

**Peoples' Trust for Endangered Species**  
**Interim report 3 (October 2013 – February 2014)**

- **Project title**  
Human Orangutan Conflict Response Unit (HOCRU)
- **Project head**  
Panut Hadisiswoyo
- **Institute**  
Orangutan Information Centre
- **Country project is based in**  
Indonesia
- **Project start and end date**  
June 2012-July 2014
- **Date of report**  
March 2014
- **Species/ habitat**  
Sumatran orangutan (*Pongo abelii*)
- **IUCN conservation action/ research action being undertaken AND/ OR UK BAP target addressing**

The current IUCN Red List entry for the Sumatran orangutan (<http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/full/39780/0>) appears to be outdated, and does not include any information specific to managing human-orangutan conflict. However, the Indonesian government's National Action Plan 2007-2017 for the orangutan considers human-orangutan conflict to be a priority area for intervention<sup>1</sup>, with in addition several other government policies also referring to the need to address the problem of conflict, including the 2004 North Sumatra decree (No.522.51/2235.K), and the Indonesian Ministry of Forestry 2008 decree (Regulation No.48).

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<sup>1</sup>Soehartono, T., Djoko Susilo, H., Andayani, N., Utami-Atmoko, S. S., Sihite, J., Saleh, C., & Sutrisno, A. (2009). *Orangutan Indonesia: Conservation Strategies and Action Plan 2007-2017*.

- **What activities have you undertaken to date**

*Rescues*

In late September 2013, we received a report of an orangutan mother-baby pair being isolated in a small forest patch located inside a palm oil concession owned by PT. Mestika Prima Lestari Indah (MPLI) in Aceh Tamiang. The workers that were clearing the forest area inside the concession for development said that the orangutans had been isolated in the small forest patch for a week, and there was not enough food for them to survive. They also admitted to having attempted to capture the ~2 year old male infant for sale into the pet trade. On 28 September 2013, the HOCRU team arrived and on 30



Figure 1 The mother and infant from MPLI in transit to the translocation site

September 2013, with the assistance of Forest Nature and Environment of Aceh (HAKA foundation) and the Acehese Natural Resources Conservation Agency (BKSDA Aceh), managed to safely bring down and relocate the orangutans into protected forest in the Leuser Ecosystem near Tenggulon village, Aceh Tamiang.



Figure 2 HOCRU inspecting the female orangutan in the field

On 1 October 2013, we received a report from the local community of an orangutan isolated in the farmlands of Kilang Alay, Langkat district, North Sumatra. After confirming the presence of an adult female ~24 year old, on this same day together with BKSDA North Sumatra the team decided to evacuate and translocate the orangutan. This evacuation was relatively quick because the orangutan was traveling among the lower ends of the tree canopy. Soon after being tranquilised, the net was set and the orangutan was brought down safely. After a thorough health check, the HOCRU

team immediately transported her to the GLNP forest adjacent to our forest restoration site in Besitang and released her.

From 4 to 7 October, together with staff from the Sumatran Orangutan Conservation Programme (SOCP), HOCRU veterinarian Dr. Ricko escorted 3 orangutans from the quarantine centre to the orangutan reintroduction programme at Bukit Tigapuluh National Park, Jambi. Of the three orangutans scheduled to be reintroduced, one was an individual that the HOCRU team had evacuated from an isolated community farm in July 2013.

On 7 October, OIC Founding Director Panut Hadisiswoyo was involved in a dramatic rescue of a young female orangutan that was spotted on a becak (motorized rickshaw) in the streets of Medan, the capital of North Sumatra. The driver refused to surrender the orangutan to our custody, which resulted in Panut jumping onto the vehicle and telling him to pull over and stop, with the driver still refusing whilst issuing threats. Fortunately, the becak broke down, forcing him to stop, with Panut remaining with them until suddenly another person arrived and took the orangutan by motorbike to an unknown location. After remaining with the original



