

# Annual Report 2023





Hope in a time of crisis

We are living in a time of crisis, which continuously reminds us of why our work is necessary. Nature is pressured by centuries of exploitation. Way too many species are endangered. The climate crisis is no longer something we fear on the horizon, it has real consequences, as seen clearly on Borneo. In 2023, the weather phenomenon El Niño made headlines world-wide, and on Borneo, it made the annual forest fires more intense and unpredictable.

However, much is also being done to make the world better. We believe that our work, together with other key players, can provide hope during this time. We and our partners are making a tangible difference, and we will continue to do so.

In 2023, we developed a new five-year strategy in close collaboration with our partners on Borneo. Through this joint operation, we can best support local fieldwork and address the challenges our partners foresee in the years ahead. This includes releasing as many orangutans as possible to the wild and ensuring that those orangutans that cannot be released have a life as close to nature as possible. At the same time, we will continue to secure forest areas for both released and wild orangutans.

2023 marked a turning point for Save the Orangutan: we secured two major programs that will provide stable funding for the upcoming years. We have become a program organisation under the Danish organisation Civil Society in Development and have entered into an important partnership with Ørsted Nature-Based Solutions, partially funded by Danida's Green Business Partnership. Together, these programs will ensure important habitats for wild orangutans and sustainable development for local and indigenous peoples in forest areas. Such funding also creates better opportunities for long-term planning of initiatives and more stability for both our partners and our organisation.

There have also been great efforts in the rehabilitation program, and even this year, many orangutans regained their freedom. One in particular was especially meaningful to us: Cinta, who had been at Nyaru Menteng for nearly 11 years. Many of our supporters have closely followed her over the years and witnessing familiar orangutans starting a life in the forest is a wonderful experience every single time.

We have naturally also focused heavily on awareness-raising and engaging the public in the critical situation facing our close relatives, the orangutans.

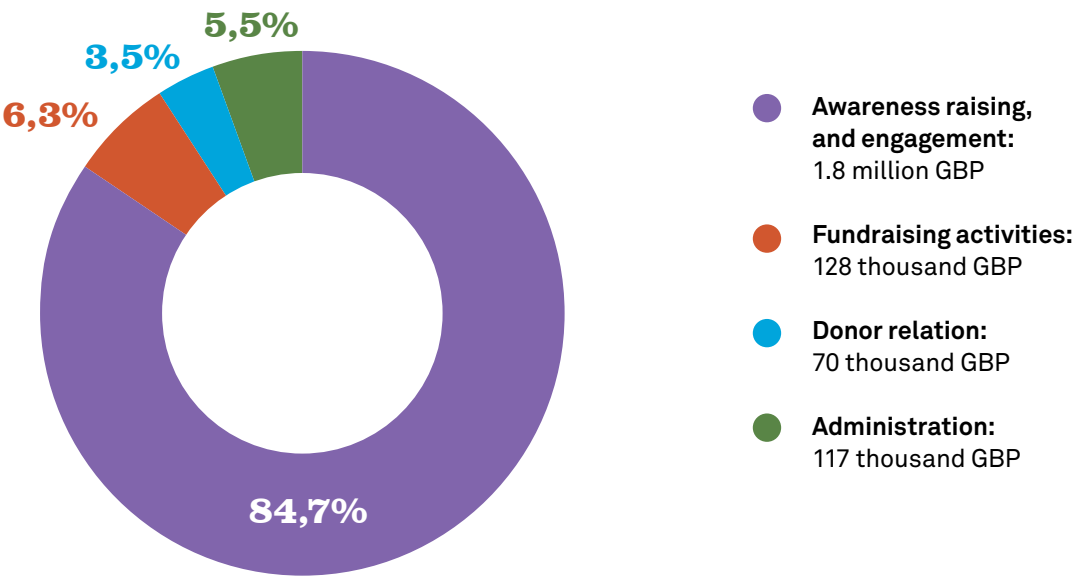
Everything we do is for the orangutans, the rainforest, and the people of Borneo. The results offer not just hope, but also a belief in what the future holds. This is only possible because of our collaboration with both local and international partners and the support we receive from businesses, foundations, and thousands of individuals. For this, we extend our heartfelt thanks - together we make a difference!



Kind regards  
*Marie Sigvardt*  
Marie Sigvardt  
Executive Director



Distribution of funds in 2023



**Funds raised**  
The three organisations under Save the Orangutan raised a total of 2.2 million GBP in 2023 from private donors, businesses, foundations, and institutional donors.  
  
Of this amount, 2.05 million GBP was raised in Denmark, 128 thousand GBP in Sweden, and 23 thousand GBP in England and Wales.

