



WORLD
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Reforestation Borneo's Genting Wildlife Corridor

Our Plant a Tree project
with partner HUTAN

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Country: Malaysian Borneo

Partner/Organisation:
HUTAN

Biome

Tropical and subtropical moist broadleaf forests

Ecoregion

Borneo lowland rainforests

Habitats

Set within the Kinabatangan Floodplain of Malaysian Borneo, the landscape in and around the Genting Wildlife Corridor is a mix of established oil palm (*Elaeis guineensis*) plantations and remaining fragments of natural forest, from mixed dipterocarp forest to riverine forest and seasonal freshwater swamp forest. The Keruak limestone outcrop features tracts of limestone forest.

Project summary

WLT partner HUTAN have spent over two decades working to safeguard the rainforests of Malaysian Borneo's Kinabatangan Floodplain, a landscape pushed to breaking point by historic logging followed by the rapid advance of commercial oil palm plantations.

This is some of the world's most biodiverse land and with WLT's support, HUTAN have sought to protect it through purchases – with the Keruak and Pangi corridors created and expanded over the past few years – but also reforestation. Through a pioneering partnership, the WLT partner has been working since 2019 to create the Genting Wildlife Corridor by restoring 110 acres (45 ha) of former oil palm plantations. Donations to WLT's Plant a Tree programme will fund 35 acres (14 ha) of this total, split between 20 acres (8 ha) in 2019-2020 and 15 acres (6 ha) in 2021-2023.

Hailing from the local village of Sukau, HUTAN's all-women reforestation team (see following page) are the engine of this conservation project. The 10-strong squad oversee the nurturing of the seedlings at HUTAN's nursery, followed by the planting itself at sites they have identified at prior visits of former oil palm plantations. For three to five years after planting, they will carry out pesticide-free maintenance and weeding to give every sapling the best chance of survival.

Funded by Plant a Tree, the 29 native species being planted have been selected to be a good fit with the landscape – they are all suitable to the area's dry or seasonally inundated soils – as well as its biodiversity. The orangutans roaming this corridor will not just enjoy a reconnected landscape with links to the Keruak Wildlife Corridor; they will find new, native trees that are a confirmed food source for this great ape.

Main methods for restoration

Decades of cultivation have drastically degraded the soils alongside the Kinabatangan River, leaving behind a landscape dominated by herbaceous species. Natural regeneration cannot take place in these conditions, making HUTAN's seedling planting the necessary approach for forest restoration.

Bornean Orangutan



Asian Pygmy Elephant



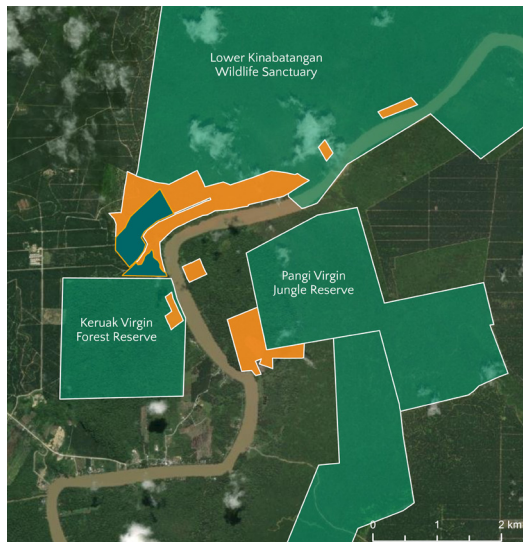
Key species¹

Bornean Orangutan (*Pongo pygmaeus morio*, CR), Asian Pygmy Elephant (*Elephas maximus*, EN), Rhinoceros Hornbill (*Buceros rhinoceros*, VU), Edible-nest Swiftlet (*Aerodramus fuciphagus*, LC), Sunda Pangolin (*Manis javanica*, CR), Sun Bear (*Helarctos malayanus*, VU), Malayan Box Turtle (*Cuora amboinensis*, EN), Proboscis monkey (*Nasalis larvatus*, EN), Sambar (*Rusa unicolor*, VU), Philippine Slow Loris (*Nycticebus menagensis*, VU).

¹ The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species includes categories of Critically Endangered (CR), Endangered (EN), Vulnerable (VU), Near Threatened (NT) and Least Concern (LC)

Global prioritisation

The Lower Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary was gazetted in 1977 under the purview of the Sabah Wildlife Department. The broader Kinabatangan Floodplain is an Important Bird Area (IBA), a Key Biodiversity Area (KBA), and falls within the Sundaland Biodiversity Hotspot, one of the biologically richest hotspots on earth. The area is also classified as part of the Lower Kinabatangan Managed Elephant Range.



■ Genting Wildlife Corridor and restoration area
■ Keruak and Pangli corridors
■ Protected Area



Main threats to the area

The Kinabatangan Floodplain has already lost 80% of its natural forest, mainly due to historical logging for the timber trade and subsequent conversion for agricultural plantations. The resulting landscape of small forest fragments leaves orangutans, elephants and other iconic species with no choice but to cross through private land, resulting in human-wildlife conflict. The Kinabatangan's orangutan populations have already crashed from an estimated 20,000 individuals in 1900 to about 780 today, and further degradation of the remaining forest fragments could put genetic diversity at an even greater risk. By creating a new corridor of native, fast-growing tree species, HUTAN will be unlocking free movement for species along the river, in the process boosting natural regeneration of soils degraded by human activities.

Local communities

Local communities belong to the orang sungai (or 'river people') group and for centuries, the Kinabatangan River – the longest in Malaysia's Sabah State – has been their main socio-economic asset and source of food and livelihoods. To ensure conservation is led by and benefits those who know this landscape best, HUTAN's restoration team is exclusively staffed by 10 women from the nearby village of Sukau, who are in charge of planting, maintaining and monitoring trees. These permanent jobs, a lifeline in an area where such opportunities are scarce for women, come alongside six to ten paid trainee positions. The interns, also recruited locally, join the restoration team for month-long periods where they receive training in reforestation methods. They also take part in HUTAN's year-long environmental education programme, where they learn the importance of preserving the natural habitat for wildlife.

Partner/NGO

HUTAN was founded in 1996 in the Sabah State of Malaysian Borneo to research and reverse the decline of orangutan populations in the Kinabatangan Floodplain. After helping local authorities implement a conservation strategy for the species, HUTAN co-founders Isabelle Lackman and Marc Ancrenaz went on to build a 60-strong workforce of locally hired conservationists, today the driving force for programmes for orangutans, elephants, wildlife surveys, law enforcement, reforestation and more. WLT have supported HUTAN since 2008, going on to fund projects ranging from the Keruak and Pangli Corridors, to the present Genting Wildlife Corridor and others.

UN Sustainable Development Goals advanced by HUTAN projects

