

Charity at the heart of orangutan surrogacy programme

Monday 8 December, 2025

An orangutan surrogacy programme run by YIARI a partner of Sussex-based International Animal Rescue (IAR) is giving the most vulnerable babies in Borneo something they thought they had lost forever – a mother's love.

From North to South and East to West Borneo, orangutan forests are disappearing at an alarming rate as palm oil and industrial agriculture expand. Injured, orphaned or snatched illegally as pets, many orangutans arrive at rescue centres clinging to life.

At YIARI's rehabilitation centre in West Borneo, which is supported by Sussex based IAR, teams have rescued and released 267 orangutans, of which 131 are now living wild again. But for the youngest infants, who have lost their mothers to tragedy, there is no chance of survival without a mother to show them how to climb, forage and build nests and how to trust the forest again. Until now.

Through this surrogacy programme, rescued orangutan mothers are being given a second chance at life as surrogate mums to infants whose mothers have been lost forever.

To help replace the mother love stolen from them, YIARI has created a surrogacy programme where adult females are paired with orphaned infants and act like mothers to give them the warmth, protection and skills they need and the possibility of returning to the wild in the future. YIARI now has eight surrogate orangutan mother/infant pairs, with five pairs already released and living wild in Bukit Baka Bukit Raya National Park.

"This programme is absolutely transformational. It gives orangutan babies a mother again and with her, a future," said Alan Knight OBE, President of IAR.

Muria was a surrogate orangutan who spent the first 11 months of her life chained around the neck and locked in a tiny cage. The pair were released together in 2019 and have since thrived in the wild and three years later, Muria was found with a wild-born baby of her own, Bumi. Her new infant, Bumi, is living proof that love is the best remedy for even the deepest of wounds.

"Muria and Zoya have stolen the hearts of everyone working at YIARI and we can't wait to see what the future brings with their new wild-born baby."

IAR needs to raise £90,000 to cover the costs of rehabilitation and working towards the future release to the wild of the protected rainforest, followed by essential post-release monitoring.

Can you help? Please donate today to help these orangutans find their freedom.

<https://bit.ly/OrangutanChristmasAppeal>

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International Animal Rescue UK

T. 07870808166

E. media@internationalanimalrescue.org

W. <https://www.internationalanimalrescue...>

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