**Distribution of funds**  
In 2023, Save the Orangutan allocated 1.8 million GBP to program initiatives, awareness, and engagement, which represents 80.8% of the funds raised that year and 84.7% of the total funds spent. A total of 1.1 million GBP was directly transferred to our partners on Borneo.  
  
Save the Orangutan spent a total of 326 thousand GBP, equivalent to 15.3% of the funds used, on supporter services, administration, and fundraising activities. Administrative expenses accounted for 5.5% of the funds used in 2023. The total unrestricted equity for the organisations in Denmark, Sweden, and England & Wales increased by 105 thousand GBP in 2023.





# Our most popular orangutan was released

In 2023, 33 orangutans were released into the rainforest after a long rehabilitation process. Among them was the orangutan Cinta, whom many of our supporters have followed for nearly 11 years.

Significant progress continues to be made in the rehabilitation of orphaned orangutans. This vital work, which is close to our hearts, is made possible in large part by our many private supporters who have adopted an orangutan. Save the Orangutan remains the largest individual contributor to Nyaru Menteng – the world's largest orangutan rehabilitation centre. In 2023, we were able to send 641 thousand GBP to the centre. We also support the Samboja Lestari rehabilitation centre in East Kalimantan.

## Cinta began her new life

The year ended on a high note when our most popular adopted orangutan, Cinta, was released into the rainforest after nearly 11 years. Thousands of supporters have followed her journey over the years, and it was with great joy that we informed them that all those years of effort have truly paid off. Another prominent orangutan who gained her freedom in 2023 was Kejora. She was rescued from a life in captivity amid significant media attention in 2016. Now, she is finally back in the rainforest!



FOREST  
SCHOOL  
UPDATE

## Final phase of rehabilitation

Overall, we were able to share many good stories with our "adoptive parents" this year. In July, the orangutan Otong, who has many supporters in Save the Orangutan Sweden, arrived at the pre-release islands. The same happened for Jelapat and Taymur, both adopted orangutans, who joined the pre-release islands in December. Here, the orangutans live on an island that provides a confined natural environment where they can test their skills before their final release. In total, 22 orangutans were moved to a pre-release island in 2023.

## The forest school is moving

In 2023, the launch of a significant project began, which will continue into 2024: the Nyaru Menteng Rehabilitation Center is set to relocate. The area where the centre is currently located is owned by the authorities and will now be used for ecotourism. Our partner, the BOS Foundation (BOSF), believes it is in the best interest of the orangutans to move to a nearby natural area also managed by BOSF. At the new site, referred to as Nyaru Menteng 2, plans are underway to build new and improved facilities for the forest school students.

## New orphaned orangutans

Unfortunately, there is a continuous need to rescue and rehabilitate orangutans, and we have now made it possible to adopt a new orphaned orangutan, Iqo. In the forest school, she will receive the care and training she will need to one day experience freedom.

If you would like  
to adopt Iqo,  
you can read more here:  
[savetheorangutan.org.uk  
/adoption/](https://savetheorangutan.org.uk/adoption/)

## #ORANGUTANFREEDOM

533 ORANGUTANS RELEASED INTO  
THE RAINFOREST FROM 2012-2023

ORANGUTANS AT NYARU MENTENG  
REHABILITATION CENTRE

243 in rehabilitation  
54 in lifelong care  
1 newcomer and 2 newborns in 2023

ORANGUTANS AT SAMBOJA LESTARI  
REHABILITATION CENTRE

116 in rehabilitation  
74 in lifelong care  
1 newcomer in 2023



## Four highlights from our new strategy

We have developed a new strategy for the next five years in close collaboration with our Indonesian partners. Here are some key points from the strategy.

### 1. Together we are stronger

Through 20 years of collaboration with strong local partners, we have built up an incredible wealth of valuable experiences and results that can be shared to benefit even more orangutans. Therefore, we aim to work with even more stakeholders, on both Borneo and Sumatra, to exchange experiences and spread knowledge, enabling us and our local partners to protect even more orangutans.

### 2. We want to strengthen ourselves and our partners

Strong partnerships are essential for saving the orangutans. Hence why we have continuously focused on ensuring that our local partners are well-equipped for the vital work in the field. This remains a priority, but so does enhancing our own capacity. The stronger we are, together with our local partners, the more effective we become as a collective. Therefore, we are committed to consolidating and strengthening our knowledge and capacity, allowing us to better assist our local partners.

