



Forest Chatter

Issue 44 | June 2023

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From the President ...

I couldn't be more excited to start this edition with the news that we just released the first five orangutans of this year. Andreas, Elaine, Leann, Mayer and Riana are back in the Bornean rainforest where they belong. Read more about their incredible journey home below.

As much as we want to return all orangutans in our care to safe forests, many may never experience true freedom. This is because they are too old, disabled or suffer from illnesses that pose a threat to other orangutans.

But there is hope. With your invaluable support, we aim to get as many unreleasable orangutans as possible out of their cages and onto specially designed sanctuary islands. By giving to our end-of-financial-year appeal, you can help us kickstart the development of 21 of those forested islands. Find out more about our long-time residents and how you can change their lives on pages 2 and 3.

Lastly, we can't wait for you to meet Nur Syamsiah, one of our fantastic female orangutan warriors, on page 4.

With much gratitude,

K WELFORD

Kerin Welford
President



Five to freedom

In our first release of 2023, the BOS team recently returned five orangutans to their wild home.

It is one of those moments that still give us goosebumps: The second when one of our rehabilitated orangutans steps out of their transport cage into freedom. We can only imagine what it feels like to be finally home after being stolen from your mother, illegally kept as a pet and spending years learning and practising how to survive in the forest.

Elaine (13), Leann (13) and Riana (10), Andreas (11) and Mayer (10) were all significantly traumatised when they arrived at BOS Foundation's Samboja Lestari Centre. Riana, for example, had been chained around her neck to a tree in an unshaded yard. The rescue team had to cut the chain from her neck, which was scarred from years of being held captive in that manner.

Now Riana and her four peers can roam freely and independently in BOS Foundation's 86,593.65-hectare Ecosystem Restoration Concession area within the Kehje Sewen Forest in East Kalimantan. The trip by trucks, boats and on foot to the remote release site was no easy feat. Over muddy roads, through wild waters, up and down steep terrain - the release team faced many challenges, but their dedication and tireless effort pulled them through.

The release of these five orangutans was the first from our Samboja Lestari rehabilitation centre after an almost two-year gap due to restrictions mitigating COVID-19 risk and the availability of orangutans ready to be released.

"By remaining fully committed to efforts to save orangutans, we took advantage of this gap to prepare orangutan candidates", says BOS Foundation CEO Dr Jamartin Sihite.

He emphasises that the task and responsibility for protecting and preserving orangutans is a joint effort that requires all parties and stakeholders to work together "because we all reap the benefits of healthy forest ecosystems. For these to thrive, they need the presence of orangutans, and, in return, they provide us with fresh air, clean water, and a regulated climate."





Meet our long-time residents

Can you imagine how difficult it must be for an orangutan to climb trees, forage for food, and build nests - with no arms? Yet, Koprал makes it look easy. He is our superhero and one of 93 so-called unreleasable orangutans in BOS Foundation's care. Currently, only 11 live on specially created sanctuary islands. But with your help, it can be more soon.

When Koprал arrived at BOS Foundation's Samboja Lestari Centre in 2009, he was in the most heartbreaking condition. Kept illegally as a pet for the majority of his young life, Koprал made a perilous and futile attempt to escape his captors. After climbing an electricity pole, the four-year-old was severely electrocuted and left for dead for an entire week before his captors finally handed him over. It was truly a miracle that he survived.

The poor male had severe burns to most of his body, and the BOS veterinarians had no choice but to amputate his arms. For four months, he received around-the-clock care and treatment and, through this time, showed us his immense determination and spirit.

Koprал spent the next few years in Forest School, but while he was eager and capable of learning nearly everything that his classmates did, due to his disability, he would never survive on his own in the wild. It would not be fair to release him. However, Koprал was not destined to live his life behind bars. Instead, he was chosen to live on a sanctuary

island, where he thrives. You should see him somersaulting, climbing trees, and gathering food, confident and proud like his releasable peers.

