



Issue 41 | September 2022

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From the President ...

Welcome to our September issue of Forest Chatter. Before I tell you more about the exciting stories we have prepared for you, I would like to thank all of you who donated to our Tax Appeal. With your generous and kind support, we have exceeded our goal and can now reforest 100 hectares of vital orangutan habitat in the Mawas Conservation Area in Central Kalimantan. Please watch the special video we have put together for you as a token of appreciation.

Did you know that we also care for sun bears? Learn about our work with the world's smallest bears and how you can help them on page 2. In addition, we would like to introduce you to our newest wild-born orangutan baby, give you a glimpse into the Tuanan Research Station, and want you to meet photographer Andrew Suryono. He talked to Forest Chatter about the lessons he learned while capturing BOS Foundation's work.

Please enjoy the reading!

Yours,

K WELFORD

Kerin Welford
President



Bungan's baby Bunga



We are thrilled to announce the birth of a new baby orangutan in the Kehje Sewen Forest in East Kalimantan.

It is always a special moment for us when we hear that one of the released females becomes a mum and raises the next generations of wild-born orangutans.

This joyful occasion happened recently when the Post Release Monitoring (PRM) team from Nles Mamse camp monitored and observed female orangutan Bungan. They had spotted Bungan, who was released in the forest seven years prior, spending a lot of time with Hamzah, a dominant male released a decade ago.

The team noted that Bungan and Hamzah were seen actively looking for food together and had also jointly nested during the day. As suspected, the two ended up copulating – and to no surprise, Bungan became pregnant.

When the PRM technicians first saw the newborn, it was lying in Bungan's arms and appeared in good condition. Through observations, the team could determine that Bungan had given birth to a female, and they named the baby girl Bunga, meaning 'flower' in Indonesian.

The new mum looked happy and content with her baby girl and was reportedly stroking and caring for Bunga with great affection. We are confident that mum Bungan will raise her baby as a truly wild Bornean orangutan who will contribute to the survival of this critically endangered species.



Meet the world's smallest bear

Did you know that besides caring for and rehabilitating orangutans, we also look after sun bears? Learn more about our work with the world's most miniature and tree-dwelling bears.

It doesn't seem obvious. So why does an orangutan conservation organisation care for sun bears? The reason is simple and sad: As a vulnerable species threatened with extinction, sun bears in Borneo need organisations that care for those displaced and champion their cause.

Unfortunately, in Kalimantan, these entities are limited in number and resources. So, in 1997, when the Indonesian government asked BOS Foundation to help with one bear, they could not say no. The plan was always to find a more suitable home for the bears, as we are experts in orangutan care. But we could never find a reliable organisation to take on the bears, so the number in our care continued to rise.

Today BOS Foundation takes care of 72 individuals in their Sun Bear Sanctuary in Samboja Lestari, East Kalimantan. Previously, BOS also housed sun bears at the Nyaru Menteng Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre in Central Kalimantan. However, the team decided to move all of them to Samboja Lestari, where there are unique, custom-made enclosures that account for the species-specific needs.

The sun bear (*Helarctos malayanus*), also known as the honey bear, is one of the rarest of the eight bear species – and the smallest. The bears grow between 120 and 150 centimetres long and weigh up to 80 kilograms. The light patch of fur on their chest is as unique as an orangutan fingerprint; no two chest marks are the same. And they share a lot more with orangutans. Sun bears...

- spend most of their days in the trees and by themselves,

- travel vast distances across their forest homes,
- learn survival skills from their mothers,
- are a keystone species, vitally important to seed dispersal, pest control and nutrient cycling, meaning that their presence is crucial to the healthy functioning of their forest homes,
- are red-listed by the IUCN (the International Union for Conservation of Nature), which has also implemented the Sun Bear Conservation Action Plan (2019-2028) to help save the species from extinction,
- face similar threats to their survival, like habitat loss due to forest fires, land-use change, and illegal logging. They are hunted as pests and a commodity for the illegal animal trade, with an ongoing demand for their body parts and baby bears as pets.

Sadly, despite being threatened with extinction, most rescued sun bears also share the need for lifetime sanctuary care with many orangutans in our centres. Samboja Lestari veterinarian Agus Irwanto says: "At its core, we care for sun bears in a similar way we care for orangutans because, for both, it is not only about tending to their physical needs, but also their social and psychological wellbeing."

Therefore, our caretakers apply the same animal welfare principles and implement training programs to help rehabilitate the bears. The programs incorporate:

- Target training, which involves teaching sun bears to follow a target on a stick that directs them to move from place to place in a safe and relaxed manner.
- Electric Fence Awareness, to make sun bears aware of the dangers of electric fences. Samboja Lestari has connected forest enclosures

covered with natural foliage. Electric fences border these enclosures to stop the bears from escaping.

- Transport Cage Use to encourage sun bears to enter transportation cages voluntarily. Transport cages are used to move sun bears from one enclosure to another or to bring them to the clinic for a medical examination. By training the sun bears to enter transport cages voluntarily, they don't need to be anaesthetised.

While orangutan and sun bear care have a lot in common, there are also differences in handling both, particularly in veterinary care and their capability to develop the survival skills needed to return to the wild.

With orangutans, the most common veterinary challenge comes in disease treatment and management, whereas with sun bears, veterinarians primarily treat wounds or injuries sustained from fights. So, when a rescued sun bear arrives at the centre, the vets assess them, provide medical treatment if required, and often in the case of orphaned cubs, look after them around the clock.

