



Rangkong badak (*Buceros rhinoceros*) in Hutan Harapan  
| Photo: Hutan Harapan/Fadlurrahman

### Hornbill “Farmers of the Forest”: Real Action Is Needed for Conservation

Of the 32 hornbill species recorded in the Asia region, 13 species are found in Indonesia, three of which are endemic: the *Rhagodorrhinus exarhatus*, *Ryhticeros cassidix* and the Sumba hornbill (*Ryhticeros everetti*). Sumatra Island has the highest number of hornbill species with nine with Hutan Harapan being one of the last remaining habitats for hornbills in Sumatra.

In order to raise awareness about hornbill conservation, Hutan Harapan and Burung Indonesia sponsored a webinar, “Hornbill Conservation Amid the Threat of Deforestation” in mid-March 2021. The webinar brought together 260 participants composed of students, environmental activists and bird researchers and bird watchers.

The main speaker, Yokyok Hadiprakarsa, from Rangkong Indonesia, is a conservation biologist and a longtime advocate of hornbill conservation. With over 20 years of experience, he noted that research on the distribution, characteristics, and population of hornbills is extremely limited, not to mention the lack of research publications. “How can we optimize hornbill conservation, if there is very little research on these birds?” asked Yokyok. According to Yoyok, that there were only about 80 studies on hornbills published between 1970 and 2020.

Yokyok challenged students, academics, and institutions engaged in conservation to do more research on hornbills. He also invited the webinar participants to do hornbill research in Hutan Harapan because it is one of the important habitats for hornbills in Indonesia. “There are eight species of hornbills in Hutan Harapan but research is lacking on their characteristics,” said Fadlurrahman, Hutan Harapan’s fauna staff person.

Hornbills are being targeted by hunters because of their high price. Hutan Harapan is one of the habitats for the ivory hornbill (*Rhinoplax vigil*). The ivory hornbill is threatened with extinction as their population in the wild has been drastically decreased due to hunting, trade and massive forest conversion of their natural habitat.

Hornbills are an indicator of a healthy forest because they only live in forest habitats with tall and large trees and various types of fruit trees. Nicknamed, “true farmers of the forest” because of their ability to spread seeds of forest plants covering an area of 100 thousand hectares, and thus helping the process of forest regeneration. The webinar can be watched on the Hutan Harapan Youtube. (HOS)

### Ralu Jambee Snake Rescue Community and Jambi Natural Resources Conservation Center Release Dozens of Snakes in Hutan Harapan

The Jambi City Snake rescue community, Ralu Jambee, together with the Natural Resources Conservation Agency (BKSDA) Jambi released 31 snakes in Hutan Harapan, consisting of 27 pythons (*Python reticulatus*) and 4 sputtering cobras (*Naja Sumatrana*) on 14 April 2021. These snakes were captured in the city of Jambi, clearly not a safe habitat for either them or the city’s inhabitants.

The chairperson of Ralu Jambee, Boslan Tobing, acknowledged that the presence of snakes urban areas cannot be separated from the conversion of forests into plantations, residential areas or offices. The lack of knowledge on how to mitigate wildlife conflicts, such as with snakes, results in people killing snakes that they encounter, rather than capturing them. According to Boslan, communities cannot be blamed because their security may be threatened; even if the snakes are caught, they not know who to call to take them away. Fortunately, with the establishment of Ralu Jambee, there is now an organization that has the skills to safely capture the reptiles that enter residential areas and find a new home for them. “These snakes are living creatures that must be returned to their habitat, not to be killed,” explained Boslan.

As one of the last remaining lowland forest areas in Sumatra, Hutan Harapan is a haven for wildlife. This is not the first time that rescue animals have been given a new home Hutan Harapan. In the past, BKSDA has released elephants, snakes, birds, and pangolins. Hutan Harapan management fully supports BKSDA and Ralu Jambee’s efforts to rescue snakes while adhering to existing procedures, including ensuring that each type of snake is already found in Hutan Harapan and is healthy before being released. “Releasing snakes in Hutan Harapan is very suitable because it is a habitat for about 30 species of snakes found in Sumatra,” said Hutan Harapan Fauna coordinator, Erwanda. Let’s save Hutan Harapan, which is the last paradise for wildlife in Jambi and South Sumatra. (AWI)



Jambi Snake Community and Jambi BKSDA release a python in Hutan Harapan  
| Photo: Hutan Harapan | Ardi Wijaya



Students planted a tree in Hutan Harapan.  
Photo: Hutan Harapan | Ardi Wijaya

## Planting Trees, Harvesting Abundance

I am sure everyone has experienced falling in love at first sight. But have we ever fell in love with plants or animals? Of course, each of us has a different answer. At first, I was not too interested to talk about plants. However, everything changed when I became the Flora and Abiotic Coordinator in Hutan Harapan. I finally fell in love with plants and animals. I am happy when planting, seeing plants grow, bear fruit and even see animals approaching them.

