

Caring passionately for orangutans

The tropical rain forests of Indonesia are something to behold: Gigantic trees, lush undergrowth, raindrops lazily rolling off shiny leaves onto a tangle of ferns and other plants, enormous ants busying themselves with their tasks and the distant sound of apes shouting in the tree canopies.

A while back, I indulged my love of nature and went to live with the indigenous people in Borneo. There wasn't a single day when I didn't discover something new and exciting to train my camera lens onto. I don't know how many rolls of film I went through in those years.

But something was wrong. It was the orangutans. They were in a dire situation. Their forest habitats, were (and are) being destroyed by mining, logging slash-and-burn farming and the demand for palm oil. By now, precious few orangutans are left and these are endangered by illegal pet trade and poaching.



Not just a pretty face

Orangutans are an umbrella species, this means a lot of the fauna and flora of the rain forest depends on them. During my time in Indonesia, I fell in love with the orangutans. And wouldn't you? These lovely and gentle great apes are so much like us, they are intelligent and care immensely for their young. And yet, they are killed carelessly and threatened by our actions. Helping these orangutans has become a matter near to my heart.

Orangutan rehabilitation

The largest primate reintroduction centre in the world is found in Central Kalimantan in Borneo. Nyaru Menteng is hidden in a difficult to access area of rain forest largely undisturbed by visitors. The center is home to around 600 orangutans.



The orangutans in the centre have been rescued from starvation injury, illness or captivity. Often, they are orphans whose mothers were slaughtered by workers in the oil palm plantation while searching for food. Here at Nyaru Menteng, the animals are nursed back to health. They then embark on a long rehabilitation project to learn to survive in the rain forest, which is where they are ultimately being released back into.

In the central sanctuary, the sick orangutans are treated medically and are vaccinated against diseases transmitted by humans such as tuberculosis or hepatitis. From January to March, due to the rainy season, the isolation ward is full with animals sick from malaria, dengue or typhoid fever.

Medical help

Medical instruments such as pulse oximeters allow right diagnosis and good treatment of these sick orangutans. Sometimes, the orangutans living in the outer reaches of the centre are treated directly on-site in the jungle!

But medical equipment, drugs and laboratory stuffs are hard to come by at such a remote location, especially for a charity on a tight budget. This is where I saw an opportunity to help: after all, we specialize in innovative medical equipment.

We are pleased to be able to support the Nyaru Menteng Orangutan rehabilitations project by donating one of our pulse oximeters. These are sturdy, high end pieces of equipment, able to endure tough conditions. Just what you need when working with ape patients, sometimes even out in the wild.

Pictured is the medical lab assistant Bärbel Köhler treating an infant orangutan in the isolation ward. The isolation ward is a busy place. Regular check-ups of vital parameters need to be done and blood tests have to be prepared. The specialist from Germany is flying out to Borneo every year to train the medical team at Nyaru Menteng in the area of laboratory medicine. Her commitment and dedication are exemplary.



It's a worthwhile effort. This year, the team at Nyaru Menteng successfully released 25 orangutans into the wild so far and eight more are on their way as I write. This is a great achievement, because for many years, it had been impossible to release any of these precious animals into the wild, as they had nowhere to go to. Now, some habitats in East Kalimantan have been restored and the local population is learning to protect and value their environment.

We have a passion

Protecting the environment is a priority for us back home, too. This is why all our products come in eco-friendly packaging. And to minimize waste even further, we make our equipment to last, with an extended product life span. So your bin stays slim.