Figure 3 The orangutan being transported via becak through Medan, the capital of North Sumatra

perpetrator for another 15 minutes, the BKSDA wildlife protection authorities that we had alerted arrived on the scene, and an interrogation began unto the whereabouts of the orangutan. The man admitted that the orangutan 'belonged' to his employer, and the authorities then forced him to bring us to that location, where we found a vacant house. After forcing him to continue trying to call his employer, we eventually found that the orangutan had been moved to another house owned by the family, located approximately 100m from the first house. There we encountered the orangutan, and with the government authorities we immediately confiscated and evacuated the orangutan to the SOCP quarantine centre. Until now we are still

attempting to have the 'owner' prosecuted for having illegally held a protected, critically endangered species.

On 21 October 2013, the HOCRU team rescued a ~30 year old female orangutan isolated in a rubber plantation near Paya Tusam village, Wampu subdistrict of Langkat. This location was approximately 3km from Sejagat village, where we had also recently rescued an adult male orangutan named Jagat. The following day the HOCRU team released the orangutan, named Putri, into the GLNP forest near the main OIC restoration site in Besitang.



Figure 4 The joint rescue team from OIC and SOCP confiscating an orangutan in Nias Island

On 23 October 2013, HOCRU together with staff from SOCP and BKSDA North Sumatra travelled across Sumatra and thereafter by boat to Gunung Sitoli, Nias Island, to confiscate an ~8 year old female orangutan that was being held by a Catholic church foundation. The priest told that the orangutan was brought to the island as a gift to the foundation, which

also manages a miniature sort of zoo. The owner of this foundation agreed to surrender the orangutan after the OIC reported the case to BKSDA, so she was then brought to the SOCP quarantine.

While some of the HOCRU team was in Gunung Sitoli, on the same date, the remaining HOCRU team members on the Sumatra mainland made a joint effort with SOCP staff to evacuate a large ~40 year old male orangutan which was caught by a local community in Mane, Aceh. The team made the 14-hour drive from Medan to find a chained, injured orangutan, which the



Figure 5 The conditions under which the male orangutan was being held in Mane, before being picked up by the HOCRU team



local people had brought down from a tree by cutting it down with the orangutan still in it. There was clear evidence that the orangutan had also been beaten, so the team made a rapid effort to evacuate the orangutan and bring him to the safety of the SOCP quarantine centre. However, the orangutan had suffered too harshly at the hands of the local community, and unfortunately died in transit. Based on post mortem examination, the orangutan died due to internal bleeding.

We received a report on 7 November 2013 that the orangutan that was being held at



Figure 6 Manohara's living conditions under captivity

the BKSDA office in Banda Aceh since the HOCRU team had arranged for his rescue in August 2013, had fallen ill with a respiratory condition. The HOCRU team was thus called in to evacuate the orangutan, named Manohara, along with an additional ~8 year old female orangutan called Monic that the BKSDA had confiscated on their own two months previously. Together with staff from the SOCP, on 9 November 2013 the team traveled to Banda Aceh to pick up the pair and transport them to the quarantine centre at Batu Mbelin.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of November we received a report from the BKSDA North Sumatra of an injured orangutan in a salak fruit plantation in Sugi Tonga village, Tapanuli Selatan – not far from the Batang Toru research site and wild orangutan population. We were told that the orangutan was in critical condition, with many wounds in need of immediate medical attention. Thus together with staff from the SOCP, we made the 12-hour drive to the region from Medan. On arrival the ~24 year old male orangutan was found approximately 6



Figure 7 The rescue scene in Tapanuli Selatan

meters up a tree, and after being brought down by tranquiliser, was found to have 4

cm lacerations to the head, 7cm wounds on the back, and multiple other wounds to the body. It was estimated that the wounds were inflicted up to 2 weeks previously, with the orangutan appearing to be in a very weak state. Due to the serious nature of the wounds, a drip infusion was started with emergency first aid treatment, with after a brief monitoring period the orangutan determined stable enough to be evacuated back to the SOCP quarantine and care centre. Unfortunately, the orangutan was unable to recover from the injuries received at the hands of unknown and unpunished perpetrators, and ultimately he succumbed soon after arriving at quarantine.

