



Press Release

Four Bornean Orangutans Return to the Wild in Bukit Baka Bukit Raya National Park

Central Kalimantan – Four Bornean orangutans (*Pongo pygmaeus*) will be released back to the wild in the Bukit Baka Bukit Raya National Park (known as Taman Nasional Bukit Baka Bukit Raya in Bahasa Indonesia, and hereafter referred to as TNBBBR) in Katingan Regency, Central Kalimantan, on Tuesday, 3 April. The planned release is part of the #OrangutanFreedom campaign, and was organised by the Borneo Orangutan Survival (BOS) Foundation, in collaboration with the Central Kalimantan Natural Resource Conservation Agency (BKSDA), the TNBBBR authority, and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) through its USAID LESTARI program. This is the 9th orangutan release event in the TNBBBR, bringing the total number of orangutans released into the national park up to 79. This release is also supported by the Blue Bird Group and Save the Orangutan (STO).

The four release candidates include one 13-year-old male named Meong, and three females: Hayley (13), Nabima (18), and Tari (5). All four have completed a lengthy rehabilitation process at BOS Foundation's Nyaru Menteng Orangutan Rescue and Rehabilitation Center, and possess the skills and behaviour required to live independently in the forest. They will be transported from Nyaru Menteng on a 10-12-hour trip across land and river to predetermined release points in the TNBBBR. After being released, the orangutans will be monitored daily for two full months, and then be observed for two hours per day over a year.

BOS Foundation's CEO, Jamartin Sihite, says that BOS Foundation is still receiving young orangutans on a regular basis, many of which are from the illegal pet trade. "Since January, four orangutans have been brought to our two rehabilitation centers, Samboja Lestari and Nyaru Menteng, where we currently care for almost 600 orangutans. While we appreciate the reports coming from community members, this trend indicates that many people are still not taking the legal consequences of keeping orangutans as pets seriously.

"The illegal wildlife trade, combined with ongoing and widespread illegal logging, even in those forests with protected status, means we have a huge task ahead of us. While cleared forests may never return to their natural states, reforestation can restore these areas to a point where they regain much of their original functionality, but it is a lengthy process. Environmental destruction and degradation has reached a deeply concerning level. We urgently need clear and firm law enforcement to change public perception on these issues. As we approach Earth Day, which is observed annually every April, we should collectively renew our effort to care for planet Earth; for humans and all the creatures that rely on Earth's natural resources for their survival. Conservation must be collaborative effort. We are all at risk, we all stand to benefit, and we all bear the same responsibility to promote positive change."

Head of the Central Kalimantan BKSDA, Adib Gunawan, added that all parties must remember that hunting, catching, keeping, and trading orangutans or other protected wildlife is illegal and must be curbed. He emphasised the urgency for a reinvigorated orangutan conservation effort by saying: "Currently, there are hundreds of orangutans still in rehabilitation centres, waiting for a chance to return to the wild. We work in cooperation with BOS Foundation and other organisations concerned with orangutan and habitat conservation, to release as many orangutans as we can back to the forest. Today, we—the BOS Foundation, the TNBBBR authority, and USAID Lestari—will release four orangutans to the TNBBBR. This will take the total number of orangutans released in the area to 79.

"Our call centre still receives direct reports and calls about orangutans that are being held captive. We need to take further steps to increase public awareness. As the most recent [Orangutan] Conservation Strategy and Action Plan outlines, if we are to ensure the sustainability of orangutans and their habitat through stakeholder partnerships, all of us—government, local communities, non-profit organisations, and corporations—must take definitive action to protect the remaining habitats and wildlife, starting right now. We cannot afford to take our time on this."

Head of the TNBBBR authority, Heru Raharjo, said that, since 2016, TNBBBR has accommodated the release of 75 orangutans, following their rehabilitation at BOS Foundation's Nyaru Menteng centre. "We will keep adding more orangutans to the current population. Our surveys suggest, the carrying capacity of the TNBBBR is as much as 250 orangutans.



“The security of the orangutan population living in the area is key to the sustainability of the orangutan release program, and ensures the creation of a new wild orangutan population. Given that the forests of the TNBBBR have received global recognition, and have been declared as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, we all bear responsibility to protect them. This orangutan release is simply another one of our attempts to maintain the high environmental value of the TNBBBR.”

USAID LESTARI Coordinator in Central Kalimantan, Rosenda Chandra Kasih, stressed the importance of multi-party cooperation in protecting orangutans from extinction. “This release is evidence of the collaborations we can achieve among stakeholders in Central Kalimantan to help save orangutans, our key species. USAID LESTARI is strongly committed to actively supporting the orangutan release program undertaken in the TNBBBR during the period 2016-2018. We heavily support the improved land and forest governance effort, and we are convinced that that approach will help us realise the conservation of this iconic species. However, involvement from all parties is crucial,” she added.

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Editor’s Note:

ABOUT BOS FOUNDATION

Founded in 1991, BOS Foundation is an Indonesian, non-profit organisation dedicated to the conservation of Bornean orangutans and their natural habitat, in cooperation with local communities, the Ministry of Environment and Forestry of the Republic of Indonesia, and international partner organisations.

The BOS Foundation currently cares for around 600 orangutans in two rehabilitation centres, with the support of 440 highly dedicated staff members and experts in the fields of primatology, biodiversity, ecology, forest rehabilitation, agroforestry, community empowerment, communications, education, and orangutan welfare. For further information, please visit www.orangutan.or.id.

ABOUT ORANGUTAN RELEASES

Since 2012 to date, the BOS Foundation has released 334 orangutans to three release sites in Central Kalimantan (Bukit Batikap Conservation Forest and Bukit Baka Bukit Raya National Park) and East Kalimantan (Kehje Sewen Forest).

This is the 9th release conducted by BOS Foundation in the TNBBBR, with the first taking place in August 2016. This release brings the total population of released orangutans in the TNBBBR up to 79 individuals.

ABOUT USAID LESTARI

USAID LESTARI is a collaborative project between the governments of the United States of America and the Republic of Indonesia. USAID LESTARI fully supports the efforts made by the Indonesian government to reduce



greenhouse emissions and increase efforts to conserve forest biodiversity and mangrove ecosystems rich in carbon storage.

USAID LESTARI focuses on regions with unscathed primary forests, high carbon deposits and rich biodiversity. These regions include Aceh (the Leuser landscape), Central Kalimantan (the Katingan-Kahayan landscape), and Papua (the Lorentz Lowlands, Mappi-Bouven Digoel, Sarmi and Cyclops landscapes).

ABOUT WORLD BRANDING AWARD

The World Branding Awards is an annual event organised by The World Branding Forum, a registered non-profit organization from the UK. Awards are only presented to top household names, recognised globally and in their home countries. BOS Foundation thanks all those who supported and voted for our organisation to win Brand of the Year in the “Animal Welfare – Conservation” category.