

# Forest Chatter

Issue 47 | March 2024

BOS Australia | + 61 2 9011 5455 | PO Box 7699, Bondi Beach NSW 2026, Australia

## From the President ...

**I hope you had a great start to 2024. We can't wait to see what the new year holds, but we can assure you we will continue to make significant strides towards stopping the decline of Bornean orangutans and safeguarding their habitats.**

Since our last edition, we reached some incredible milestones. We have released three of our adoption program favourites. Our beloved Taymur and Jelapat are now honing their skills on Badak Besar Pre-Release Island, and sweet Cinta is finally roaming free in the Bukit Baka Bukit Raya National Park (page 2).

While looking back, I want to express my deepest gratitude to all of you who have given to our Christmas Appeal. Thanks to your generosity, we raised over \$100,000

to help release more rehabilitated orangutans in Borneo.

A huge thank you also to all of you who have adopted one of the three new babies in our family: Baimah, Iqo and Onyer. The ongoing adoption program is essential for our work as its regular funds enable us to support long-term projects related to our rehabilitation program, especially our unique Forest School.

But despite all the progress, we must continue fighting for our red cousins' survival, and in most cases, our conservation efforts start with rescuing orphaned baby orangutans from captivity and imminent danger (page 3). That's why we launched our **Rescue Appeal** to raise urgently needed funds to rescue more orangutans and bring them to the

safety of our centres. Your donation will go a long way in making a difference in the lives of these innocent orphans.

Please enjoy this first edition of 2024.

*K WELFORD*

With endless gratitude,  
Kerin Welford



## Catch-up with Beni

**We recently checked in on everybody's darling Big Boy Beni on his pre-release island. Though he has grown up a lot, he still holds on to two favourite habits from his unforgettable Forest School days. Can you guess who they are?**



For Beni and the other residents on Badak Besar Island, each day starts with hanging out by the canal's edge, eagerly awaiting the arrival of the technicians' boats that will deliver their daily dose of nourishment – fruits and vegetables thoughtfully combined to meet the dietary needs of adult orangutans.

While all other orangutans savour the variety, Beni has just one fruit in mind - bananas. As soon as he gets ahold of a bunch, he immediately abandons everything else on the menu. Some things never change.

Beni also has a unique way of beating the heat. He loves taking a refreshing plunge into the water,

reviving another beloved habit from his Forest School days – taking mud baths. This delightful remnant of his student adventures is a testament to his remarkable adaptability to the island environment.

So far, Beni has displayed incredible progress during his pre-release phase. And despite still benefiting from the supplementary food our technicians provide, Beni is skilled and diligent in foraging for his own. He consistently demonstrates outstanding abilities, making him one of our star pupils on the path to release.

Way to go, Beni! We can't wait to bring you home.





## Graduation to freedom

**It was a moment we all have been waiting for. Three of our beloved adoption family members recently took a huge step on their rehabilitation journey.**

Taymur and Jelapat moved to Badak Besar Island to tackle the pre-release stage of their rehabilitation, and Cinta returned home to the rainforest. She is now roaming free in the Bukit Baka Bukit Raya National Park.

What a journey it has been for the three of them! We couldn't be more proud of each one. They had to overcome tremendous challenges in their young lives, and it is easy to forget what they have endured when you see them now, grown into confident adolescents with strong personalities.

### A long journey home

Taymur's story gained worldwide attention after the BOS Foundation had worked tirelessly for months with several authorities through the Indonesian Embassy in Kuwait to repatriate the at that time two-year-old male. The poor infant was illegally smuggled to Kuwait and kept as a pet.

Luckily, local police discovered him following a traffic accident involving his captor, who was under the influence of narcotics at the time of the incident. The journey back home to Borneo took 30 hours, and we are still in awe of Taymur's unbelievable strength and resilience to come this far against all odds.

Veterinarian Arga Sawung Kusuma recalls that initially, Taymur only liked human foods, and when he first arrived, he was remarkably affectionate, perhaps due to his challenging past. "He had a tendency to approach us,

often seeking comfort by hanging around our necks."

### Dressed like a human baby

Jelapat shares a similar trauma with Taymur. He was also illegally kept as a pet by a local villager in Central Kalimantan. The resident claimed to have found him wandering, alone and weak, in a gold-mining area. Forest fires devastated the area around that time, and his mother undoubtedly perished in the fires or was killed intentionally by humans.