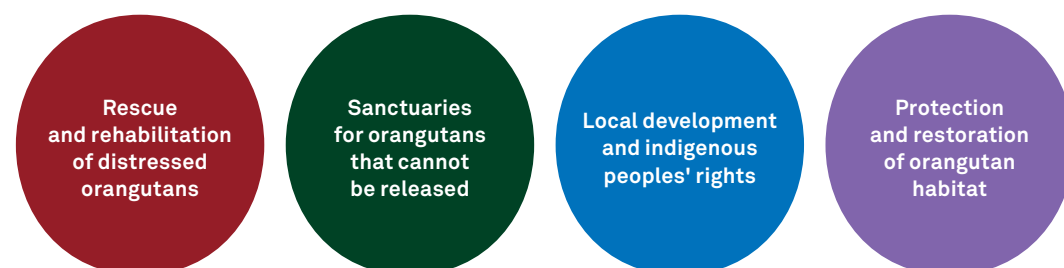
### 3. Greater focus on reintroduction areas

In the last 10 years, over 500 rehabilitated orangutans have been given a new chance for life in the rainforest. As a result, we have increasingly focused on reintroduction areas to ensure the protection of the released orangutans and their habitats. This focus will be further strengthened as more orangutans are released to the rainforest.

### 4. Greater engagement in the situation of the orangutan

Saving the orangutan requires a collective effort from many stakeholders, including knowledge sharing and commitment to address the threats to its survival. Together with our local partners, we aim to increase awareness about the orangutan and engage even more people in the vital work of its conservation, both in Indonesia and internationally.

Our work has four main focus areas



## Visit from BOS Foundation

In the spring, Save the Orangutan Denmark had a visit from our Indonesian partner, the BOS Foundation (BOSF). It was a busy visit filled with important meetings and workshops, lectures, and a seminar on forest conservation with like-minded NGOs.

### NGOs shared knowledge on forest conservation

Save the Orangutan hosted a networking seminar for several NGOs focused on forest conservation and improving living conditions for local forest communities. This led to some truly engaging presentations and valuable exchange of experiences regarding concrete methods to make a difference for nature worldwide – from Uganda to Borneo. Representatives from BOSF participated, and Andreas Arinda Anantha Kusuma from BOSF shared insights directly from the field.

### The audience visited Borneo

In the Cinematheque in Copenhagen, Save the Orangutan hosted a public event where supporters and other interested parties could engage in dialogue with us and BOSF. The highlight was an informative and entertaining lecture by BOSF CEO Dr. Jamartin Sihite, which included stunning video clips from the rainforest and rehabilitation centres. We had the pleasure of having a wonderfully engaged audience, who showed great enthusiasm and curiosity.



SOCIAL MEDIA

### Save the Orangutan on social media





## Program status provides four years of sustainability

Save the Orangutan has secured a program grant from the Danish Civil Society in Development (CISU). This means four years of guaranteed funding for our vital work in the rainforest, supporting local communities and wild orangutans on Borneo.

Since 2007, Save the Orangutan has implemented CISU-supported projects on Borneo, focusing on the rainforest, wild orangutans, and the development of local communities. This close collaboration and many successful outcomes led to our designation as a program organisation within the CISU framework in 2023. This status includes a grant of 1.8 million GBP over four years, providing stable funding that offers much greater security for our work in Borneo's rainforest.

### What does the program cover?

The new program, titled "Forest Guardians," encompasses all the areas on Borneo where we work with our partners, BOS Foundation and Yayasan Borneo Nature Indonesia. Thematically, the program covers a wide range of topics and seeks to scale up within the areas in which we and our partners have developed expertise over the years.

### This entails:

- Ensure the rights of indigenous peoples to the rainforest – benefiting both people and the forest.
- Conservation and restoration of damaged rainforest.
- Sustainable income sources for local communities.
- Inputs for political decision-making on Borneo regarding the frameworks for nature conservation and the rights of indigenous peoples.

## We are partnering with Ørsted

Save the Orangutan has entered into a significant strategic partnership with Ørsted Nature-Based Solutions. This project aims to address a critical challenge in working with indigenous peoples on Borneo: how to ensure they have a stable income that allows them to remain near the rainforest and manage it sustainably without resorting to deforestation.

Locals in peatland areas will receive support to protect and restore the forest, benefiting themselves, wildlife, and the climate. Through better protection of the forests, the project will generate carbon credits that local villages can sell to Ørsted. Not only does this provide income for the local community, but also secures vital orangutan habitat for many years to come. The project will commence in 2024 and will be funded by both Ørsted and the Danida Green Business Partnership program.

