PROJECT REPORT Q1

January – March 2026

Sintang Orangutan Center

Becoming Nature's Friend: Nurturing Environmental Awareness from an Early Age at Jerora Forest School

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On January 22, 2026, Sintang Orangutan Center (SOC) conducted an environmental awareness activity themed "Becoming Nature's Friend" at Jerora Forest School. The event was attended by 10 students from SD Islam Raudhatu Ath-Thalibin Sintang, accompanied by four teachers. The activity was also supported by the Natural Resources Conservation Agency (BKSDA) of West Kalimantan as part of a collaborative effort to strengthen conservation education for the younger generation.

The event began with an educational session led by the BKSDA West Kalimantan team. During this session, participants were introduced to BKSDA's role and function in managing and protecting biological resources and their ecosystems. The students learned about various initiatives, ranging from the protection of endangered species and plants, monitoring the illegal wildlife trade, to efforts in preserving conservation areas. Through this session, students were encouraged to understand that protecting nature is a shared responsibility involving the government, conservation organizations, and the community

The next session was led by the SOC education team, focusing on the theme "Becoming Nature's Friend." In this presentation, participants were guided to understand the importance of forests as habitats for wildlife as well as crucial support systems for human life. Forests play a crucial role in maintaining ecosystem balance, storing water reserves, and providing a variety of natural resources. Students were also introduced to orangutans as a keystone species, playing an important role in seed dispersal and forest regeneration. In addition, the threats faced by orangutans in the wild were explained, including deforestation, forest fires, and human-wildlife conflict.

As part of experiential learning, the students were then invited to observe the orangutans in the rehabilitation center area while maintaining a safe distance. Through this activity, participants were able to witness orangutan behavior firsthand and gain a better understanding of ongoing conservation efforts. This experience served as an important moment to foster emotional connection and awareness of the importance of preserving orangutan natural habitats.

The activity continued with a tree-planting session at Jerora Forest School. Participants, together with their teachers, planted local fruit tree seedlings that have ecological value and the potential to serve as future food sources for wildlife. Beyond providing hands-on experience, this activity also symbolized a shared commitment to protecting and restoring the environment.

Throughout the activity, participants showed high enthusiasm, reflected in the questions and discussions about orangutan life, forest functions, and simple steps that can be taken to protect the environment. This interactive educational approach is expected to instill the understanding that protecting nature is not just the responsibility of certain parties, but a shared responsibility.

Through the “Becoming Nature’s Friend” program, SOC hopes to instill values of environmental awareness and wildlife conservation from an early age. In this way, the participating students are expected to grow into a generation that is more environmentally conscious and actively contributes to the preservation of forests and wildlife in the future.


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Final Stage Towards Release: Health Check of Orangutan Candidates at Jerora Forest School

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As part of the final evaluation of release readiness, the medical team, behavior team, and animal keepers of Sintang Orangutan Center (SOC) conducted a series of final health checks on five orangutans at Jerora Forest School. The individuals assessed were Sinta (female, 13 years) with her daughter Sabine (2 years), Jamilah (female, 25 years) with her son Ulin (1 year), and Benazir (female, 14 years).

The health assessments took place on February 18, 2026, aiming to ensure the physical condition, health status, and readiness of each orangutan for independent life in their natural habitat. Each individual underwent a thorough examination, which included blood sampling for haematology and biochemistry analyses, as well as screening for key infectious diseases such as tuberculosis (TB), Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), and hepatitis B. These preventive measures are a crucial part of the rehabilitation process, ensuring that released individuals do not carry diseases that could endanger wild orangutan populations.

Based on the results, all five orangutans were found to be in good and stable health. Following the medical procedures, Sinta and Sabine, Jamilah and Ulin, and Benazir were placed in isolation enclosures for a period of post-procedure observation. This isolation phase is intended to monitor their recovery and ensure no complications arise before release.

These five individuals are scheduled as the next release candidates, planned for April 28–30, 2026, pending the issuance of a recommendation letter from the Director General of Natural Resources and Ecosystem Conservation (KSDAE).

In general, the adult orangutans—Sinta, Jamilah, and Benazir—have demonstrated strong release readiness according to key indicators. All three can recognize more than 20 types of natural food, actively perform arboreal locomotion, and independently build nests. These skills are essential for orangutans to survive in the wild.