The resident took the baby home and named him Jelapat. He kept the little orangutan in a small cage on the side of a busy road, dressed him in baby clothing and gave him rice and side dishes to eat. It must have been a terrifying experience for the little male.

Sri, his surrogate mother, remembers Jelapat crying in forest school when he was late for milk and fruit. He often went home early to his sleeping cage and always hid and ran away. On the other hand, Sri says, "he liked learning something new, for example, eating termites. He would seriously pay attention".

The vet team and surrogate mothers are confident that Taymur and Jelapat will adapt perfectly to island life and, no doubt, will graduate to freedom with flying colours – like our sweet Cinta.

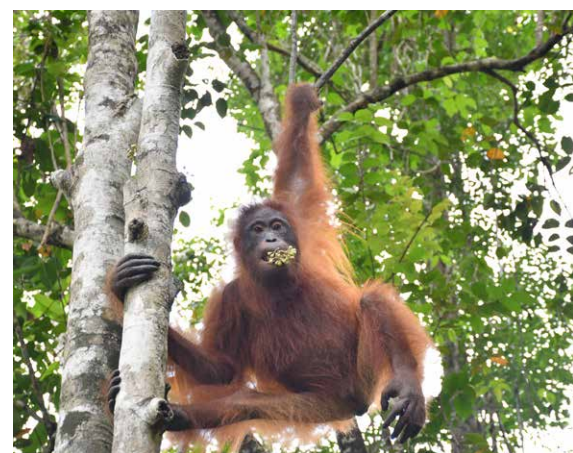
### Drum solos in the jungle

Do you remember Cinta's washing habits and drum solos from Orangutan Jungle School? Now, her beats will resound through the Bukit Baka Bukit Raya National Park. In December 2023, we released her together with Liti, Ojes, Wanto, Fajar, Fathia, Lala and Tomang to her true wild home.

Finally, Cinta's life has come full circle, from a tiny and shivering five-month-old baby found on an area of land cleared by a palm oil company to a brilliant and skilled student in forest school who is now ready to tackle her life in the wild again.

And she even has an admirer already: Wanto. Our post-release monitoring team spotted the two following each other around, eating and building nests together. Will they help us increase the Bornean orangutan population by raising the number of wild-born babies among our released orangutans to 35? Stay tuned.

Unfortunately, we can't release all orangutans in our care. But, whenever possible, we move them to Sanctuary Islands, where they can live a semi-wild life, well taken care of by the BOS Foundation staff - and by you! You can help the enrichment team hands-on by joining one of our **Volunteer Tours**. Check out the new available start dates from October 2024 to March 2025.





# Rescue - the first step to a better tomorrow



**Every year, thousands of orangutans are displaced or killed due to mass deforestation, rampant forest fires, poaching for human consumption and the illegal wildlife trade. Whenever an orangutan survives their trauma or is reported captive, we at BOS are ready to rescue and rehabilitate them.**

We can only imagine what these rescued orangutans have endured, but we do everything we can to save their lives and, whenever possible, return them to their true home in the wild. Even in more complex situations when orangutans were smuggled to other countries, we have worked with Indonesian authorities to bring them back to Borneo, like our beloved Taymur, who recently graduated from Forest School with flying colours and is now thriving on Badak Besar Pre-Release Island (see page 2).

Most of our rescued orangutans are innocent babies illegally kept as pets in tiny cages, chained in deplorable conditions, or fearfully roaming around and fighting for their lives because poachers, loggers or fires killed their mums. We could tell you hundreds of stories that break your heart. Just looking at some of these orphans - malnourished, dehydrated, wounded and traumatised - is difficult to comprehend.

But there is hope. We luckily receive hints, calls, and messages about displaced or captured orangutans. Many are handed over to us by the Central or East Kalimantan Natural Resources Conservation Agency. Also, local villagers may discover roaming babies and bring them to our centres.

## Immediate evaluation is key

In case the rescue team finds an adult orangutan in distress, our BOS veterinarians sedate and examine

them right on the spot. Healthy orangutans are relocated to a safe forest while the team transports sick or injured individuals to one of our rescue centres for further evaluation.

Upon arrival at the sanctuary, every orangutan receives a thorough medical check-up, vaccinations, and necessary treatments from our skilled and devoted veterinarians. Severely injured or malnourished patients require urgent and 24-hour intensive care, like little Topan, a long-time member of our adoption family.