### How Do Locals Protect the Forests?

Our partner, BOS Foundation, and local authorities work together with the community on Borneo. Their efforts include:

- Patrolling the rainforest to reduce illegal logging and forest fires.
- Extinguishing forest fires.
- Replanting and restoring damaged orangutan habitat.
- Advocating for indigenous peoples' rights to forest areas.
- Ensuring that the local community has the necessary capacity to manage forest areas sustainably.
- Monitoring the status and progress of biodiversity in forest regions.





# When the forest is on fire

The weather phenomenon El Niño left its mark worldwide in 2023. On Borneo, El Niño caused drought conditions that intensified the wildfire season beyond its usual severity. Save the Orangutan's Indonesian partners have therefore made significant efforts, with our organisation's support, to prevent and extinguish these fires.

The devastation caused by wildfires is a recurring curse that has significant consequences for both wildlife and people in Indonesia each year. With climate change, extreme weather phenomena like El Niño are becoming more common, leading to an increase in the frequency and intensity of wildfires.

## Preparation for fires

Preventing wildfires is always a major focus for Save the Orangutan and our Indonesian partners, and we are continually improving our ability to anticipate and prepare for these fires. However, they remain a challenge, especially in 2023. To prepare, local communities have been blocking man-made channels that drain the soil to prevent it from getting flammable during hot and dry weather. They are also continually planting new trees in damaged areas. All of this helps make the forest floor more resilient, reducing the likelihood of uncontrollable fires.

## Focus on health issues

Satellite data has repeatedly shown that wildfires are the leading cause of deforestation in the areas where

we operate. The thick smoke from burning trees and peatlands poses serious health risks. Each year, many people are hospitalized with respiratory infections, which can, in severe cases, lead to fatalities. In 2023, we and our partners identified areas and villagers particularly vulnerable to fires. For example, this might include an elderly woman needing assistance to leave her home or a house situated in an area where water levels are low, increasing fire risk. With this knowledge, plans were made for how to respond in villages when fires approach.

## Firefighting

In our areas of operation, teams of locals patrol regions at high risk for fires, enabling them to extinguish flames as quickly as possible when they arise. When we and our local partner organisation prepare for fires, our work primarily focuses on equipping these local patrols with the best possible resources. They receive training, equipment, and access to water through boreholes and reservoirs for rapid response. Our efforts are coordinated with local authorities to ensure effective collaboration in firefighting efforts.



NEW  
RESEARCH  
STATION

## New research station to provide insights on orangutans

In the Rungan area of Central Kalimantan, home to over 3,000 wild orangutans, we, along with our partner Yayasan Borneo Nature Indonesia, have established a research station in the most biodiverse part of the region. Located deep within the forest, this station will be used by researchers and students who will contribute to a greater understanding of the importance of preserving this beautiful area. Knowledge about where orangutans live is crucial when advocating for better protection of these animals and their habitat.



# Sprouts of new forest



## Natural bags help more seedlings survive

New trees start as small seedlings, which are grown in local nurseries before being planted out. A couple of years ago, the small plastic bags used for the seedlings were replaced with natural bags made from the material purun . This change has proven to be not only better for the environment than plastic, but it also increases the survival rate of the seedlings by up to 20%. This means that fewer resources are needed to plant more trees!

**Orangutans need the rainforest. Destroyed forest areas mean destroyed habitats for orangutans and other species, which also impacts local communities and the climate. That's why we have focused on reforestation and the overall restoration of damaged forest areas on Borneo since 2015.**

We are replanting trees in two major areas on Borneo. One is Mawas, home to over 2,500 orangutans, where we, along with our Indonesian partner BOS Foundation, have been planting trees and restoring the forest since 2015. We are also collaborating with Yayasan Borneo Nature Indonesia in Sebangau, which is the second-largest orangutan habitat, hosting 6,500 red-haired inhabitants. Both areas feature peat swamp forests, which provide excellent habitat for orangutans.