Meanwhile, Sabine and Ulin, both under six years old, have not yet reached the minimum age for independent release. However, following rehabilitation protocols, young orangutans can be released together with their mothers. In this scenario, Sabine and Ulin will remain under their mothers' care, allowing them to continue learning essential survival skills naturally in the wild.

The maternal behaviors exhibited by Sinta and Jamilah are also a critical factor in this process. Both mothers actively guide their children in exploring, foraging for natural food, and selecting safe resting sites. This natural learning process forms a vital foundation for Sabine's and Ulin's future development.

With good health and behavioral development indicating readiness for life in the wild, Sinta, Sabine, Jamilah, Ulin, and Benazir are expected to enter the final stage of their rehabilitation—the return to their natural habitat. This release represents an important step in conserving wild orangutan populations and reflects SOC's ongoing commitment to ensuring the long-term survival of this species.

New Structural Enrichment Installation in Matuari's Nursery Enclosure

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In an effort to enhance animal welfare, the team at Jerora Forest School continues to develop various forms of enrichment tailored to the needs of each individual orangutan. In the indoor cages, the facilities typically consist of hammocks made from fire hoses and hanging drums that serve as play and activity media.

However, a different approach has been applied for Matuari. Matuari is a 19-year-old adult male orangutan categorized as unreleasable. He was rescued from human care at around six years old. This background, combined with his strong temperament, prevented him from participating in the forest school program—a critical stage in the orangutan release evaluation process. In addition, the physical condition of a disability in one of his hands increases the risk if he is released into the wild.

Considering his character and specific needs, the animal keeper team added a structural enrichment to Matuari's enclosure. A pipe was installed on the outside of the enclosure bars and used as an enrichment device, with food items such as sunflower seeds and honey placed inside. This design aims to stimulate cognitive abilities, particularly problem-solving skills and tool use.

On the first day of the installation, Matuari showed a high level of curiosity. He attempted to retrieve the sunflower seeds from the pipe using a long bean, but the attempt was ineffective and made it difficult for him to reach the food. This process became an important part of his learning. Over time, Matuari realized that the tool needed adjustment. He then switched to using a stick, which proved more effective in reaching the contents of the pipe. Now, Matuari appears more skilled and comfortable using the stick as a tool to obtain the enrichment.

In addition to his progress with tool use, Matuari is also known for a unique habit in maintaining the cleanliness of his enclosure. Every afternoon, when given leaves as nesting material, he throws the leaves through the gaps in the floor. This behavior reflects his preference for a clean and minimally disturbed environment.

The addition of structural enrichment represents an individualized approach to orangutan care, particularly for individuals like Matuari who cannot participate fully in the rehabilitation program. Through appropriate stimulation, Matuari is expected to continue expressing his natural behaviors while maintaining an optimal quality of life within his indoor enclosure.

Routine Maintenance to Support Rehabilitation at Jerora Forest School

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Routine maintenance activities at Jerora Forest School, covering both Forest School One and Forest School Two, play a crucial role in supporting the ongoing rehabilitation of orangutans. Each week, staff consistently carry out various maintenance tasks, such as clearing forest trails, repairing natural learning facilities, ensuring the safety of the area, and maintaining the environment to support orangutan activities.

This maintenance work focuses not only on the physical aspects of the environment but also on creating a safe and comfortable learning space where orangutans can practice their natural skills, such as climbing, foraging, and socializing. By keeping the environment well-maintained, potential disturbances or hazards are minimized, allowing the learning process in the forest school to proceed more effectively.

In addition to caring for the forest school areas, the team regularly performs maintenance on the indoor enclosures. These activities include checking the structural strength of the enclosures, repairing damaged parts, and repainting cages that show signs of wear. Repainting helps protect the enclosure materials from weathering while ensuring that the enclosures remain safe, comfortable, and suitable for the orangutans housed within them.

The benefits of this routine maintenance are significant, both for the orangutans and for the smooth operation of the forest school. Orangutans enjoy a semi-natural environment that supports the development of their natural behaviors, while staff can work more efficiently in guiding the rehabilitation process.

Looking ahead, it is hoped that these maintenance activities will continue consistently and see further improvements in quality. This ensures that Jerora Forest School remains an ideal place for orangutans to relearn essential skills for life in the wild, preparing them for eventual release. Furthermore, proper and ongoing maintenance is key to maintaining the stability and smooth operation of all activities at the forest school, supporting the long-term conservation mission.


