

Safe haven

Borneo's orang-utans are on the endangered list, but there is some hope for these gentle jungle creatures in the 64-acre Rasa Ria Nature Reserve

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Shangri-La's Rasa Ria Resort Nature Reserve



The “people of the forest” need our help. They are the gentle orang-utans who for thousands of years have ruled the tropical jungles of Borneo and Sumatra, but who now find themselves unable to defend their territories against the encroachment of 21st-century man.

Unregulated clearing of the rainforest for hardwood timber, or to make way for palm oil plantations, has led to the loss and fragmentation of habitat, putting these highly intelligent creatures high on the endangered species list.

Best estimates suggest that only around 65,000 remain in the wild, and gazing into the limpid, brown eyes of these soulful primates, one can sense not just their ability to think and reason, but also a sadness at what has been happening and a heartfelt appeal for assistance.

Fortunately, this plea has been heard. Conservation groups and organisations in both the public and private sectors have been stepping up efforts to protect the home of one of our closest cousins, putting the brake on ill-conceived commercial activities, and creating awareness about the importance of ecological diversity.

An excellent example of this is the far-sighted partnership between Shangri-La's Rasa Ria resort in Kota Kinabalu and the Sabah State Wildlife Department. In 1996 they jointly planned and set up a 64-acre nature reserve on land adjacent to the resort specifically to care for, rear and rehabilitate baby orang-utans.

These orphans had either been captured and sold as pets, or were otherwise separated from their mothers while still unable to fend for themselves. And learning to be an adult orang-utan is certainly not easy. In fact, offspring are reliant on their mothers for longer than any other animal species. Babies nurse for up to six years and stay close to their mothers into their teens in order to learn a complex set of survival skills. These include finding and selecting the right leaves, flowers and insects to eat; learning the seasonal cycle of fruit-bearing trees; and committing the map of the rainforest canopy to memory. Along the way, of course, they are also dispersing seeds, and thereby helping to keep the rainforest alive.

Spending much of their lives in the treetops, young orang utans come to know hundreds of plant species and numerous other “tricks of the trade”. For instance, they will build nests to sleep in, and in a tropical downpour, may twist together giant leaves to fashion an umbrella and wait out the storm.

Since females only give birth about once every eight years, the potential rate of reproduction is slower than any other mammal. That means the welfare of every orang-utan is now vital, and shows the importance of the work being done by the nature reserve's dedicated team of experts.

Once the babies are older and stronger, they are moved to the Sepilok Orang-Utan Research Centre for the next stage of their rehabilitation, which, all being well, culminates with a return to the wild.



Left: Children experience the joy of encountering an orang-utan. Above: Rasa Ria Nature Interpretation Centre. 左：孩童與紅毛猩猩接觸，高興萬分。上：莎利雅自然保護中心。

The Rasa Ria reserve is also home to more than 60 bird species, 30 types of butterflies, and an amazing range of indigenous flora and fauna. Visitors get a fantastic close-up view of nature and can learn even more at the resort's new Nature Interpretation Centre, which helps both the local community and international travellers appreciate the need for ecological diversity and respect for the environment.

It includes a peaceful but imposing forest garden, as well as viewing platforms and walking trails where visitors can enjoy the wonders of nature.

保育野生新希望

數千年來一直統治著婆羅洲和蘇門答臘熱帶森林的主人紅毛猩猩，正被21世紀人類侵略，他們已不能捍衛自己的領土，要我們施以援手。無規範的砍伐及種植棕櫚樹，令瀕臨絕種的紅毛猩猩流離失所。

據統計，現存野生猩猩只剩下65,000隻，他們是具有高智慧的靈長類動物，那棕色清澈的眼神流露著絲絲哀愁，訴說著他們的無助。幸而來自公眾及私人的環保團體力量，制止了毫無規範的商業活動，更喚醒人類對保護自然生態的重要性。

最令人鼓舞的是沙巴野生動物局，和當地香格里拉莎利雅酒店組成合作夥伴。早在1996年已於渡假村附近，設立了一個64公頃的自然保護區來照顧幼猩猩，這些猩猩孤兒曾被捕獵出售作寵物，或在未獨立生存時被強行與母猩猩分離。猩猩順利成長並不容易，相對其他動物，猩猩寶寶依賴母親的時間最長，需時六年才能學會求生技能，包括覓食、學懂果實收成的季節性、尋找安全居所。同時牠們也會在四處覓食時傳播種子，協助樹木繁殖。由於常在樹頂生活，小猩猩除了要分辨過百種植物外，更須學會些「小技倆」，如築巢棲息和用巨葉做傘以遮風擋雨。

雌性猩猩每八年才生育一次，繁殖速度遠較其他動物為慢，其彌足珍貴處更需要專家們全力協助。小猩猩長成後會被送到西比洛紅毛猩猩教育中心，是第二階段的棲息所，如順利成長就會送回大自然。

莎利雅自然保護區遍佈逾60種鳥類、30種蝴蝶及大量不同種類的本土動植物，遊客除可近距離觀賞外，更可在自然中心內認識生態環境。中心還設有寧靜的森林花園、瞭望台和步行徑，置身其中，令人煥然一新。