-old female), and Unyu (a four-year-old male) – all of whom have been introduced to Alba and they have bonded well. All show a certain level of wild behaviour and can be categorised as semi-wild.

Once on the island, the group will have full-time monitoring and security provided by staff who will conduct patrols and collect data on their behaviour and health. Additionally, our staff will record which orangutans are seen at the feeding platform, where supplementary foods are provided twice a day.

There is still a need for donations for Alba's new home. Collected funds will be used to build the feeding platforms and security posts on the island, and help us to provide her and the others with their daily needs.

With your support, Alba and her new friends can explore their wild side and live happily protected on this island sanctuary.



BOS Australia
primates helping primates

Borneo Orangutan Survival Australia

+ 61 2 9011 5455
PO Box 3916
Mosman NSW 2088

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Thank you for your continued support.



We love hearing from you

We know you've been spreading the orangutan word, so why not tell us about what you're up to? Email contact@orangutans.com.au or post your photos online at [facebook.com/bosaustralia](https://www.facebook.com/bosaustralia) or [instagram/bosaustralia](https://www.instagram.com/bosaustralia)

Can you help us?

Your donations provide food, shelter, protection, medicine and companionship for orangutans in our care. Visit www.orangutans.com.au to help us help them.

Donations by cheque are payable to Borneo Orangutan Survival (BOS) Australia at PO Box 3916, Mosman NSW 2088.

Make a one-off or regular payment via direct debit or by credit card either online or by calling us on (02) 9011 5455. We now accept **pay pal** donations too! See the link on the homepage of our website.

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