

Forest Chatter

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From the president ...

Welcome to our first edition of 2025. As we reflect on the first few weeks of the year and the various events that have unfolded globally, many of us may feel anxious about the future.

We at BOS are worried, too. Due to the freeze of the United States Agency for International Development funding, the BOS Foundation will have a shortfall of \$50,000 in their 2025 budget for the Bukit Batikap Protection Forest. This area is one of the last critical habitats for critically endangered orangutans. Additionally, this funding gap impacts our planned releases for this year, leaving rehabilitated orangutans ready for a life in the wild in limbo.

But if you have followed us for a while now, you know we will not

give up, keep focusing on the tasks at hand, and will continue doing everything we can to protect the wild orangutan population and their rainforest homes while caring for the 349 orangutans and 76 sun bears in our centres.

In this edition, we want to highlight our sun bear cubs, who urgently need a new **Baby House**, which you can help us build. Learn more about their care and enjoy an insightful interview with Patrick Rouxel, consultant for the BOS Foundation's sun bear program.

Also, meet our newest rescued orangutan baby, discover why our little orangutans love the dentist, and find out who joined the latest orangutan party at Camp Lesik.

If you are still looking for the perfect adventure this year, we have spots left for our **Trek for Orangutans**, and we've just released the new dates for our **Orangutan Volunteer Program**.

Let's keep working together to save orangutans and sun bears!

K WELFORD

With endless gratitude,
Kerin Welford



Meet baby Jenny

We have recently welcomed a new infant orangutan at the Samboja Lestari Rehabilitation Centre.

Little Jenny's rescue story began when a villager found her alone on an oil palm plantation. Believing she was a macaque, he took the baby, who is about one to two years old, home and kept her as a pet for five months.



Fortunately, a neighbour informed him that orangutans are a protected species he can not keep as pets. The villager then contacted the nearest Natural Resources Conservation Agency, and a rescue team quickly arrived to retrieve Jenny and brought her to Samboja Lestari.

During her captivity, the resident fed Jenny milk, bananas, rice and bread. Eventually, due to financial constraints, he replaced the milk with tea. As a result, Jenny became dependent on tea and would show signs of aggression if she didn't receive her usual drink.

Despite being kept as a pet, the infant never behaved aggressively toward humans. She even slept with

the family and occasionally played outside, climbing trees and nibbling on young leaves.

Jenny feels a bit scared but is overall healthy as she joins her new family at Samboja Lestari alongside other baby orangutans like Galaksi and Otan. It may take her some time to adjust, but with the loving care from her surrogate mother and the dedicated efforts of the animal welfare and medical team, we are optimistic that she will grow stronger each day.

Did you know that by **adopting** an orphan like Jenny, you can help all babies in our care thrive towards a wild future? Meet our adoptable orangutans **here**.

Open wide, please!

Orangutans go to the dentist, too. Our veterinarians handle everything from serious adult procedures to playful check-ups for young ones.

Recently, Herkules wasn't feeling well. He was suffering from cavities and a fractured root tooth, which caused him pain and disrupted his eating habits. It was time for dental surgery to address these problems.

It is not uncommon for orangutans to chip their teeth or experience other dental injuries, as they often chew on branches, wood, or similar hard objects. Unfortunately, this behaviour can harm their dental structure. With a 97% genetic similarity to humans, orangutans have nearly identical dental anatomy, which explains why they experience comparable dental health issues.

Before our experienced medical team performed the procedure on Herkules, they sedated him and gently transported him in a wheelbarrow from his enclosure to the operating room. General

anesthesia was necessary to ensure the male remained calm and pain-free throughout the surgery.

Our veterinarians began by cleaning the affected area and examining the condition of the other teeth. The operation involved several key steps: tooth extraction, cleaning and disinfection, and wound closure. The procedure demanded high precision, as the anatomy of an orangutan's oral cavity is similar to that of humans but with much larger dimensions.

Orangutans, like humans, have two sets of teeth: 20 baby teeth and 32 permanent teeth. And like human children, our orangutan students in Forest School need regular check-ups to prevent any issues.

"These young ones are at the age where permanent teeth replace their baby teeth. Therefore, we're doing routine dental checks to see if there is any damage or if their teeth are growing properly", says vet Arga. But how do you get the energetic bunch to open their mouths? You



take advantage of their after-school playtime. In addition to climbing, swinging and solving food puzzles, there is Dr Arga's water entertainment station. He sprays a gentle mist from a bottle into their mouth, and just like that, they open wide, showing off their pearly whites. What a fun way to go to the dentist!

A Baby House for sun bears

In addition to 116 orangutans, our Samboja Lestari Centre currently accommodates 76 sun bears. Many of them are orphaned cubs who need nursery care and go to Forest School, similar to our orangutans.

"Sun bear cubs require the comforting presence of their mothers at all times and experience stress when left alone," says Patrick Rouxel, consultant for the BOS Foundation's



Sun Bear Program at Samboja Lestari. He emphasises that when a new rescued sun bear cub arrives, it is crucial to provide them with the best possible early childhood experience, including round-the-clock care and allowing the cubs to spend as much time as possible in their natural habitat.

"In the past five years, the BOS Foundation has received twice as many orphaned cubs as adult sun bears. Typically, the mother is killed, and the cub is handed over to the authorities, who then pass it on to BOS", explains Patrick Rouxel.

Sun bears, like orangutans, face numerous challenges, including habitat loss, commercial hunting, and the illegal pet trade. The total population of sun bears has declined by at least 30 per cent over the last 30 years, which has led to their classification as 'vulnerable.' Since 1998, BOS has been dedicated to caring for the world's smallest bears, and like our efforts with orangutans, we strive to provide them with the highest welfare standards.