Sintang
Orangutan

Orangutan Evacuation and Relocation Efforts in Hovat Hamlet

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On February 15, 2026, SOC's Monitoring Team at Basecamp Mentibat received a report from residents of Hovat Hamlet regarding the presence of an orangutan in their farmland. In response, the team immediately proceeded to the site for field verification. After confirming the orangutan's presence, the information was forwarded to the team in Sintang as part of coordinated follow-up actions.

Considering the potential for negative interactions between humans and the orangutan, the team decided to carry out an immediate evacuation. The evacuation process took more than an hour due to the orangutan's agile movements and indications that it was accustomed to anesthesia equipment, requiring extra caution from the team. Despite these challenges, the evacuation was successfully completed safely in the early afternoon.

Following the evacuation, the team conducted an initial health assessment and identification using an ID chip reader. However, no ID chip was detected in the individual. Based on this finding, the team suspected that the previously implanted ID chip was either damaged or could not be detected.

The relocation process commenced as soon as the orangutan was confirmed to be stable post-anesthesia. The relocation team departed from Basecamp Mentibat at 10:36 AM. and arrived at the release site in Logat at 11:30 AM. The approximately 7-kilometer distance from the original location was considered sufficient to minimize the likelihood of the orangutan returning to the farmland.

During the operation, the team faced challenges due to low river water levels, which limited access to upstream areas. Nevertheless, with careful planning and effective coordination, the relocation proceeded smoothly, and the orangutan was successfully released at the designated site.

After completing the entire process, the Relocation Team returned to Basecamp Mentibat. This activity is a critical part of efforts to mitigate interactions between humans and orangutans, ensuring the safety of both. Rapid response efforts like this also demonstrate SOC's commitment to sustaining orangutan conservation in their natural habitat.

Phenology Monitoring as a Basis for Determining Orangutan Release Timing

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In February 2026, the SOC's Monitoring Team conducted phenology observations at two orangutan release sites, Rongun and Jepala Lala, located within Betung Kerihun National Park. This activity aimed to understand the dynamics of fruiting seasons in the natural habitat, which serves as a crucial basis for determining the most suitable timing for orangutan releases.

The observations were carried out by establishing phenology plots at each site. Each plot measured 20 x 20 meters and contained identified food trees, which were labelled with their local names and assigned specific codes. This approach allows the team to monitor periodic changes in plant growth phases, from mature leaves, young shoots, flowering, to fruit formation.

Based on the observations during this period, most trees were still in the mature leaf phase. However, some individual trees had begun to show young leaf shoots, flowering, and early fruit formation. These conditions indicate that the availability of natural food for orangutans is still at the early stage leading into the fruiting season.

Phenology monitoring plays a vital role in supporting the success of orangutan rehabilitation and release programs. Information about fruiting patterns enables the team to determine a more precise release timing, increasing the orangutans' chances of adapting and surviving in the wild. Additionally, phenology data provides insights into the overall condition of the forest ecosystem.

Moving forward, this activity is expected to be conducted consistently and sustainably to generate more accurate long-term data. As a result, orangutan releases can be planned and implemented more effectively, while also contributing to the conservation of their natural habitat and maintaining the balance of the forest ecosystem.

ABOUT
SINTANG ORANGUTAN CENTER

The Sintang Orangutan Center (SOC) is a local environmental NGO that colaborate with the Indonesian government to rescue, rehabilitate and release orangutans back into the wild.

In addition to the orangutan work, SOC also provides awareness and education programs for local people to reduce deforestation by providing sustainable agricultural alternatives, stop illegal poaching and the keeping of illegal pets like orangutans. SOC is located in Sintang, West Kalimantan, an Indonesian province on the island of Borneo.

SOC's rehabilitation program aim is to rehabilitate orangutans and provide them with the survival skills to prepare them for release back to the wild. After a series of medical health examinations healthy orangutans are transferred to the socialization groups where they can learn together with friends. The final stage before release is a training period in a so-called forest school which is a fenced in intact rainforest.

We work under an official agreement with the Forestry Ministry Department. So far we have rescued and taken care of more than 50 orangutans since 2010. Orangutans were rescued from illegal wildlife trade, or confiscated from people who kept them as pets. We also collaborated in rescue orangutan victims of conflict with local people.

We release orangutans in a special part of the Betung Kerihun National Park.

Sintang Orangutan Center

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