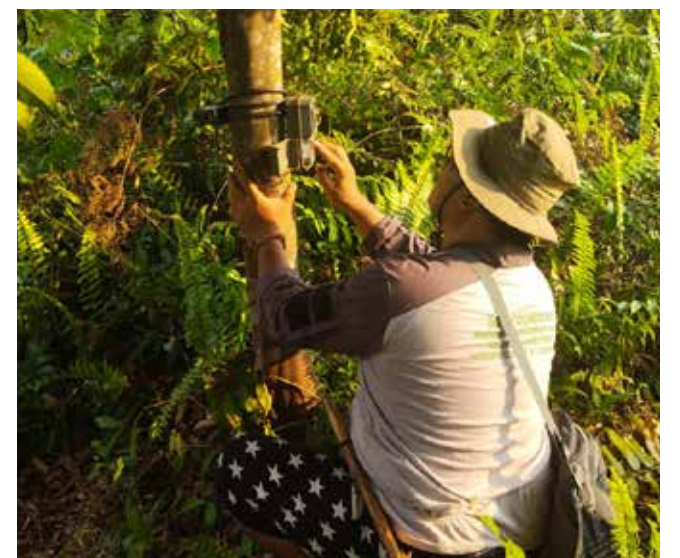
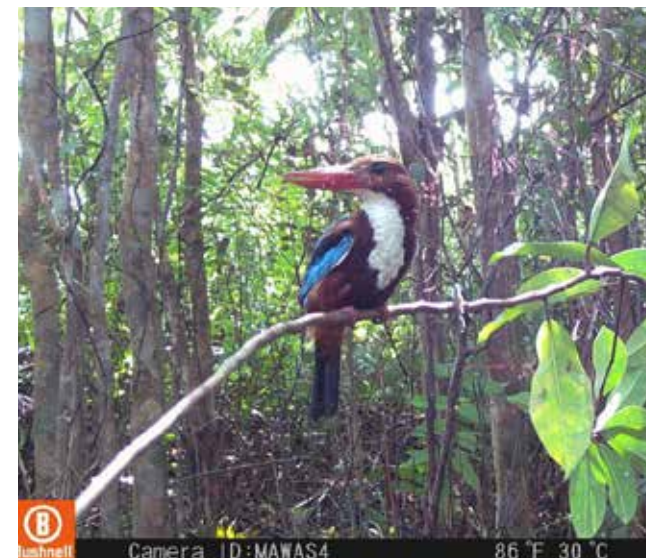
### Weather challenges for replanting areas

The Mawas area faced significant weather challenges in 2023. In April, flooding affected the region, submerging the newly planted trees. Then, in the fall, wildfires struck. Fires in a peat area like Mawas can be particularly difficult to extinguish because the flames move underground. However, we managed to protect the area effectively. Among other measures, five wells were dug to give firefighting teams access to water.

### Many years in Mawas give results

After nearly a decade of work in Mawas, we are now beginning to see the results of tree planting and the restoration of damaged forests. The trees have gradually formed a new forest in the areas that were replanted long ago. In June, our partners set up camera traps to observe whether the new forest attracts wildlife, and the initial results look promising. The early images show several bird species. We expect to see even more species in the new forest areas over the coming years.

**In 2023,  
we replanted  
nearly 42 hectares  
of orangutan habitat  
with almost  
41,000 trees.**







## The important role of the local community

All our work on Borneo is carried out in collaboration with local communities. Those who live close to the forest are key to the long-term protection of nature. Therefore, it is crucial that the community takes ownership of the initiatives, while we provide them with the framework to create change.

### Significant progress in the fight for rights

The rainforest is best protected when indigenous communities, who have lived by or in the forest for generations, hold the rights to it. However, securing these rights is a complex bureaucratic process that can take a long time. This makes it historic that 17 villages in the Rungan area, three of which we and our partner Yayasan Borneo Nature Indonesia have worked with, were granted rights to the forest. This ensures that local communities can remain in the forest and manage it sustainably.

### Space for local communities

Indonesia's new green capital will be located on Borneo, close to the Samboja Lestari nature reserve and its rehabilitation centre. The villages in the area are locked between this natural region and extensive mining operations, leaving them with limited land. Therefore, we, along with our partner BOS Foundation, have worked to create a "buffer zone" on the outskirts of Samboja Lestari, where locals can cultivate durian trees, pineapples, tomatoes, and other fruits and vegetables. Additionally, the natural area and rehabilitation centre have become more accessible to the locals, fostering a greater understanding of the nature and wonderful orangutans that are their neighbours.

### Unique local knowledge

The local communities on Borneo often possess unique knowledge about their specific areas. They understand what can be foraged from the rainforest, how to cultivate the land effectively, and are familiar with local medicinal plants. This knowledge can be instrumental in village development planning, and it has been documented across several villages in recent years. For instance, it can be utilized in landscape planning to identify orangutan habitats and natural resources that need protection.

### Teaching Borneo's children about climate

The children of Borneo are the future guardians of nature. It is crucial that they understand the environment and learn how to care for it effectively. Together with our local partners, we have worked to educate children in Borneo's villages about the impacts of climate change on their lives and the environment. The education has provided children with insights into why there have been increasing floods and longer droughts in recent years. They also learned what actions to take if they encounter an orangutan near their homes. The educational initiatives have yielded fantastic results, and there are now plans to expand the teaching materials throughout the whole district.







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