The tiny girl was only eight months old when she was rescued in October 2017 by a local villager who found her weak and alone by a riverbank. Topan must have just lost her mum and was suffering from severe dehydration and malnutrition, weighing only one and a half kilograms (photo in the middle).

## Fight for life or death

The BOS medical team was extremely concerned and fighting for Topan's life for days. Thanks to their dedication and the little female's strong will to survive, Topan recovered and is now a 6-year-old curious, strong and skilled student at Forest School.

Once the team has evaluated a newly rescued orangutan, they proceed into quarantine. Here, the orangutans are under round-the-clock tender loving care for three months as they recover from diseases, wounds and hidden traumas.

During this time, the veterinarians also conduct genetic tests to ensure that each individual can be identified throughout their lifetime. In addition, these tests help to determine the specific subspecies to which a rescued orangutan belongs, which is crucial information for deciding where to release them if they qualify for a life in the wild. It is important to keep the gene pools of the Central and East Kalimantan subspecies separate to prevent any negative impact on their already critically endangered survival.

As soon as the quarantine is over, we place each orangutan into the appropriate stage of the rehabilitation process. The youngest ones join the nursery group while the juveniles start forest school - and so their journey to freedom and a brighter future begins.

To be able to rescue more innocent orphans, we cordially ask you to give to our **Rescue Appeal** today. Your contribution can help provide the medical attention and tender loving care they so desperately need. Please consider giving generously, as every dollar donated can go a long way to help save an orangutan's life. Additionally, you can adopt one of the little orphans who recently joined our **Adoption Program** - Baimah, Onyer, or Iqo - and support our ongoing rescue and rehabilitation efforts. Together, we can keep orangutans in our world and ensure their well-being for generations to come.



# HELLO, I AM WIWIK ASTUTIK



**Meet Wiwik Astutik, BOS Foundation's incredible Volunteer Facilitator. Her passion and love for orangutans are truly inspiring, and it all started almost 30 years ago with a ravaging forest fire.**

**Since when have you been working for BOS, and how did you get into your first role?**

I started my first job in 1999, entering medical test data into the system. I waited three years for a chance to work at the BOS Foundation while staying at my brother's house near the area where BOS released the first orangutans.

When I moved to my brother's place after finishing high school, there was a big forest fire, and many animals died. I saw an orangutan mum with her crying baby dying outside the forest, so I rushed to help.

After this experience, I wanted to learn more about orangutans and work with them. That's when I came across the BOS Foundation.

**But entering data was just the beginning of your long career at BOS...**

Yes, shortly after, I became a babysitter, caring for the orangutans in Forest School and on the playground. During that time, I assisted a scientist from Cambridge University who did research at the centre, as I was the only babysitter who spoke English.

Before she left Samboja Lestari, she asked me what I would like to learn if I could attend university. At the time, I cared for an orangutan who was happy in a tiny cage but so stressed when outside. So, I said: "I want to learn more about my orangutans to understand them better. I want to study psychology." So she paid for me to go to university.

**What happened when you returned after four years?**

I first became the Forest School Coordinator and, a few years later, the Animal Care Coordinator. Then, BOS

started the Volunteer Program, and my boss asked me if I wanted to work for it. I immediately said yes because I love new experiences.

**As the Volunteer Facilitator, what do you enjoy most about your job?**

I enjoy making enrichment, collecting leaves, and building, for example, platforms and climbing structures for orangutans and sun bears. With the help of the volunteers, we can achieve so much more in a shorter time.

**What are your most memorable moments working for BOS?**

The releases. Seeing an orangutan you cared for being released into their real home makes me so happy, even though it's sometimes hard to say goodbye.

**How do you imagine the future?**

I imagine fewer orangutans in cages. All orangutans who can be released will return to the wild, and those who can't will live on sanctuary islands.



**BOS Australia**  
primates helping primates

**Borneo Orangutan Survival Australia**

+ 61 2 9011 5455

PO Box 7699,

Bondi Beach NSW 2026

[facebook.com/bosaustralia](https://www.facebook.com/bosaustralia)

[instagram.com/bosaustralia](https://www.instagram.com/bosaustralia)

Our newsletter is proudly written and produced by BOS Australia volunteers.

All images © BOS 2024

**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](mailto:contact@orangutans.com.au) or post your photos online at [facebook.com/bosaustralia](https://www.facebook.com/bosaustralia) or [instagram.com/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](http://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.

Save paper and the environment and opt-in to receive our newsletter via email at [contact@orangutans.com.au](mailto:contact@orangutans.com.au).