



## ORANGUTAN REHABILITATION

### What is orangutan rehabilitation really about?

Essentially it is the process through which **o n c e - c a p t i v e** orangutans are returned to the wild. It involves **c o n f i s c a t i o n**, quarantine, veterinary care and a supervised release. Frequently it involves hand-rearing; always it is a long-term undertaking. The underlying rationale is a combination of animal welfare and conservation: improving the welfare of the individual while enabling law enforcement agencies to do their job. The Orangutan Foundation also believes that, because release sites need to be large and secure, rehabilitation can support habitat protection efforts.



### If rehabilitated orangutans are supposed to be returned to the wild, why are they fed everyday?

The daily provisioning of ex-captive orangutans serves three purposes: it allows people to monitor the orangutans (sometimes the only time they are seen is at feeding); in times of poor natural food availability, the food offered decreases the chance of competition between wild and rehabilitated orangutans; and finally the amount given is only a supplement thereby ensuring the orangutans stay healthy while still having to search in the forest for their own food. It must be remembered that, while the feedings do provide the best opportunity for short-term visitors to see these elusive apes in their natural environment, they are run for the orangutans not people.

### Why does the Foundation no longer release orangutans into Tanjung Puting?

In 1995, the Indonesian government passed legislation that ex-captive orangutans should not be released into areas such as Tanjung Puting National Park where there are large, viable populations of wild orangutans. The aim of the law was to separate wild and ex-captive populations so there was no competition for resources and to prevent the possibility of the latter introducing disease. This is the view shared by most orangutan experts.

As a National Park status Tanjung Puting is already offered some protection; the Foundation and other NGOs are active there and the wild orangutan population is estimated to be around 4,000.

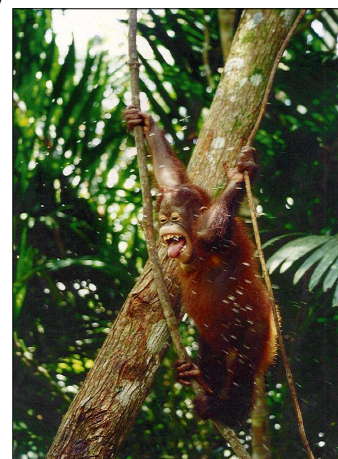
### So where are orangutans released now?

In the late 1990s after it was agreed and signed into law that orangutans should not be released into areas such as Tanjung Puting National Park, the Indonesian government created the Lamandau River Wildlife Reserve out of an ex-logging concession. More than 160 orangutans have been released into Lamandau and the Orangutan Foundation now operates six orangutan release camps in the reserve and runs a veterinary health programme. The Lamandau River Wildlife Reserve is not open to the public.

Somalia's story demonstrates how rehabilitation can work. Somalia was found severely dehydrated, covered in scabies and starving (see image top left). No one thought he would survive. After months of intensive (and often) 24-hour care, he pulled through. Then, under the watchful eyes of his carers, he began the process of learning how to live in the wild, initially in the 'nursery forest' adjacent to the Orangutan Foundation International's Care Centre and Quarantine facility. When he was old enough Somalia was released into Lamandau - a healthy orangutan back in the forest (see image below).

### What do the critics say?

Critics of the rehabilitation process claim that money would be better spent on conservation, arguing rehabilitation is overly sentimental, not scientific and detracts from the real issue, which is saving wild orangutan populations. The Foundation responds by agreeing that the wild population has to be protected; we work hard to achieve that. But the number of orangutans in rehabilitation centres **I n d o n e s i a** is an unavoidable issue. It has to be tackled. No one would deny that rehabilitation is expensive. Long-term care, veterinary treatment, and following the agreed guidelines on rehabilitation all come at a price.



However, we conscientiously maintain the link between rehabilitation and habitat protection. For us, the process must achieve both conservation and welfare goals.

**Ultimately all orangutan conservation, including rehabilitation, depends on having safe, secure habitat. This is what the Orangutan Foundation aims to provide.**