In late December 2013 the team received a report from the community in Ujung Pandang, Bakongan sub district, South Aceh, of orangutans found consuming young oil palm trees from their plantations. Initially we tried to instruct the GLNP and KSDA officials on tactics we have used to push/scare orangutans back into the forest, but due to growing concerns of the community and in order to avoid the possibility of danger to the orangutan(s), the team decided to travel to the region to investigate themselves. Thus on 4 January HOCRU arrived and found a population consisting



Figure 8 Carrying the sedated orangutan out of Bakongan

of 2 adult females with 2 accompanying offspring and 1 adult male, all taking refuge in a ~5 hectare forest fragment located near the GLNP border. This fragment is also destined to be cleared and converted to oil palm, so that ultimately the entire population will have to be shifted as they will soon no longer have any sort of refuge to live in. The

community had said that there were up to ten orangutans in the area, with the lone ~30 year old 80kg adult male being the individual that caused the most problems in terms of conflict. The team thus decided to first intervene on his behalf, and on the 5<sup>th</sup> of January managed to tranquilise him and conduct a medical examination on him. He was found to be in good health, so that with the support and authorization of the KSDA and GLNP authorities, he was transported to the protected forest area

adjacent to the Suaq Balimbing orangutan research station, with the aid of SOCP staff and infrastructure. HOCRU has added the site to its list of populations in need of monitoring and intervention – and shall return soon to check on the remaining orangutans.

### *Apprentices*

We have hired one new member of staff for the HOCRU team, Joko Supriyanto. Joko had previously apprenticed with the team, and after a three-month trial period it was decided to bring him on full-time. Thus along with the veterinarian and team leader, Dr Ricko, there are now five full-time staff on the HOCRU team.

### *Field Surveys*

On a monitoring mission for isolated populations in Tualang Kepang on 2 December, the team encountered the corpse of an adult male orangutan in the farmlands. The orangutan was estimated to have died a few days previously, due to unknown causes. HOCRU was requested by the government authorities to bury the orangutan on-site.



Figure 9 The deceased orangutan upon being encountered in Tualang Kepang

In January 2014, two students from the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology joined the HOCRU team in performing monthly assessments and

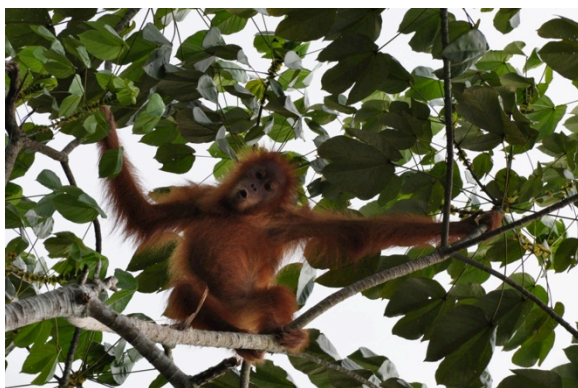


Figure 10 The young male orangutan found ranging through the OIC forest restoration site

monitoring missions of isolated orangutans. In the Kilang Alay (Sampan Getek) region they encountered a young female orangutan, believed to be the offspring of Gober, an orangutan formerly evacuated from the area in 2009 due to her having severe cataracts, who later went on to give birth to twins at the SOCP

centre, where they all remain to this day. Later the HOCRU team also encountered a young male orangutan along one of the new transect lines in our main forest restoration site at Besitang, where we have until now also conducted 20 translocations from rescue missions. The orangutan was thought to be one of those rescued in February 2012 from the nearby oil palm plantation PT Sisirau, and released by the HOCRU team into the Gunung Leuser National Park forest at Besitang. Then in February we once again returned to Kilang Alay, and on this occasion found a female orangutan ranging in a rubber plantation. Along with this, we also received a report of there being an additional 3 orangutans in the area, so that we will continue to monitor and report on this population to ensure their safety.

