REPORT

CAPTIVE ORANGUTANS IN WEST BORNEO PROBLEMS and SOLUTIONS

AUGUST 2009
As one of the most protected wild animals in Indonesia, orangutans are in fact not protected from criminal acts. In West Kalimantan, Centre for Orangutan Protection (COP) has identified a number of orangutans who are illegally kept in homes as pets or held in zoos' cages. In general, they are all in bad condition and ailing. COP has been working to lessen their sufferings and to strive for their release to be sent to Rehabilitation Center.

**Illegal Possession**

Orangutans are protected by Law no.5/1990 on Biodiversity Conservation and its Ecosystem. Public cannot keep orangutans, except those Conservation Institutions appointed by the government. Breaching this law will be fined 100,000,000 rupiah or 5 years in detention.

In reality, orangutans are often kept without any restriction. COP has identified illegally kept orangutans in several West Kalimantan cities and has sent reports to the Agency of Conservancy and Natural Resources, as the provincial technical executioner unit of the Ministry of Forestry, who has the authority and responsibility to protect orangutans and their habitat. In general, the orangutans were depressed during the captivation due to treatment they received from their owners, who claim themselves as animal lovers. The followings are profiles of the poor orangutans:
Lupus (male, 15 years old) and Lupis (female, 10 years old) kept by a property businessman who was running for the mayor office of Pontianak. He was provided with sufficient food and drink but suffering from tetanus and showed symptoms of paralysis. The owner was willing to hand him to BKSDA and even offered his private island, which covers an area of 200 hectares for orangutans' sanctuary when needed by the state.

Neng (female, 5 years old) was suffering from an acute eye illness, almost blind and paralyzed. She was kept in Selimbau, by Sentarum Lake, which is now being deforested for a palm oil plantation.
Binyo (female, 5 years old) and Pango (male, 6 years old) kept by a policeman in Sintang, 10-hour drive from Pontianak.

Jojo (male, 4 years old) kept by an old masseur in completely broken wooden cage on a sewage. He was suffering from a serious tetanus.
COP has been repeatedly reported about poor conditions of captive orangutans' to BKSDA of West Kalimantan. However, there hasn't been any response from them so far. COP officially has reported the orangutans' conditions to the Forestry Ministry on April 22, 2009, following a publication by TRAFFIC on observed practices of orangutans' illegal petting in Sumatra. Toni Suhartono, the Director of Wild Life Diversity's Conservation of Forestry Ministry denied the report and challenged us to bring up evidence. COP fulfilled the challenge by handing the Forestry Ministry reports on it. Apart from that, COP has also communicated with owners of the orangutans, most of whom were willing to hand over their orangutans and were even ready to help BKSDA to build up shelters for orangutans on their own land or island.

First Aids

Unfortunately, there hasn't been any reaction following up the reports yet. Meanwhile the orangutans' conditions were becoming much worst. Lupus and Jojo were reported paralyzed. Neng was suffering from severe fever and almost blind. Along with International Animal Rescue (IAR), COP has sent a medical team to Pontianak and provided the orangutans with first aids on April 22, 2009.

Finding Solutions

COP concluded that there are three main factors leading to abandonment towards captive orangutans, as the followings:
1. BKSDA is not equipped with technical capacities such as shelters and medical tools for confiscated orangutans' accommodation.
2. BKSDA is set up with an approved policy written in Orangutan Action Plan.
3. BKSDA doesn't have sufficient capacity of morals while working as a wild life protector. Its personnel have gotten accustomed to neglecting their responsibility and won't be bothered completing any existing problem as there has been hardly any conviction for doing so.

Based on the conclusions, COP was tried to offer BKSDA solutions in forms of the followings:
1. Provide maximum support for rescue operations in terms of funds, personnel and transportations to the rehabilitation centre.
2. Establish and manage Shelters for confiscated orangutans.
3. Take over the management of the zoo of Pancur Aji in Sanggau.
Rescue Operations

Unexpectedly, BKSDA rejected all supports offered by COP. Afterwards, various lobbies done but still ended up in refusals. Finally, COP decided to commit rescue operations without BKSDA’s involvement and it is legal according to the Indonesia’s law. On August 4, 2009 COP’s team released Jojo and sent him to BKSDA office in Pontianak. Despite being placed in a narrow cage, Jojo would receive better treatment under a supervision of right and legal hands. On August 7, 2009 COP set free Binggo and Pango in Sintang. Both of them were submitted to BKSDA office of Sintang.

The operations certainly have put BKSDA in a hard position. They have to take care of the orangutans and provide them with food and drink with minimum resources. It forced BKSDA to commit quick actions and transfer the orangutans to the zoo or create a better shelter for them. Meanwhile, the zoo’s administrators refused to accommodate the transferred orangutans due to continuous criticisms from COP concerning their poor capabilities while taking care of orangutans.

Pango and Binyo caged in BKSDA of Sintang - West Borneo. Despite being placed in narrow cages, they will receive better treatment under a supervision of right and legal hands.
Future Plans

The responsibility of orangutans' protections is indeed under the Ministry of Forestry. BKSDA as its subsidiary which serves as technical executioner in provincial level should proactively save orangutans from illegal captivation. COP will keep on socializing the principle to the public through many ways. One of them is through spreading postcards, with messages encouraging public participation for reporting practices of wild life's illegal captivity.

On the postcards, there is a space to report information about a practice of orangutan's illegal captivity. Therefore anyone will be able to write on it and send the card to the local BKSDA office.

COP will keep on releasing illegally-captive orangutans along with or without BKSDA's involvement. This action will hopefully force BKSDA to establish shelters for confiscated orangutans and act more proactively in law enforcement.

Acknowledgements

Jojo, Pango and Binyo have been in the hands of BKSDA, the governmental body which has authorities for orangutans' conservation. COP will remain active to set free other captive orangutans, which are now longing for being released. Without your help the whole operations wouldn't have been a success. COP, therefore, would like to extend its gratitude to the followings, which have given their kind supports and taken part wholeheartedly:

1. Australian Orangutan Project.
2. Brigitte Bardot Foundation.
3. Chitra Allen.
4. International Animal Rescue
5. Monkey Business
6. Nature Alert
7. Orangutan Appeal
8. Orangutan Outreach
9. Primate Helping Primate
10. Rettet den Regenwald.
11. Trish Morton.
12. With Compassion and Soul