I remember a lecture by Mustofa Bisri (a charismatic Indonesian cleric) who said that people who plant trees are good people. From planting trees, at least we have been “sincere” because we never determine who can breathe the oxygen released by the trees we plant, who wants to take shelter under the trees, and we are not angry with other living beings who harvest them. Planting trees means providing habitats for a variety of wildlife and vegetation. Imagine when we plant trees there will be a lot of benefits extending beyond the immediate area.

My former lecturer at University of Gajah Mada, Maz Picoes and my current manager at Hutan Harapan Elva Gemita both encouraged me to better understand the complexities of a healthy forest ecosystem. From them I learned that creating and protecting a forest must be “LAAS”, which consists of Love, Analysis, Action, and Sincerity.

Love means we have to love the forest and its contents because of what it provides. With love we will be happy and dedicate ourselves to protecting trees and plants. I was so happy when I saw Meranti (*Shorea* sp) trees that I planted growing well. It is necessary to analyze the planting method, the type of plant and how the silvicultural methods are employed. I applied this when I was involved in post-fire planting in Sungai Jerat area of Hutan Harapan. Based on the analysis the next steps of planning and planting or, “action” is carried out. Lastly, sincere, when we have gone through the entire process from the beginning, we have to wait patiently for the results that will bring numerous benefits. Plant with “LAAS” and abundance will be the result. **(ROHMAT EKO)**



Batin Sembilan children fishing with Hutan Harapan staff  
| Photo: Hutan Harapan | Ardi Wijaya

## Night Fishing with Batin Sembilan Children

It was 8 pm, the faint sounds of children chatting were heard, until finally the voices became clearer in front of our tent located along the Lalan River in Hutan Harapan. “Hey, where are you guys going?” I asked the seven Batin Sembilan children. “We want to go fishing,” answered one of the children. “Can we come with you?” I asked again. The Batin Sembilan children invited, Ardi Wijaya (Communication Coordinator), and Randy (Business Department staff) and me to follow them to the river.

Some of the Batin Sembilan children were wearing sandals and some were barefoot. Each of them had brought a fishing rod and wore headlamps. Not to be forgotten, were the worms and insects in a can in a rattan basket. Batin Sembilan children are accustomed to fishing from a young age. When the adult Batin Sembilan mandah (camp in the middle of the forest) to collect resin from the trees, the children are usually assigned to look for fish. Snakehead are just one of the many fresh water fish species found in rivers running through Hutan Harapan.

Arriving at the river, the Batin Sembilan children looked for the ideal spot to cast their fishing lines. I was among them. Flashlights were turned off. It was completely dark. I tried to talk to a child named Ani. “Shhh, you can’t talk when you’re fishing,” Adit, reminded me. Fishing in pitch dark conditions in the middle of the forest is scary for the Batin Sembilan children. Although they often encounter snakes and other forest wildlife, the children are not afraid because they do not disturb the animals. “If the wild animals are not disturbed, then they will not disturb us,” Ani concluded.

After waiting about ten minutes without catching any fish because we were too noisy, Adit suggested to move our location, about 100 meters from the first position. Two minutes later, Adit caught a snakehead. A few minutes later, Ani suddenly exclaimed, “Ka (Elder sister) Pita, I got a big snakehead! We will have a delicious meal tonight.” After about two hours of fishing, the children’s faces were beaming as they showed off their catch of 10 snakehead. There are still many snakehead because the river is still undisturbed. The Batin Sembilan community guards the river and forbids immigrants from electrocuting or poisoning the fish. For the Batin Sembilan, the fish are an important source of protein. If Hutan Harapan’s vital river ecosystems are destroyed, then the Batin Sembilan’s source of protein will be lost. **(HOS)**