Several reasons for being unreleasable

While Koprал is an example of our long-time residents with physical disabilities who have acquired sufficient natural skills and behaviours, several other reasons make it impossible for us to return orangutans to the wild. Some individuals were rescued too late in life, lacking the skills needed to survive in the wild and are not able to still learn them because of their advanced age.

Others suffer from illnesses such as tuberculosis or chronic respiratory disease, requiring them to receive daily treatment or remain in isolation as they pose a risk of transmission to the broader orangutan population. And then there are a few that need permanent intensive care due to severe physical limitations, like our completely blind residents or those who miss multiple limbs.

But no matter what stops our unreleasable ones from being able to live a free and independent life in the forest, "they are as amazing as the healthy ones with great personalities, who can still live a happy life, says BOS veterinarian Fransiska Sulistyو.

Our goal is to transfer as many as possible onto sanctuary islands, humanmade river islands, where physically fit but unreleasable orangutans can live semi-wild lives in

a forested, controlled environment. The river boundaries keep out predators and prevent the islanders from escaping. In addition, the BOS technicians deliver fresh food twice daily and closely monitor their well-being together with our dedicated veterinary team, who is always on call for emergencies.

Securing space and funds

However, the reality is that we currently don't have enough space on the existing sanctuary islands for all potential candidates. So, while we prepare more suitably-sized islands, the orangutans must wait in caged enclosures.



Besides space, the biggest challenge in providing sanctuary for our unreleasable individuals is securing the funds required.

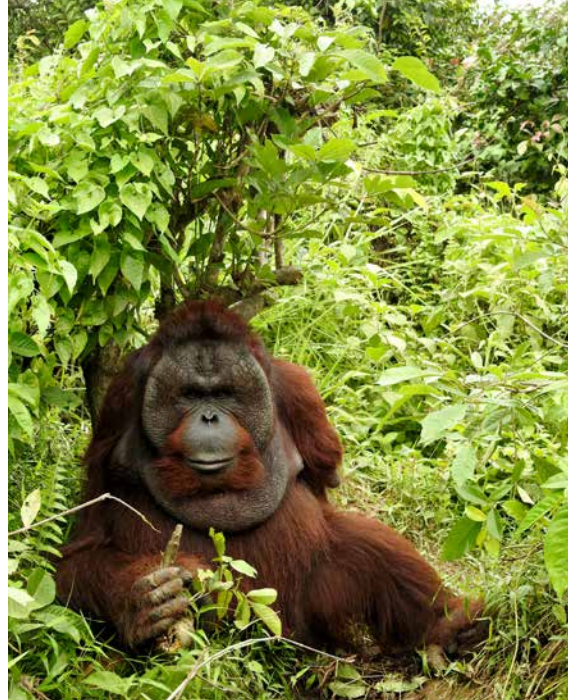
As you can imagine, between the costs for decades of food and medication and the expenses associated with building new, appropriate sanctuary enclosures and islands, providing lifelong care requires more funding than what is needed to put an orangutan through rehabilitation.

Here is where we need you, our dear supporters. To kick off the development of 21 new sanctuary islands, we want to raise \$150,000

by 30 June 2023. If you can, please [support our end-of-financial-year appeal](#) so that many more of our long-time residents can thrive and roam around freely like our beloved superhero Koprul.

And who knows: There is always the possibility, however small, that some of these orangutans make behavioural progress significant enough to warrant their release in the wild.

We continue our work, hoping for this miracle so that every orangutan can live free in their true home, the Bornean rainforest.



Keeping orangutans busy



Nothing is more boring than sitting behind bars in an enclosure and watching the day go by. But luckily, this is different for the orangutans in our care. Our enrichment team comes up with lots of fun items to keep our residents mentally and physically stimulated.

What do bamboo shoots, ice blocks, cardboard boxes and old tyres have to do with orangutans? A lot. The BOS Foundation enrichment team uses them to create toys, problem-solving puzzles and structures to keep the orangutans in our centres active.

