

Press Release

For immediate release

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Survey reveals Borneo's Malua Biobank as a key area for orang-utan conservation

Results from recent ground and aerial surveys of 34,000 Ha of lowland rainforest known as the Malua Biobank in Sabah, Malaysia are revealing the area to be one of the most important refuges for orang-utan in Borneo.

Sabah Forestry Department's Malua Wildlife Unit Leader, Hadrin Lias, led the surveys, and says the orang-utan population is benefiting from current conservation activities in Malua Biobank. Logging in Malua ceased in 2007 and since then the habitat for orang-utan has remained undisturbed and the area is regularly patrolled.

Dr. Marc Ancrenaz, an international expert on orang-utan, assisted and trained the Malua Wildlife Unit to undertake the surveys and believes that the Malua Biobank supports one of the highest, if not the highest, density of this sub-species (*Pongo pygmaeus morio*) of orang-utan anywhere in the world.

"Malua Biobank is critically important for the survival of this subspecies, though all three sub-species of orang-utan in Borneo are endangered due to extensive habitat loss," Dr Ancrenaz said.

"For orang-utan to survive in Borneo, it is vitally important to preserve large contiguous blocks of lowland rainforest such as Malua Biobank and the nearby Danum Valley Conservation Area.

Reconnecting populations

Orang-utan density was shown to be particularly high in eastern Malua. The individuals in this part of the reserve are physically and genetically isolated from the rest of the population due to the presence of the Malua River which cuts across the reserve, which orang-utans are unable to cross.

In an effort to connect populations, the second of two suspended orang-utan bridges across the Malua River has now been constructed and remote cameras will be installed to record any wildlife movements across the bridges. The new orang-utan bridge consists of a lattice of chains that provides the orang-utan hand and footholds to cross the river, mimicking the function of overhanging tree branches in areas where large trees are now absent.

The orang-utan projects have been possible with financial assistance from the Malaysian Palm Oil Council, which has been very supportive of a number of conservation projects in Malua Biobank.

Malua Biobank is a pioneering public-private partnership to deploy private sector capital for the restoration and protection of endangered lowland rainforest. The Malua Biobank is a unique joint venture between the Sabah Forestry Department, the Sabah Foundation and the Eco Products Fund.

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Darius Sarshar, Director of New Forests Asia, the company that manages the Malua Biobank, says the recent orang-utan survey results reinforce the significance of the Biobank for threatened species preservation, making it all the more important to secure its future.

“The purchase of Malua Biodiversity Conservation Certificates by companies or individuals assists the conservation and the restoration of suitable habitat within the Malua Forest for species like the orang-utan,” he said.

The Malua Biobank is currently offering certificates to business, industry and individuals interested in saving the endangered orang-utan as well as other threatened species such as the banteng, pygmy elephants and sun bears that call the Malua Biobank home.

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Photos and Notes to Editor on following pages

Photos

1. Orang-utan (*Pongo pygmaeus morio*) in Malua Biobank Photo: ©JPHTN/USM/MBB/Wildlife Unit



2. The Malua Wildlife Unit surveying for orang-utan nests in Malua (Left to right Sahidul Kassan & Sarinus Aniony) Photo: ©JPHTN/USM/MBB/Wildlife Unit



3. The new orang-utan bridge spanning the Malua River Photo: ©J. Sinyor



Notes to Editor

About the Malua Biobank

The Malua Biobank was established to protect and restore the Malua Forest Reserve and manage environmental credit sales from the area. The project started in 2008 and covers an area of 34,000 ha of mostly threatened lowland dipterocarp forest in Sabah, the Malaysian part of Borneo. The area supports a number of other threatened species, such as the Asian pygmy elephant, clouded leopard, sun bear and banteng. The project has 13 Sabah Forestry Department staff permanently based in the reserve and a purpose-built work station and guard posts manned 24 hours. In addition to putting an end to the high levels of poaching taking place in Malua prior to the start of the project, a wide range of restoration and protection works have been completed, including the orang-utan bridges. For further information on this public-private conservation project go to www.maluabiobank.com

About the Eco Products Fund

The Eco Products Fund, LP (EPF) is the private investor in the Malua Biobank. It has committed up to \$10 million to finance the restoration and long term protection of Malua. EPF is a private equity fund that is

jointly managed by New Forests Inc. and Equator Environmental, LLC. EPF invests in a portfolio of credits associated with wetlands and endangered species conservation, forest and land-based carbon sequestration, and water quality improvements in the United States and internationally.

About New Forests

New Forests Asia is the asset manager on behalf of EPF for the Malua Biobank, and is a wholly-owned subsidiary of New Forests Pty Limited of Sydney, Australia. New Forests (www.newforests.com.au) manages investments in sustainable forestry and associated environmental markets, such as carbon, biodiversity, and water that deliver sustainable land management strategies and triple bottom line returns. New Forests is a signatory of the Principles of Responsible Investment and a member of the Forest Stewardship Council.

About the Sabah Forestry Department

The [Sabah Forestry Department](#) is a state government agency that was established in 1914 and entrusted as the custodian of the State's forest resources. A total of some 3.6 million hectares of forest reserves, or about 50% of the state's total landmass, is under the jurisdiction of the forestry department. The department aims to place all these forest reserves under Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) based on the state's model forest, Deramakot, which is the first tropical forest to have been certified as a well managed forest under the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) standards. The Forestry Department is a strong believer in SFM as the way forward to ensure a balanced and perpetual role of the forests for social, environmental and economic gain. Since the statewide adoption of SFM in 1997, the Forestry Department has been actively working with partners to achieve this goal, including seeking potential partners in devising sustainable financing for SFM implementation.

About the Sabah Foundation

The [Sabah Foundation](#) works to assist the Sabah State Government in strategic development initiatives. The Sabah Foundation is the largest forest concessionaire in Sabah, wholly owned by the State Government. It is responsible for the management of approximately 1 million hectares of forest in Borneo, including forests in the Danum Valley, Maliau Basin and Imbak Canyon.