Based on a report of orangutan sightings from the local community in Bakongan, south Aceh province, the HOCRU team in March returned to a small forest patch at the site then being cleared for oil palm development. However, the team did not find any orangutans during the visit, with the logic being that due to there still being connectivity with the adjacent GLNP forest, that any individuals could be moving back and forth between these areas.

### *Workshop*

Two members of the HOCRU team were invited to participate in a human orangutan conflict workshop in East Kalimantan on 11 December 2013. The workshop was sponsored by Indianapolis Zoo and the Kutai National Park Authority, with attendees including staff from various



NGOs and government organisations. At the meeting the HOCRU team was able to discuss their experience in Sumatra and present data on the cases encountered therein.



## Community Education



Figure 12 Teaching the local community to employ bamboo noise cannons

In addition to on each rescue or survey mission there being an education component from the team, the team also made specific awareness raising visits to several villages prone to incidents of conflict. These included Tanjung Putus, Soelkam, Kaperas, Batu Gajah and Sei Litur, all in the Langkat district of North Sumatra. Here in addition to

speaking on the relevant issues, we also trained 315 farmers on conflict mitigation methods, and in total distributed 500 human orangutan conflict themed posters, socializing the hotline number on which people can report any instances of conflict and get further information regarding conflict issues. Then in mid-February HOCRU returned to the above mentioned December rescue site of Bakongan to conduct mitigation training and speak about conflict issues with the local community. Here the team also and distributed an additional 200 throughout the area, so as to maximize coverage of the hotline.



Figure 13 HOCRU distributing conflict mitigation posters in Aceh

- **Are you on target – e.g. achieving sample size, reaching target audience?**

Yes

- **Have you achieved any outcomes to date? What are they? E.g. produced survey booklet, radio-tagged six animals, arranged three community workshops**

In this project period we have directed the rescue of 10 orangutans, with the HOCRU team since January 2012 having been involved in the rescue and evacuation of a

total of 44 orangutans. Of these, 20 have already been released into the GLNP area adjacent to our restoration site, 3 have been released in protected forest in the Aceh province, 3 have been released into the Jantho Reintroduction programme, 2 have been released into Bukit Tiga Puluh reintroduction programme, and the remaining 13 are still being cared for in the SOCP quarantine centre. Most unfortunately, 3 orangutans have died either in transit, or soon after, due to injuries sustained from unknown assailants before being rescued, or due to malnutrition and parasite infestations as a result of having been held in previous poor conditions of captivity and treatment.

- **Is your project on target to achieve the sustainable measures outlined in your application?**

Yes

- **Please indicate if the income or expenditure for your project differs significantly from that stated in your original application.**

Thus far we are operating within the project budget, with no items over their original estimated cost.

- **Have you started disseminating any results – e.g. giving talks, preparing papers, producing management guidelines, submitting evidence to change government policy, getting media interest?**

The veterinarian and team leader of the HOCRU programme, Ricko Jaya, in February traveled to Jersey Zoo in the UK, to attend the 12 week Durrell Endangered Species Management Graduate Certificate (DESMAN) training course, affiliated with the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust and the University of Kent. Here Dr Ricko will be studying to improve the management and scope of the HOCRU programme, with a subsequent speaking tour also planned throughout Britain to discuss the programme with the public. During this time, the HOCRU team is receiving voluntary assistance from another skilled Indonesian veterinarian in the region, with as always the veterinary team from the SOCP also being available on an as-needed basis.

Furthermore the founding director of the OIC, Panut Hadisiswoyo, is scheduled to present a talk on the HOCRU programme, entitled 'Addressing human-orangutan conflict in plantation landscape in Sumatra', at the bi-annual International Primatological Society Congress, this year being held in August in Hanoi, Vietnam.



Figure 14 A translocated adult female orangutan encountered at our main forest restoration site in Besitang