



Forest Chatter



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From the President ...

Just three months ago when I wrote my President's report, the world was a different place.

We were busy performing rescues and releases and planning ambitious construction programs at our facilities. That is all on hold now. Like every single one of you, we have been deeply impacted by COVID-19. Our first priority is the health and safety of our staff and the orangutans in our care.

The lucky 462 orangutans who have been released however are living their life in the rainforest, safely away from this virus and, no doubt, oblivious to its impact.

At our care centres we have instituted very strong protocols and remain

vigilant in the case of a transmission from human to orangutan. So far, at the time of writing, we have avoided any cases, but the situation can change rapidly. Please follow the news on our website, Facebook and Instagram for updates.

In this difficult time, it is exciting for us to be partnering with our friends at Ethical Jobs, who have kindly agreed to double your donations for our tax appeal. This is our most important appeal for the year, and it comes at a critical time.

We are very grateful for the ongoing support we have received from all of you in the last few months. We hope, with your help, we can return to a new normal – rescuing, rehabilitating

and releasing our gorgeous red cousins back to their magnificent rainforest homes.

Tony Gilding
President



No better time for giving

For 29 years BOS has been working tirelessly to save orangutans, and although Covid-19 has caused us to drastically change the way we operate, we are dedicated to continuing the fight.

Due to the closing of our offices, visitor centres, accommodations, and research sites, as well as having

to postpone many of our fundraising activities, our major revenue streams have now ceased. All the while, panic buying has created scarcity and drastic price increases for vital animal care goods and personal protection such as masks, hand sanitizer and gloves.

The evidence that orangutans can contract this deadly disease is significant and we need to ensure that this simply does not happen. Our staff continue to devote themselves to working for the sake of the orangutans, even if it means putting themselves at risk for Covid-19 exposure. But we need your help to keep operations running.

With your support we can continue to care for over 450 orangutans currently in our centres. Most importantly, with your assistance we can provide the

necessary equipment to our staff members to ensure their safety and protect orangutans from the threat of this life destroying disease.

Please consider supporting orangutans once again by donating today. The great news is that the impact of your gift today will be doubled! Our good friends at **EthicalJobs.com.au** have kindly offered to match donations received up to a total of \$30,000. During this period when we are desperate for your help and your generosity will have double the effect – there is no better time to show your love and support for orangutans!

With us all standing together during such trying times, we are confident that we can overcome this current battle and continue to fight for the orangutan's survival. Please give today **here** and have your donation doubled by **EthicalJobs.com.au**.

DOUBLE THE IMPACT



OF YOUR GIFT TODAY

www.orangutans.com.au



Sustainable partnerships

Cooperating with the local ethnic communities in our working areas is crucial for BOS Foundation's success. Especially when it comes to securing safe habitats for orangutans and conducting sustainable forest management activities.

Through its company PT. Restorasi Habitat Orangutan Indonesia (RHOI), BOS Foundation works closely together with the local Dayak Wehea tribe, the oldest tribe living in BOS' working area in the Muara Wahau District in East Kalimantan.

According to a Wehea elder, the ancestors of this ethnic group came from a caterpillar that emerged from the bark of a tree. God turned it into *jiel*, a human male. He then took one of *jiel*'s ribs to create *jiels*, a human female. Today the descendants of this first human couple, currently about 11,000 people, spread across six villages and share the same ecosystem with orangutans.

Only by understanding the culture and traditions of the tribe, and by involving and empowering their communities, we can make sure that the forests we manage are used

sustainably and will remain a safe haven for orangutans.

Therefore, BOS is supporting the Wehea people through partnerships, forest education and training, research and development, and by trading in sustainable, non-timber forest products and services for domestic and international markets.

Rooted in their traditions

To find out more about the tribe, members of RHOI's community development team conducted a series of interviews. They learned that the Dayak Wehea people respect and proudly uphold the traditions of their ancestors.

These traditions strongly value teamwork and mutual support in conducting daily activities. For example, when it comes to the ritual of land clearing, rice planting and harvesting festivities known as the *Mbob Jengea*, all members of the tribe, both young and old, participate as one collective unit.

In general, each family owns a paddy field, and every day, after the children are home from school, the whole family heads to their field

to work the land together. Besides farming, the Wehea also raise pigs and chickens. Typically, they build enclosures for their domestic livestock near their homes, but, on occasion, they will also hunt wild deer and pigs in the forest.

There are over 400 sub-ethnic Dayak tribes in Indonesian Borneo. However, the Dayak Wehea have not been officially recognized as an independent sub-ethnic group. Recognition is significant, as it would enable them to formally protect and preserve their traditions and pass their knowledge down to the next generations – an essential prerequisite if they are to survive.

Together for a brighter future

BOS believes that the best way to save orangutans is not only by focusing on protecting them and their habitat but also by improving the livelihood of the local people, our key stakeholders. This way, they become a sustainable partner in our commitment to creating a brighter future for orangutans and supporting worldwide efforts to combat the serious threats of global warming and climate change.



Under watchful eyes

Once we have released a group of orangutans to the wild, our work does not stop. Our Post Release Monitoring (PRM) team regularly monitors each individual, to ensure all are adapting well to their new forest home.

Every morning at dawn, the technicians of the PRM team leave their camp and hike along transects through the jungle. While they know the forest very well, the movements of orangutans can be unpredictable. Therefore, the technicians can only track them efficiently with the help of satellite phones, handheld GPS units and radio-tracking equipment that pick up the signals of the small radio transmitters implanted under the skin of each reintroduced orangutan.