However, unlike the orphaned orangutans we care for, the sun bear cubs do not have a Baby House, an essential part of their upbringing. In a Baby House, they could sleep near their human surrogate parents rather than share the same room, which becomes challenging when the cubs get older. "Therefore, the bears often have to spend the night in forest enclosures, a situation they don't like", says Patrick.

The Swedish-french, who has spent most of the last 14 years with sun bears in Indonesia, stresses the importance of a nursery. "Our sun bear cubs deserve a healthy psychological and physical development, and the Baby House will greatly facilitate our ability to provide this for them."

Will you help us build a new Baby House for our little bears? We must raise \$50,000 by 31 March to help Patrick and his team build the urgently needed nursery so the cubs never have to sleep alone again. Please donate [here](#).



Preserving ancestral heritage

BOS supports not only orangutans and sun bears but also the indigenous communities living in and around the forests of Kalimantan. We proudly uphold their traditions, such as the Hudoq Festival of the Dayak people, passed down through generations.

Each year, the Community Empowerment Team from PT. Restorasi Habitat Orangutan Indonesia, a limited company established by the BOS Foundation in 2009, has the opportunity to witness this colourful festival.

Hudoq is a traditional dance of the Dayak people, deeply connected to

their agricultural cycle. This dance was initially performed as part of a traditional ritual to seek blessings from the gods and nature spirits. The Dayak people believe that by performing this dance, they can ensure abundant harvests and prosperous lives.

The name “Hudoq” originates from the Modang Dayak language, meaning “mask.” This reflects the dancer’s use of beautifully crafted masks and unique costumes that resemble supernatural beings. Hudoq is believed to represent guardian spirits that protect the crops and

drive away evil spirits that might harm the plants or the community.

Beyond its purpose of seeking blessings, the Hudoq Dance is also a way for the Dayak people to honour their ancestors, whom they believe continuously protect them. In addition, it serves as a moment for the community to unite, celebrate, and strengthen social bonds.

Through the Hudoq Festival, we can witness the richness of Indonesia’s cultural heritage and the harmonious relationship between humans and nature firsthand.

Party time, orangutan-style

It’s been almost three years since orangutan Sayang and her baby, along with Lesan and her offspring, last gathered at Camp Lesik. Recently, the mothers returned for another party.

Our Post-Release Monitoring team first noticed the presence of the two females when they heard rustling sounds from the bamboo thickets behind the camp. Shortly after, they saw the two mother-baby pairs moving and swinging between bamboo trees while munching on young leaves.

Lesan and Sayang now carry their second offspring, both around two years old, while their eldest children – Ayu and Padma – have grown

independent and no longer follow their mothers.

The BOS team released Lesan into the Kehje Sewen Forest in 2012, followed by Sayang in 2013. Both became excellent mothers, skillfully teaching their offspring essential survival skills for life in the wild.

This time, the two females could enjoy their get-together peacefully without the presence of Hamzah, an impressive, dominant male notorious for disrupting their feasting sessions in the past.

If you’ve ever wondered, a party among orangutans doesn’t mean they are dancing or sitting around a hotpot together. Experts use this

term for a group of orangutans, where the actions of one individual can be seen by another and potentially impact their behaviour.

Unlike females, male orangutans typically do not engage in parties – unless they happen to crash one, much like Hamzah.



HELLO, I AM PATRICK ROUXEL

Patrick serves as a consultant for the BOS Foundation's Sun Bear Program. His unwavering passion and commitment to improving the facilities of the sun bears at Samboja Lestari are essential to their well-being.

What inspired you to start working with sun bears?

In 2011, a chance encounter with an orphan sun bear cub in Indonesia changed my life. As told in my film *"Life is One"*, I chose to rehabilitate this cub to the wild, followed by another two cubs, and in the process, I discovered what it is to be a sun bear. The three years I spent in the forest with the cubs opened my eyes to the joy the bears experience at being free in their habitat and, in retrospect, to the suffering they endure when confined behind bars. This triggered my commitment to improve the welfare of captive sun bears in Indonesia.

What specific actions do you take to enhance their welfare?

When I first arrived at Samboja Lestari in 2015, we began by building larger cages for the bears and allowing them to be together. Then, we built large forest enclosures. By 2020, we had created 15 enclosures across approximately 15 hectares of forest land. The bears now have the option to stay in their indoor dens or spend time



in the forest, which significantly improves their well-being. As more sun bears arrive at Samboja Lestari, we continue to build new forest enclosures and renovate older ones. My current project is to create a Baby House for the sun bear cubs.

Why is having a Baby House so important?

Sun bear cubs need to feel their mother's presence at all times and experience stress when left alone. Therefore, when a new sun bear cub arrives at the centre, we give it 24-hour care and allow them to spend as much time outdoors in the forest as possible. Currently, due to

a lack of proper facilities, we have the cubs staying in the same room as the person caring for them, which becomes difficult to manage as the cubs get older and begin breaking into everything they can get their claws on. Having a Baby House designed for cubs and their keeper to live under the same roof would allow them to stay with their foster parent 24/7 for as long as necessary, ensuring they feel secure and supported.

How crucial is Forest School for sun bears and their chances of future release?

Forest School and 24-hour care allow the cubs to receive the best possible early childhood experience. By spending 8 to 10 hours a day in the forest with their foster parent, the cubs develop the essential skills needed for potential release. However, releasing rehabilitated sun bears is risky, as the wild resident bears in Indonesia struggle to survive in their dwindling habitat and do not want newcomers stealing their food. BOS Foundation does not yet have a rehabilitation program for the sun bears, but it is interested in developing one. When this happens, the cubs who have experienced Forest School would certainly be the best candidates for release.

Please help Patrick build a new sun bear Baby House [here](#)!



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primates helping primates

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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 or 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.

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