

The Orangutan Tropical Peatland Project

"Working to Protect the Sabangau Peat-swamp Forest since 1999"



2012 Request for Volunteers

Thank you for your interest in the Orangutan Tropical Peatland Project. This contains background information about our project and the research we will be carrying out during summer 2012. The accompanying application pack contains more information you will need to participate on our project.

Who are we?

The Orangutan Tropical Peatland Project works to protect one of the most important areas of tropical rainforest in Borneo - the Sabangau Forest in Central Kalimantan, Indonesia. We monitor the distribution, population status, behaviour and ecology of the forest's flagship ape species, the endangered orang-utans (*Pongo pygmaeus*) and agile gibbons (*Hylobates albibarbis*). We also carry out vital biodiversity and forestry research, provide scientific feedback to conservation managers, and work with our local partners to implement successful conservation programmes.

Our earliest work identified the Sabangau forest as home to the largest orangutan population remaining in Borneo – 12% of the total world population - thus bringing the region to the forefront of orangutan conservation efforts. This resulted in the forest becoming a National Park in 2004. We work in partnership with Indonesian NGO *the Centre for International Cooperation for Sustainable Management of Tropical Peatland* (CIMTROP) based at the University of Palangkaraya, Indonesia. Through this partnership we support and empower Indonesian conservationists and their local conservation efforts by implementing or funding a number of community-led conservation activities, including a Forest Patrol Unit, Fire-fighting Team, and programmes of environmental education, developing local livelihoods and habitat restoration. As a direct result of these programmes we successfully helped to put an end to illegal logging in 2005 and we continue to dam illegal logging extraction canals and drainage channels.

Our research and volunteer programme has been running since 2001 and is a focus for local conservation efforts, providing much-needed employment and financial benefits for the local community and replacing illegal logging as the main activity and source of income in the northern Sabangau Forest.

Why we need you

We need volunteers to help us collect vital research data for conservation. We have a long-term on-going programme of research in which we monitor: orangutan and gibbon density; forest biodiversity; habitat structure, productivity, regeneration and disturbance. We have satellite monitoring stations throughout the national park from which we collect these data annually in order to assess trends in the condition of the forest and its wildlife. This is a large amount of data and we couldn't collect it all without the involvement of volunteer researchers.

We use these results to provide feedback on the state of the habitat, report on problems and assess the effectiveness or otherwise of conservation programmes. We need intelligent, fit, enthusiastic individuals to join our team and help us collect these vital data.

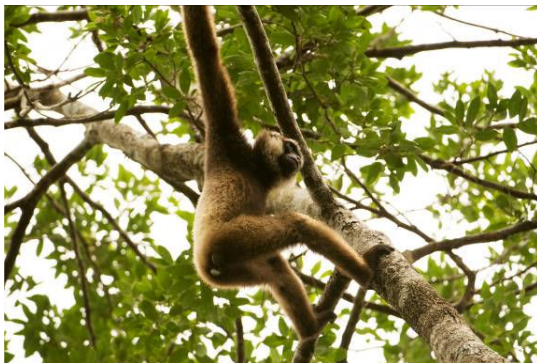
We can offer you a challenging seven week program of field research with opportunities to undertake your own research project, together with visits to the BOS Nyaru Menteng Orangutan Reintroduction Project and Tanjung Puting National Park. We provide you with training in field methods, a window into a career as a conservation biologist and, hopefully, an unforgettable experience! Many of our past volunteers now work in conservation or related fields.



Where you will be volunteering

The Sabangau River is a minor blackwater river in southern Borneo, in the Indonesian province of Central Kalimantan. The Sabangau forest covers an area of some 580,000 hectares of peat-swamp forest, the largest single area of lowland rainforest remaining in Kalimantan. Peat-swamp forest is a little-known, relatively inaccessible habitat, yet remarkably diverse and home to over 30% of the remaining population of wild orang-utans in Borneo. Peat formed here under waterlogged conditions through the incomplete breakdown of organic matter – dead leaves, branches and trees – and this has built up over many thousands of years to form a thick peat layer up to 18m deep in places. Standing atop the peat is a rich tropical rainforest, with a huge diversity of plant life, including large timber trees such as Ramin and swamp Meranti, a wide variety of pitcher plants and sustainable commercial species such as rattan and rubber trees. Nine species of primate including the orang-utan, agile gibbon, red langur, slow loris and pig-tailed macaque are found here; other notable animal life includes the sun-bear, bearded pig, clouded leopard, sambar deer, civets, treeshrews, water monitors, pythons, over 200 species of bird including the rhinoceros hornbill, Asian paradise flycatcher, Wallace's hawk eagle and the endemic Bornean bristlehead; and a large and diverse invertebrate community.

Our base camp is the Setia Alam Field Station, sited just inside the edge of the forest approximately 1 hour by car, boat and small train from the provincial capital of Palangkaraya. Facilities here are basic but comfortable, including accommodation in purpose-built dormitory huts, washing and toilet facilities, office and laboratory, kitchen, drinking water, generator, radio, security guard and cooks. We have a network of trails and permanent study plots inside the forest, and also carry out research at a number of satellite camps in the heart of the jungle where we camp in basic huts for up to a week at a time.