Given how intelligent these great apes are - they share 97% of the same DNA as humans - these

challenges, opportunities and stimulations are crucial for their wellbeing. Regular stimuli are especially important for our long-time residents, who most likely will never return to the wild. While waiting in their enclosures for a spot on a sanctuary island or another controlled outdoor environment, they receive daily visits from the enrichment staff.

By definition, enrichment is a main husbandry principle seeking to enhance the quality of animal care, whether in zoos, sanctuaries or similar facilities. We are lucky to have Lou Grossfeldt, Primate Manager at Sydney Zoo and one of the leading experts in great ape husbandry, as our BOS Australia Vice President. She says, "One of the challenges of any enrichment program is to keep it dynamic by regularly implementing new ideas and problems for the animals to solve. We must keep their minds occupied because orangutans experience stress and boredom just like humans."

Lou states that collaboration is key when it comes to enrichment development. Working alongside the experienced BOS Foundation technicians gives valuable insight into the daily challenges and solutions needed to provide the best care possible for each individual.

As much as orangutans love to eat, it is not surprising that items with hidden food rewards are extremely popular among our residents

and perfect for stimulating their natural foraging skills. Therefore, the enrichment team hides fruits, vegetables and seeds, for example, in cardboard boxes, ice blocks or bamboo shoots.

Especially bamboo is used a lot as it grows abundantly in Borneo. To get to the reward in the hollow centres of the shoots, the orangutans have to either insert their fingers to poke the filling out or use some sort of tool. In the wild, orangutans would use fingers and sticks to lure termites out of mounds and then savour the protein-rich snack.

To replicate the swinging from branches, the enrichment team implements flexible support like ropes and tyre swings that are not rigid like cage bars or platforms. And to encourage the physically fit orangutans to move around more actively, they install entertaining climbing structures.

"Many of the orangutans in our care could live up to 50 years, so we must ensure their lives are as enriched and happy as possible", says Lou Grossfeldt, who is also responsible for the BOS Australia Volunteer Program in Borneo.

She encourages everyone to [join the Volunteer Program](#) and support the enrichment team hands-on. "Creating new items and seeing the orangutans and sun bears in Samboja Lestari interacting with them is an unforgettable experience."

HELLO, I AM NUR SYAMSIAH



Meet Nur, the RHO Community Development Coordinator at BOS Foundation's Orangutan Habitat Rehabilitation (RHO) programme in East Kalimantan. While her work is not directly with orangutans, Nur's role significantly impacts orangutan reintroduction.

What does being involved in orangutan conservation mean to you?

I feel a sense of accomplishment. My role might be minor, but not everyone has the opportunity to gain the experiences that I have.

Can you describe your role?

My work focuses on community development, education, health, and alternative incomes for the Wehea Dayak community. I visit the villages supported by the RHO programme in the Muara Wahau sub-district of East Kutai Regency weekly to assist the local communities with waste-

bank training activities, collaborate with medical and educational institutions, and contribute to cultural promotion activities.

Do you have a memorable experience while interacting with the local communities?

One example was when I was entrusted to deliver lessons on environmental education. That was a daunting task because my educational background is not in teaching. I've had to learn a lot – and fast - including how to deal with students misbehaving and their different personalities.

How do you feel today about taking on this 'daunting task'?

Even though working with the communities is very challenging at times, and I once considered resigning, I came to the conclusion that learning how to work with different groups of people takes

time, maybe more than a year or two. Thus, I remained in the position and am still working hard today.

What are your hopes for the future?

I hope that the RHO programme and the Bornean Orangutan Survival Foundation continue leading the way in orangutan conservation and returning as many orangutans as possible to their natural environment.

Furthermore, I hope that the RHO programme continues to assist local people in discovering alternative incomes that do not negatively impact orangutans and their habitat, ensuring their own survival.

Do you have any advice for our supporters?

Be enthusiastic and continue to fight for orangutan conservation because good and sincere intentions will yield positive and progressive results.



BOS Australia
primates helping primates

Borneo Orangutan Survival Australia

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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.

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