



# BOS Nyaru Menteng

*Cheetah's Fracture, October 2011*



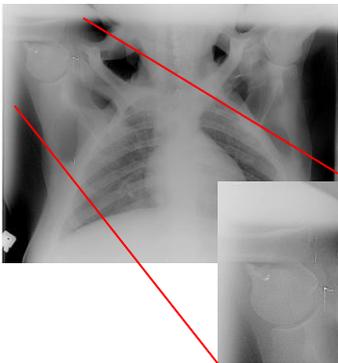
Cheetah is a 12-year-old female orang-utan at the Nyaru Menteng Orangutan Reintroduction Project in Central Kalimantan. She graduated from the Forest School stage of the rehabilitation programme in 2006, and has since been living on one of the Nyaru Menteng islands. On these islands, there are no enclosures or cages; the orang-utans live as naturally as possible within the boundaries of the island, and the technicians (animal caretakers) provide additional food on a daily basis to supplement what the forest provides.

In the second week of October, the technicians reported to the medical team that Cheetah wasn't using her left arm properly; she appeared to have a wound on her elbow. Minor to moderate wounds are not uncommon in orang-utans who are climbing in the trees all day, and often with their amazing recovery ability, they may resolve on their own. However, after three days of monitoring, there was still no signs of improvement in her use of the arm, and the possibility of a more serious injury had to be considered. On 15<sup>th</sup> October the medical team decided it would be necessary to bring her to the clinic, so that the wound could be fully assessed and treated.

As with many of the adult orang-utans on the islands, it was not possible to persuade Cheetah down from the trees for transport to the clinic without sedation—but sedating an ape at the top of a tree is not an easy process. Apart from the challenges of delivering a dart of sedative to a moving target, orang-utans have a tendency to climb higher after being darted, and fall asleep up in the branches; as the sedative takes hold, their grip loosens, and they have a long way to fall to the ground. The rescue team that sedated Cheetah set up a safety net at waist level and held it tautly to break her fall, but despite their best efforts she had an awkward landing.



Cheetah was brought to the Nyaru Menteng clinic for assessment and treatment. The wound on her left arm was deep through the skin, and the muscles underneath were swollen and inflamed although didn't appear to be damaged. As well as addressing her wound, the medical team started her on antibiotics, pain relief drugs and put her on a drip.



Over the course of the next few days it became apparent that Cheetah was painful around her right shoulder, despite the wound being on her left arm. She was x-rayed on 19<sup>th</sup> October, which revealed a nasty fracture of her humerus, right up near the shoulder joint, which very likely happened when she fell from the tree. This kind of fracture would be challenging to repair in any animal of Cheetah's size; but in an orang-utan, who needs to be able to support all her weight on that arm while swinging through the forest, the way this injury heals is going to be pivotal in determining Cheetah's future. If the bone doesn't heal well, the arm will have to be amputated; which will mean Cheetah can never be released to the wild.

For a successful surgery, Cheetah will need a highly experienced orthopaedic surgeon, some custom-modified fixative plates to fit her bones, and a long and complicated operation which has to take place within the next two weeks, before the bones try to heal in the wrong position. Afterwards, it will take at least two months of strict rest—and a lot of patience on Cheetah's part—for the bones to knit together and heal. All of us at the Borneo Orangutan Survival Foundation are praying for a successful operation and recovery for Cheetah, so this beautiful young lady can once again return to swinging in the trees.

While we are discussing Cheetah's case with orthopaedic surgeons who are experienced in this kind of top-level surgery and willing to offer their skills to Cheetah, we also need to secure the funds and materials needed to proceed with the operation and Cheetah's post-operative care.

The surgery on Cheetah's shoulder will cost around \$2000, not including the cost of her post-operative care and follow-up checks. If you are willing to make a donation to help us continue to provide the highest level of care for Cheetah during her recovery, please contact us via the website at [www.orangutan.or.id](http://www.orangutan.or.id)

Cheetah's treatment thus far has been made possible by kind donations of medical supplies and equipment from WSPA, Abaxis and Miss Bärbel Köhler; BOS Nyaru Menteng is very grateful for your support. Cheetah's story was written by Rosalie Dench.