What will you be doing

We run two expeditions lasting seven weeks each which run between July and November. This is the dry season and the best time for carrying out research – although tropical downpours still occur from time-to-time. We require volunteers to assist on most parts of the project, for a minimum period of seven weeks with us. The team will initially work from base camp, beginning the research whilst acclimatising to the conditions and receiving training on research methods. Later on we will visit some of the remote field stations where we will camp in basic huts, sleeping under canvas, washing in the river and working during the day.

We have three main areas of research:

1) **Monitoring habitat condition and status of biodiversity.** For this we survey orangutans by counting their nests, gibbons by triangulating their morning calls and carry out line transect surveys of other primate species. We survey butterfly and bird diversity and density in areas of differing logging disturbance. We measure trees in permanent habitat plots to monitor changes in forest structure at each of our monitoring stations.

2) **Assessing long-term regeneration, succession and productivity processes in forest subject to different disturbances** including selective logging, fire, natural gaps and canal construction. We have a large number of plots in which we measure elements of tree size, health and productivity and seedling and sapling density, growth and survival.

3) **Studies of orangutan, gibbon and red langur behavioural ecology.** We follow habituated individuals of these species in order to better understand their behaviour, social interactions, food competition and ability to live in a disturbed forest. Although this does not form part of the volunteer programme, if the conditions are suitable we do offer the opportunity to spend a day or two following orangutans, gibbons and red langurs with our behaviour research team.



Conditions can be harsh in peat swamp forest – it is typically hot and humid, with difficult terrain. It is therefore extremely important that all members of the team are physically and mentally fit. Each research project will be coordinated by a separate OuTrop staff leader, who will provide full training for members of his/her team. Volunteers will get the opportunity to spend time on each of the projects running during the season. The success of the expedition relies on all members of the team helping out in all aspects of the project, from carrying out research to maintaining transects, from shopping for supplies in Palangkaraya to collecting and purifying water at remote field sites. A flexible, relaxed attitude, adaptability to unexpected changes and willingness to live in close proximity with others are essential.

In addition to the research work, visits will be organised to the nearby Nyaru Menteng Orang-utan Reintroduction Centre (as featured in the BBC Orangutan Diaries) where we will see orphaned orangutans being trained for release into the forest, and older orangutans already released onto the beautiful Pulau Kaja island. A four-day trip to the scenic and diverse Tanjung Puting National Park at the end of the project is arranged. Here you will see proboscis monkeys and long-tailed macaques along the banks of the Sekonyer River, and visit Camp Leakey, the site of the first permanent orang-utan research project in Kalimantan and home to many adult orangutans successfully reintroduced into the forest.

Undertaking your own research

Opportunities do exist with us for BSc/MSc projects or dissertations to be undertaken in most of these project areas. During the life of the volunteer programme, 19 MSc and 35 BSc projects have been undertaken by volunteers.

Projects must be original, contribute to the existing body of knowledge and have a conservation application, must be planned well in advance, be feasibly completed within 10 weeks and be approved by your supervisor. Volunteers interested in undertaking a project should contact us as soon as possible, so we can inform you of our research goals for the year and then work together to develop objectives and methodology. Project places are limited to 2-3 per group, depending on the size of the group.



Interested? What to do next

To apply to join the expedition, please download and fill in an application form, and send it back to us with your deposit and 2 passport photos. We will contact you to confirm we have received your application then, shortly after, you will be contacted by our medical advisors Interhealth. Once you have completed their online medical health form it should only take a maximum of 10 working days for us to let you know if you have been successful. Those not resident in the UK should contact us for information on submitting a full application.

Each volunteer will be required to make a contribution to cover the cost of his or her participation in the expedition. This is £1675 for seven weeks, with extended stay costing £150 per additional week. This covers accommodation in Palangkaraya, airport pick-up, transport to and from camp, use and maintenance of base camp and facilities (including electricity, food, cooks, security guard, equipment and medical supplies), Indonesian field and administration staff, travel to remote survey sites, research visa and trips to Nyaru Menteng Orangutan Reintroduction Centre, Tangkiling and Tanjung Puting National Park. The cost also includes a contribution to our long-term research and conservation work, including supporting CIMTROP Forest Patrol Unit and Fire-fighting Teams.

Additional costs you will need to bear include international and internal airfares and insurance (see the application for further details on this). Day-to-day costs whilst on the expedition are typically small, for drinks, snacks and local transport for the six or seven days you will spend in town (£5 to £10 per day) and for cigarettes, chocolate, e-mail and souvenirs.

For further information and pictures check out our website (www.outrop.com) and our blog (www.outrop.blogspot.com) which has the latest news from the team in the field and from home.

Thank you for your interest and we look forward to hearing from you soon!

The Outrop Team