In addition, unlike orangutans, sun bears easily become overly attached to their human caretakers, which, unfortunately, makes it almost impossible to release them back into the forest.

Despite the challenges involved, we will strive for a high quality of life for the sun bears and provide them with the safe, forested environment they deserve.

Will you help us look after sun bears by supporting our **Spring Appeal**? With your kind support, BOS Foundation can carry on caring for the rescued bears alongside the orangutans. Thank you!

Welcome to Tuanan

We are delighted to introduce you to the Tuanan Orangutan Research Station within the Mawas Conservation Area in Central Kalimantan.

Since 2003, the Tuanan Orangutan Research Program has been studying the behaviour and ecology of Bornean orangutans and their peat swamp environment. It has maintained collaborations among Universitas Nasional in Jakarta, the University of Zurich, Rutgers University and the BOS Foundation. With a population of over 2,500 wild orangutans in the area, there is no shortage of research questions to be explored.

After a long pause in normal activities caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the research started again with a workshop on orangutan behaviour, nutrition and health. The hands-on training included several students from the Universitas Nasional and a member of the BOS Foundation's Nyaru Menteng team.

The workshop began with a lesson on collecting plant samples of orangutan foods for long-term nutrition research. Most of the foods that orangutans eat (fruits, flowers and leaves) are found up to 30 meters high in the canopy, so they can be challenging to reach.

While climbing trees is the usual way to collect food samples, the team thought they would try out some new methods that are quicker and safer, especially during the rainy season when branches can be slippery. So, with a newly purchased throw-line launcher in hand (essentially a giant

slingshot), the Tuanan team headed into the forest to practice collecting fruit samples.

An essential part of studying the health of the orangutans at Tuanan is collecting and analysing their urine. Therefore, every morning before sunrise, with a plastic bag attached to a stick, the research team collects urine as it rains down from the nests of awakening orangutans above. When the researchers return to the lab at the end of the day, they prepare the urine for future analyses and can even start to learn about orangutan health on the spot.

With a steady hand and hyper-focus not to spill the precious golden liquid, Tuanan's co-director, Dr Erin Vogel, demonstrated to the students how to prepare urine samples and take some preliminary health data. It only takes a few drops of urine placed carefully on the coated slivers of plastic for reactions to occur that cause colour changes. These can be read and interpreted using a colour key to find evidence of weight loss, infection, or other signs of illness.

The urine samples that the young researchers prepared during the workshop will later be more thoroughly analysed to examine variations in biomarkers of stress, protein loss, and much more.

By providing students with the opportunity to get training and conduct their projects, the Tuanan team hopes to keep monitoring the health of orangutans well into the future and contribute to the education of the next generation of researchers and leaders in conservation.



Pledge for change

In honour of this year's International Orangutan Day, BOS Australia, together with its partner organisations BOS-USA and BOS-UK, launched two important pledges as an easy way to help make a difference in the lives of orangutans and other wildlife.

Our **Wildlife Trade Pledge** takes a stand against illegal animal trafficking. Over 7,000 animal species fall victim to the horrifying trade every year, and the time to bring this cruel industry to an end is now.

Our **Palm Oil Pledge** promotes sustainable practices. Unsustainable palm oil production is a leading cause of immense deforestation, destroying orangutan homes. By gaining knowledge of sustainably sourced palm oil, you can make an impact on ending unsustainable practices.

Please consider taking whichever pledge resonates with you - or both - and let's work together to preserve wildlife for generations to come!

PALM OIL
PLEDGE

I HAVE PLEDGED TO NOT
USE UNSUSTAINABLE
PALM OIL

Join me and pledge at:

PALMOILPLEDGE.COM



HELLO, I AM ANDREW SURYONO



© Andrew Suryono

Earlier this year, award-winning photographer Andrew Suryono visited Borneo, photographing and documenting BOS Foundation's work. After his return, Forest Chatter talked to Andrew about his experiences.

How did it feel to work in the rainforest?

I was amazed by the diversity of flora and fauna. At the Tuanan Research Station, I was able to hear all kinds of sounds from different species. It was such a joy to explore the rainforest with my camera! Being that close to nature and documenting it through my lens certainly left a deep impression on me.

Looking at the amazing biodiversity, it is no wonder that around 25% of our medicines originate from plants found in rainforests.

What did you learn from photographing orangutans?

I learned that saving orangutans means saving our rainforests. Many people wonder why we should prioritise the orangutan as a species that needs to be saved from extinction. The reason is twofold.

First, orangutans are closely related to humans. They have feelings, as seen in their facial expressions, can mimic behaviour and use tools. Researching orangutans will help us better understand human nature.

Second, you can't just save orangutans if you can't save their rainforest home. Orangutans are known as an umbrella species, so when you save both orangutans and the rainforest they inhabit, you also save countless other species that share the same habitat.

Do you have any advice on what each of us can do to save the rainforest?

You don't have to go to Borneo or be an expert. Everyone can contribute. One simple thing is to select responsibly sourced products.

For example, you can avoid purchasing products made from materials that drive rainforest destruction, such as those made from or with mahogany, rosewood, or ebony.

Even better, you can start using recycled products. Make sure you buy from companies with a good track record when using sustainable materials. Simple things like this might seem trivial, but they will go a long way in helping us in our quest to save the treasures that nature has so generously given us.

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primates helping primates

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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 7699, Bondi Beach NSW 2026.

Make a one-off or regular payment via direct debit or by credit card, either online or by calling us on +61 2 9011 5455. We also accept **Paypal** donations. See the link on the homepage of our website.

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