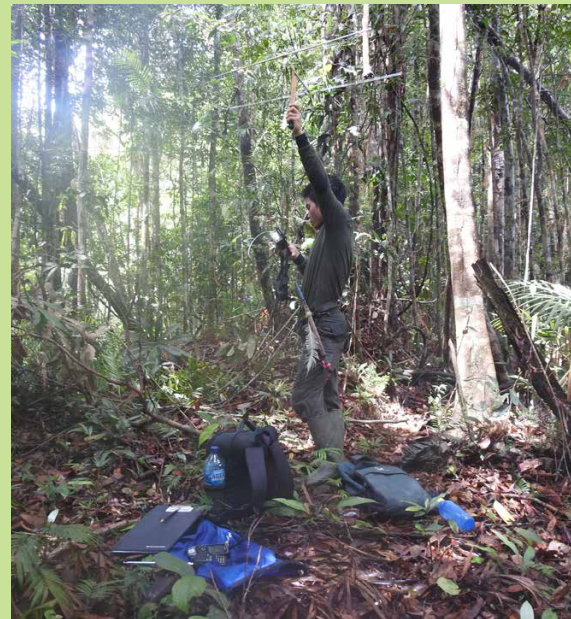
For hours, the PRM team observes nest after nest while taking notes of orangutan activities and behaviour. If necessary, the technicians can intervene, to provide food or veterinary care. Late in the afternoon, everyone heads back to the camp to discuss the observations.

In addition, the PRM team regularly conducts phenological surveys to

collect data on flora found in the forest. Phenological data show the locations and seasonal fruiting cycles of the plants that orangutans feed on. With this knowledge, we can determine the best location for future orangutan reintroduction, as newly released orangutans need to immediately forage to survive in the forest.

Team members who are not involved in either of the above activities are typically clearing overgrown transects, checking rainfall and humidity levels, conducting biodiversity surveys, or patrolling the release area. Even though we work far from the nearest village and human settlements, we are committed to ensuring that the forest remains free of human interference.

For an initial period of two months, observations are conducted daily, followed by checks on a monthly basis. Thanks to this continuous monitoring, the PRM team provides invaluable information for the success of our rehabilitation program.



Vista, the model mum

Recently, our team was thrilled to find mother-son pair Vista and Vee in the forests of Bukit Baka Bukit Raya National Park. Check out what the duo was up to.

Here is some good news in these difficult times. According to our latest observations, mum Vista and her 3-year-old son Vee have adapted perfectly to their forest home. Both were released in July 2018, and a few weeks ago Post-Release-Monitoring (PRM) team technician Domi and BOS veterinarian Vivi Dwi Santi went on a field trip to check on them.

Vista came to our rehabilitation centre in Nyaru Menteng in 2006. She successfully completed forest school and advanced to the next step of the rehabilitation process, a forested pre-release island. There she not only put her newly learned survival skills to the test; she also became a mum. In April 2017 she gave birth to baby-boy Vee. One year later the BOS team decided that both were ready to be released to their true wild home.

To find the two orangutans, technician Domi and veterinarian Vivi had to walk up and down the rough, extremely hilly terrain in the Bemban watershed of Bukit Baka Bukit Raya National Park. When they finally spotted them, Vista and Vee were sitting atop a tall matoa tree, savouring the tree's sweet fruits, known locally as *rosciu*. After getting her fill of fresh fruit, Vista climbed down to the ground to add some protein-rich termites to the meal, which she found in a nest inside a rotten tree trunk.

The following day, the BOS team continued their observations, when suddenly a heavy downpour struck. Vista quickly grabbed the leaf of a large Asian palmyra palm to cover her and her baby's heads and then immediately sought refuge under the thick forest canopy.

Domi and Vivi were impressed by Vista's forest knowhow and her use of a plant as an umbrella: "Vee is very lucky to have such a smart mother, who can teach her all about life in the forest."



HELLO, I'M JEFFREY!



My background:

I know, I may not be as cute as the little forest school students, but I belong to a group of orangutans that the BOS Foundation deeply cares for too: The unreleasable ones, and the ones that are not as easy to return to the wild.

My mom, Tian-Tian, was rescued and repatriated from Taiwan in 1998. Sadly, she had hepatitis B, and I contracted the disease from her. To avoid spreading it to other orangutans at the Samboja Lestari Rehabilitation Centre, I was placed in quarantine – indefinitely. All hope to be a wild orangutan again seemed to be lost for me.

But then, years later, scientists found that hepatitis B occurs naturally in the wild and is not dangerous to orangutans. What a breakthrough! Finally I could

be integrated with the other orangutans in the centre.

My first release:

In September 2019 was my big day: They moved me to pre-release island 7. I got the chance to thrive in a natural habitat, under the watchful eyes of the BOS technicians (see page 3). For the first time in my life, I felt what it is like to be a wild orangutan, and I got better every week. I preferred to stay high up in the trees, became very good at nesting and grew cautious of the technicians when they visited the island to deliver food at the feeding platform. All seemed perfect. But just a month later I started to have problems. One of my legs became swollen, and I could not move properly anymore. The BOS technicians noted this right away and alarmed the veterinarians, who found out that my hip was displaced. I think

they were as sad as I was when they were forced to remove me from the forest and take me back to Samboja Lestari.

My rehabilitation and second chance:

In the rehabilitation centre, they treated and corrected my hip. I am lucky because left untreated I would have had to live my life in captivity as an unreleasable orangutan.

Fixing my hip dysplasia was very expensive, and so was my recovery, with fortnightly check-ups, ongoing observations and physical therapy. Thankfully, I fully recovered, even faster than they thought, and since the beginning of March, my journey as a wild orangutan continues. I am back on a pre-release island. How cool is that! Thank you for **helping** orangutans like me!



BOS Australia
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 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 +61 2 9011 5455. We now accept **Paypal** donations too! See the link on the homepage of our website.

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